

## Children and Youth Protection Policy --Passed April 2007

The objective of the Protection Policy is to safeguard youth and children while in attendance at DCPC or the DCPC weekday preschool programs (collectively "DCPC"), to protect you and children from abuse while in attendance at DCPC and its programs and to take steps to properly screen DCPC staff and volunteers before being placed in positions of responsibility with youth and children at DCPC. This Protection Policy does not create contractual, common law or other duties or obligations owing to children or youth who attend DCPC or its programs or to their parents or guardians.

The Protection Policy is in four parts:

- Screening procedures for volunteer staff and paid staff
- Criminal background checks for paid staff
- Safety and protection procedures and behavior expectations of staff
- Reporting of accidents and incidents

Screening procedures for volunteers and paid staff:

Paid staff is all staff on the payroll of the church including nursery, pastoral, program, custodial, preschool, and support. Paid staff includes full time or part time employees.

Volunteers include all individuals who volunteer with children or youth in any capacity including parents who chaperone trips and Davidson College students.

Children are defined as age's birth to 5<sup>th</sup> grade and youth are defined as at the end of fifth grade through the end of twelfth grade.

- All paid staff and volunteers will fill out an application form that includes a disclosure statement of any arrests or convictions. The application will contain references and verification that the paid staff and volunteers have read this Protection Policy and had the opportunity to question any part of this Protection Policy that is unclear to the person
- Ordinarily volunteers will not work with children or youth until they have been in the church community for at least six months. The Christian Education Committee will review requests for exceptions to the six month waiting period.
- There will be an annual worker review in which all staff will reaffirm their commitment to our protection policy.
- The applications will be treated as confidential and will be kept with personnel files for paid staff. Applications for volunteers will also be maintained in confidential files. Disclosure of an application within DCPC shall be on a need-to-know basis for purposes of the operation or administration of DCPC and its programs.

## Criminal Background Checks

- All paid staff will be required to have a criminal background check prior to employment with DCPC. Any convictions related to child abuse, neglect, molestation, exploitation or any type of violent behavior or behavior harmful to another person including but not limited to assault or battery would constitute a basis to deny employment with DCPC. The list of criminal acts in the preceding sentence is not exclusive. An evaluation of other types of convictions will take into account the nature and circumstance of the offense and the time of the offense as they relate to the position for which the applicant is being considered.
- Employment with DCPC is employment at will and neither this Protection Policy nor other policy documents create an employment agreement or contract. DCPC will order nationwide criminal background checks on all adults who volunteer with children and/or youth.
- Volunteers must complete a background form giving the church permission to run the check. Checks will be run and reviewed by the program staff person to whom the volunteer relates. (All documents will be filed in a locked cabinet and kept under the strictest of confidence.) Background checks will be run at least every five years, and more often as deemed necessary.
- Persons refusing to have a background check run or provide an accurate social security number for a residence trace will not be allowed to volunteer with children and youth. Neither will any person who has been convicted of, or pled guilty to, physical and/or sexual abuse of children, or other serious crimes against persons (rape, assault, domestic violence, etc.), or against whom such charges are pending, be allowed to work with children or youth. Persons who have been actively affiliated with DCPC for less than six months will not be allowed to volunteer with children and youth, excepting individuals who receive approval from a member of the Pastoral staff or the Director of Christian Education. A decision concerning a volunteer's service will be made after analyzing all information and in the best interest of the children and youth involved.

## Safety & Protection Procedures for all DCPC programs on site and off site:

These procedures apply to all groups who work with children and youth and who use the facilities of DCPC including scouts and Davidson College activities as well as groups sponsored by DCPC.

Outside groups working with children and youth who use the facilities of DCPC will provide DCPC with a certificate of insurance and a signed statement agreeing to abide by the protection procedures of DCPC.

These procedures apply to all DCPC programs both on and off site. They apply to paid and volunteer staff.

- All activities for children and youth will operate on the two-adult rule. A minimum of two adults is to be in or with each group of children. If two of the adults are related, a third unrelated adult must be present.
- At least one staff should be over 21 years of age and should be present at every function, and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area. For large groups of children and youth, the number of staff will be increased accordingly. As staff supervise children and youth, they should space themselves in a way that other staff can see them.
- On overnight trips all adult chaperones must be over the age of twenty-one excepting individuals who receive approval from a member of the Pastoral staff or the Director of Christian Education. There will be one female counselor per every seven girls and one male counselor per every seven boys. No single youth shall be housed alone with an adult. Neither shall a youth travel alone in a vehicle with only one adult unless it is their parent.
- Staff should arrive at least 10 minutes before a scheduled activity and should keep watch over those in their care until an authorized person has picked up all children and youth. Do not send children out to find their parents, and do not release any child to await transportation. All children through the fifth grade are to be escorted to and from group activities/classes by an authorized parent or adult. No sibling is allowed to drop-off or pick-up.
- Adult volunteers working with youth and children are to be at least five years older than the youth and children they are assigned, excepting individuals who receive approval from a member of the Pastoral staff or the Director of Christian Education. DCPC values the presence of youth volunteers. Youth volunteers may assist in instances where there is less than a five year age difference and may serve as a third person in the room after the two adults per room has been fulfilled. It is recommended that youth wishing to assist in the childcare area complete a babysitter's course (Red Cross or Safe Sitters). Youth must be in senior high to volunteer in the infant nursery.
- Staff shall never leave a child or youth unsupervised.
- Young children, Kindergarten and younger, should be signed in and out by a responsible parent or caregiver
- For restroom supervision of children, staff will make sure individuals not known to the staff do not occupy the restroom before allowing children to use the facilities. Staff will stand in the doorway while young children are using the

restroom. If workers are assisting younger children, doors to the facility must remain open. No child, regardless of age should ever enter a bathroom alone on a field trip.

- Youth are to use the “buddy” system during all on and off campus activities. While using the buddy system, preferably, 3-4 youth should accompany one another. However, when this is not possible, the minimum number of youth using the “buddy” system should be 3.
- Once on DCPC property, children and/or youth will not be permitted to leave the church property, even with parental consent, until the event is concluded unless escorted by parents. Staff and volunteer leaders are placed in precarious situations when children walk up or down Main Street for snacks, to meet someone, etc. . . .
- Children and youth must complete a permission form in order to participate in off campus activities. A medical treatment consent form is also required. All forms must be signed by a parent/guardian.
- Children and youth may not be identified by name in photos used by the church in print and/or non print media. The name of the group or activity may be identified.
- Staff will respect children’s and youth’s rights not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable, and their right to say no. Other than diapering and appropriate bathroom assistance, children are not to be touched on areas of their bodies that would be covered by a bathing suit.
- Staff may not verbally, emotionally, or physically abuse children or youth.
- Staff may not discipline children and youth by the use of physical punishment or failing to provide the necessities of care.
- Physical restraint is used only in situations necessary to protect the child or youth, other children or youth, or staff from harm.
- Staff should be alert to the physical and emotional state of children and youth as they enter the DCPC program. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported to the Director of the DCPC program.
- Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while working with children or youth in a DCPC program is prohibited.
- Smoking or use of tobacco in the presence of children or youth in a DCPC program is prohibited.
- Profanity, inappropriate jokes, sharing intimate details of one’s personal life, and any kind of harassment while working with children or youth in a DCPC program is prohibited.
- Staff may not date DCPC program participants less than 18 years of age.
- There are special safety concerns for the use of the DCPC van and they are printed on an attached document.
- Staff are required to read and sign all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse and attend training on the subject, as instructed by the DCPC supervisor.
- Any questionable or inappropriate behavior should be reported immediately to the appropriate ministry leader as such conduct can precede abuse, even though the

observed act itself does not constitute abuse.

Health concerns:

- A first aid kit is to be kept up to date in the rooms for children who are five years and younger. There will be a first aid kit kept in the workroom of the church and the youth house and the van for other program needs.
- Diapering and hand washing guidelines are posted in the rooms.
- A fire escape and emergency evacuation plan is posted in each room. Children and youth who are running a fever or who have symptoms of a contagious illness may be asked to leave or be isolated from the group in a safe way. Guidelines vary for each program.
- Permission forms for medications to be taken during off campus activities must be completed by a parent. Medications are to be under the control of and administered by an adult in charge. The group will be accessible to parents by way of phone.
- The supervisor of each program should be aware of emergency first aid procedures and have contact numbers for emergency medical treatment.

**Reporting Accidents and Incidents:**

The Director of Christian Education will serve as the safety coordinator for all programs and will work with the Directors of each DCPC program to ensure that proper paperwork is kept up to date. The paperwork includes but is not limited to the signed statement and verification that the paid staff and volunteers have read the policy and background checks on paid staff.

All accusations of abuse or neglect or molestation by paid or volunteer staff of DCPC will be taken seriously and must be reported to the Director in charge of the DCPC program. The Director of the DCPC program must make an immediate report to the Director of Christian Education of DCPC. All leaders of DCPC programs will cooperate fully with law enforcement officials. Any staff, volunteer or paid, that is subject of an investigation will be immediately removed from their position, with or without pay, in the discretion of the DCPC Session pending completion of the investigation. Any volunteer or paid staff who is the subject of a law enforcement or social services investigation or internal DCPC investigation will not be allowed to volunteer or work with DCPC children or youth pending the completion of the investigation. After the completion of any such investigation, continued employment or volunteer efforts by the individual(s) shall be at the discretion of the Session or its duly appointed agent.

Any person who is found convicted, found guilty or who pleads guilty to a charge of abuse or neglect or molestation or other crimes involving harm to a child or youth will be removed from work with DCPC children or youth. Continued employment by DCPC in this situation(s) shall be at the discretion of the DCPC Session or its duly appointed agent or representative.

A single spokesperson will be appointed for DCPC and that spokesperson will be the only one to convey information to the media or the congregation or the community.

Accident report forms will be kept in each room for ages five years and under as well as with the first aid kit in the workroom and the youth house and van. All accidents must be reported and a copy of the report given to the person(s) injured and one copy given to the Director of Christian Education to be kept in the accident file.

Conclusion:

This Protection Policy is not an agreement or contract nor is this Protection Policy a guarantee of any practices by DCPC. This Protection Policy does not create duties or obligations to any person or organization and is intended to govern internal operation of DCPC.