

**PRESBYTERY OF LONG ISLAND  
CHILD / YOUTH / VULNERABLE ADULT  
PROTECTION POLICY AND ITS PROCEDURES**

**POLICY APPLICATION STATEMENT**

It is the policy of the Presbytery of Long Island (“Presbytery”) that all church members, church officers, nonmember employees and/or contractors, and volunteers of congregations, councils, and entities of the church are to maintain the strongest sense of integrity, safety, nurturing, and care involving all interactions with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. This Policy applies to all Presbytery sponsored activities that involve children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

**DISTRIBUTION**

Copies of this Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and its Procedures (“Policy”) shall be made available via the Presbytery website

**PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW WHEN ENTITIES ARE PROVIDING CARE FOR MINORS**

When the Presbytery provides care and supervision for Minors at one of its meetings, events or conferences, the following procedures shall be utilized.

**DEFINITIONS**

The following is a list of definitions of terms and their intended use in this particular Policy. For the purpose of this Policy:

**Child:** A child is defined as a person between the ages of 0–11.

**Youth:** A youth is be defined as a person between the ages of 12–17.

**Minor:** A minor is defined as any Child or Youth 0–17 years-old.

**Child/Youth Worker:** Any person, volunteer, paid staff or contractor who participates at any level at Presbytery Entity sponsored events or activities involving Children and/or Youth. This includes chaperones who accompany Minors to and during meetings, events, and activities covered by this Policy.

**Vulnerable Adult:** A vulnerable adult is a person who has the developmental, functional, mental, or physical inability to care for themselves, who does not have the capacity to consent, or is subject to a guardianship, conservatorship, or developmental disability.

**Vulnerable Adult Abuse:** Any act or failure to act that results in physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse, sexual, psychological, or emotional mistreatment or exploitation of a Vulnerable Adult.

**Child/Youth Abuse:** Any act or failure to act that results in physical abuse, neglect, and or sexual molestation or abuse, sexual, psychological, or emotional mistreatment, or exploitation of a Child or Youth.

**Sexual Abuse:** In the Book of Order, sexual abuse is defined as “Sexual abuse is any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone without the capacity to consent, or any person when the

conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of ordered ministry or position.” (Book of Order, D-7.0901).

**Misuse of Technology:** The use of technology that results in Vulnerable Adult Abuse, Child/Youth Abuse, or in the harassing or abusing of a Child/Youth.

### **Sexual Misconduct**

Sexual Misconduct is the comprehensive term used in this Policy to include:

*Child sexual abuse;* including, but is not limited to, any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult person or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced whether or not consented to by the child. In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the sexual abuse definition of a child is anyone under age eighteen.

*Sexual abuse as defined in the Book of Order:* “Sexual abuse is any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone without the capacity to consent, or any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of ordered ministry or position.” (Book of Order, D-7.0901).

*Sexual harassment* is defined by New York State as

Sexual harassment is a form of gender-based discrimination. It involves unwelcome sexual conduct that: • Is used as the basis for hiring or other employment decisions, such as promotions, raises or job assignments; • Creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. • The harasser can be a supervisor, a co-worker or someone who is not an employee, such as a client or customer. Harassment is illegal when it is so frequent or severe that it creates a hostile or offensive work environment or when it results in an adverse employment decision.

Sexual harassment may be verbal, visual and/or physical, including: • Sexually offensive remarks or jokes; • Unwanted touching or groping; • Coerced sex acts; • Requests for sexual favors of a sexually suggestive nature (e.g., asking employee to dig coins out of a supervisor’s pants pocket); • Displaying pornographic images; • Comments (either complimentary or derogatory) about a person’s gender or sexual preferences; • Sexual gestures (e.g., pantomiming sex acts).

*Rape* or sexual contact by force, threat, or intimidation.

*Sexual conduct* is offensive, obsessive or suggestive language or behavior, unacceptable visual contact, unwelcome touching or fondling that is injurious to the physical or emotional health of another.

*Sexual Malfeasance* is defined by the broken trust resulting from sexual activities within a professional ministerial relationship that results in misuse of office or position arising from the professional ministerial relationship.

*Misuse of technology:* use of technology that results in sexually harassing or abusing another person, including texting or emailing suggestive messages and images to persons with whom one has a ministerial or employment relationship. It is never appropriate to view pornography on church property or using church devices or property. When this includes a person under the age of eighteen, it is considered child abuse. There is never an expectation of personal privacy when using technological equipment owned by a church or church entity or within the context of ministry.

## **SCREENING, TRAINING, AND BACKGROUND CHECKS**

A Child/Youth Worker, whether on a paid staff, contractor, or volunteer basis, shall be subject to:

1. The receipt of a completed, signed, and approved application and background check authorization forms, including a signed form verifying the event policy has been read. The application should include a minimum of two references.

2. All Child/Youth Workers should be at least 18 years of age. We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for child care providers (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under the age of 18 to assist in caring for children during events or activities. In this case, the person must be at least 13 years old, must be under the supervision of an adult, and must never be left alone with children.
3. The applicant's consent to a comprehensive background check, including a criminal background check. The Presbytery should cover the costs of the background checks for all Child/Youth Workers. These checks shall be run no more than one year prior to the event and the results reported to the Stated Clerk, who shall make determinations regarding the results.
4. All Child/Youth Workers, paid, contracted, or volunteer, must participate in training sometime within the three years prior to the event. The training is to be provided by the Presbytery, which may contract with others to provide these trainings. All members of the Presbytery must comply with the Book of Order requirements regarding training.
5. No person may act as or be engaged as a Child/Youth Worker if that person has been found guilty of an offense, in local, state or federal court or in an ecclesiastical proceeding, that includes actions that fall under definitions or prohibitions set forth in this Policy.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS**

The Entity shall maintain all Child/Youth Worker applications, results of background checks, and related information in confidential, secured files.

### **REPORTING**

Anyone suspecting or having knowledge of a violation of child abuse may report such violation to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery, who will report child abuse promptly to local law enforcement and appropriate state authorities.

The Stated Clerk shall have the following responsibilities in response to allegations of Child/Youth or Vulnerable Adult Abuse or neglect incurred against any Child/Youth Worker or event participant:

1. Immediately provide for the safety of the alleged victim(s) involved.
2. If the report alleges abuse or harassment of a Minor, the response team will:
  - a. immediately ensure the allegation is reported to the civil authorities under state law;
  - b. immediately notify the parents or guardian of the Minor;
  - c. notify the insurance company of the allegation and that no investigation has yet occurred.
3. Make immediate decisions concerning the temporary removal of the individual accused from any contact with Minors pending an investigation and/or removal of the accused from the event until a resolution of the allegations has occurred.
4. Notify the Moderators immediately of the report of alleged abuse/neglect. Any possible media requests will be handled by the Stated Clerk, taking care to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.
5. If the report is against a teaching elder, the Stated Clerk shall form an investigating committee under Church Discipline of the Book of Order: The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Part II.
6. If the report is against a ruling elder, the Stated Clerk will notify the clerk of session of membership that an allegation of offense has been received against an elder that triggers the formation of an investigating committee

under Church Discipline of the Book of Order: The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part II.

7. If the report is against an employee of the Presbytery, the Stated Clerk will notify the Personnel Committee of the Presbytery. The Stated Clerk will request a follow-up report from the Personnel Committee of the outcome of any subsequent investigation or discipline.
8. If the report is against a volunteer, or nonmember of the PCUSA, the Stated Clerk will request that the Presbytery appoint an investigating committee of three persons to initiate an investigation of the allegations in order to:
  - a. gather any statements of abuse from those making the report and any party to the abuse;
  - b. gather any information from the person who was accused of abuse;
  - c. make written determinations and take actions appropriate to resolve the matter including, but not limited to, making recommendations for prevention as well as response.
9. Provide for pastoral counseling for the principal parties involved (accuser(s), possible victim(s), accused, family members).
10. A written summary of any proceedings in such cases will be maintained by the Presbytery.
11. Any person bringing a report of abuse or assisting in investigating will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment, church membership or affiliation, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged.

#### **EVENT RULES FOR WORKING WITH MINORS AND VULNERABLE ADULTS**

Presbytery shall ensure that the following measures be in place and actions taken for each event or activity involving Minors and Vulnerable Adults:

1. Child/Youth Workers shall:
  - a. respond to Minors and Vulnerable Adults with respect and consideration and treat all of them equally, regardless of race/ethnicity, color, national origin, gender, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, creed, protected disability status, citizenship status, genetic information, uniformed service or veteran status or religious affiliation; and
  - b. act as a positive role model for Minors and Vulnerable Adults by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, and maturity.
  - c. maintain appropriate boundaries with Minors or Vulnerable Adults.
  - d. Not give money or gifts to Minors, except within the context of a group gift given to all participants in the celebration of special events or recognitions.
2. Two-adult rule: Two non-related adults must always be present in groups of Minors or Vulnerable Adults. The only exception is if an emergency situation deems this not immediately possible for both in person and online gatherings. All Child and Youth Workers and volunteers must be a minimum of four years older than the age group they lead or supervise.
3. Ratios: The adult to Child ratio for all Child-related events/activities is 2:10 for both in person and online gatherings. The adult to Youth ratio for all Youth-related events/activities is 2:17 for both in person and online gatherings. Where appropriate and possible, there should be one adult of each gender when there is one or more Minors of each gender in a group.

4. View Windows and Open Doors: When Minors and adult workers or volunteers are in a room, if the door is closed, the door must have a view window installed. If no view window is installed in the door, the door must remain open at all times.
5. Adult workers/caregivers should respect the privacy of the Minors and Vulnerable Adults to whom they provide care. Responsible use of digital devices and cell phones is required in all situations (ex. Taking age-appropriate photographs and movies, not taking photographs of Minors who are not fully clothed). Adults and Minors are required at all times to wear appropriate attire. Child/Youth Workers are not permitted to take photographs of Minors or Vulnerable Adults under their care or at the meeting or event and share them in any way, including on the internet, without the written permission of a parent or guardian of the Minor or Vulnerable Adult.
6. Transportation: All adult drivers at Child/Youth events must have proper licensure and insurance on file with the organizing Entity. All vehicles used must have seat belts for the driver and each passenger. No Minor under eighty-five pounds may sit in the front seat of any vehicle. All drivers transporting Minors and Vulnerable Adults must be over the age of twenty-five and must be informed that if their vehicle is used, their insurance would be primary if an accident occurs. If a charter bus is rented, or any outside carrier is contracted, the company hired must ensure criminal background checks on their drivers. Each vehicle must follow the ratio rules noted in point 2 in this section. Lastly, no minor may be a driver at any event or activity (this includes golf carts at events).
7. Forms: The legal guardians of each Minor must provide the appropriate information and medical forms for each activity/event. The information form should include all contacts for legal guardians and the medical form must include the Minor's health insurance information. Any photos at the event that are used in social media or published material by the Presbytery must be released by a signed consent form from a participant's legal guardian as well as the Minor. All such forms must be stored at the event site, in a secure place with restricted access.
8. Adults should occupy sleeping areas separate from Minors. The exception to this rule is for the occasional legal caregiver/child situation or parent/child situation.
9. All volunteers and employees at any Presbytery sponsored meetings and events who are responsible to supervise Minors and Vulnerable Adults must also abide by a code of conduct that emphasizes the following prohibited behaviors. Some of these prohibited behaviors include but are not restricted to:
  - a. Display of sexual affection toward a Minor.
  - b. Use of profanity or off-color jokes.
  - c. Discussion of sexual encounters with or around Minors or Vulnerable Adults or in any way involving Minors in personal problems or issues.
  - d. Dating or becoming "romantically" involved with Minors or Vulnerable Adults.
  - e. Using or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of Minors and Vulnerable Adults.
  - f. Possessing sexually oriented materials—including printed or online pornography—on church property or property being utilized for a church event.
  - g. Having secrets with Minors or Vulnerable Adults.
  - h. Staring at or commenting on the bodies of Minors or Vulnerable Adults.
  - i. Engaging in inappropriate or unapproved electronic communication with Minors or Vulnerable Adults.
  - j. Working one-on-one with Minors or Vulnerable Adults in a private setting.
  - k. Abusing Minors or Vulnerable Adults in anyway, including (but not limited to) the following:
    - Physical abuse: hit, spank, shake, slap, unnecessarily restraint.
    - Verbal abuse: degrade, threaten, or curse.

- Sexual abuse: inappropriately touch, expose oneself, or engage in sexually oriented conversations.
  - Mental abuse: shame, humiliate, act cruelly.
  - Neglect: withhold food, water, shelter.
  - Permit Minors or Vulnerable Adults to engage in the following: hazing, bullying, derogatory name-calling, ridicule, humiliation, or sexual activity
10. It is expected that any church in which events or meetings are held carries its own liability insurance, including insurance against sexual misconduct, and abides by the provisions thereof.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA—ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS**

### **General Social Media Policy**

No one shall create or use a media site (Web, Facebook, YouTube, or similar) in the name of or purporting to represent the Presbytery without the explicit written permission of the Presbytery. Anyone who leads or coordinates a group activity using social media may use only official Presbytery sites/channels when they have been made available by the Presbytery. These may include Web pages, Facebook, e-mail, and similar means. No one should post or share photographs or other descriptions on their personal social media sites without advance written authorization.

### **Social Media Communications**

Persons having Facebook or other social media privileges on behalf of the Presbytery shall treat unsolicited communication or “friending” from Minors and Vulnerable Adults as an unauthorized text message. No reply may be given except to indicate by a posting that accepting a “friend” invitation by Minors and Vulnerable Adults is a violation of the code of conduct.

If a Minors and Vulnerable Adults reveal abuse or inappropriate interactions with an adult, the person must report this information in the manner of any “suspected abuse.”

### **Social Networking Code of Conduct**

Each person who leads using the resources of social media shall apply this Social Networking Code of Conduct:

- Prohibit comments that are, or could be construed by any observer, to be harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.
- Prohibit sexually oriented conversations or discussions about sexual activities.
- Prohibit private messages between employees and volunteers and Minors and Vulnerable Adults.
- Prohibit posting inappropriate pictures (for example, sexually suggestive, exploitive, or voyeuristic) or inappropriate comments on pictures.
- Provide Minors and Vulnerable Adults, and their parents and guardians with this Social Networking Code of Conduct.
- Encourage parents and guardians to play a role in monitoring their Minor’s and Vulnerable Adult’s interactions with employees and volunteers.
- Continuously remind Minors and Vulnerable Adults how to interact appropriately through social networking sites.
- Deny participation by individuals who repeatedly violate the code of conduct.
- At the institution of the use of social media, the authorized minister shall present this Social Networking Code of Conduct to Minors and Vulnerable Adults and parents/guardians.

### **Misuse of Technology**

No member, employee, volunteer, or contractor of the Presbytery shall misuse technology in the following ways:

- Using technology to send suggestive messages and/or images to a Minor.

- Having contacts by Misuse of Technology to contact a Minor or Vulnerable Adult that is not preapproved by the Minor's or Vulnerable Adult's legal guardian with a signed waiver, unless the contact is on an open public medium.
- To view pornography or sites (ex. dating websites) which include pornography or naked bodies on the premises of a General Assembly Entity event, activity or meeting, no matter where it is held or by which Entity it is organized.

### **Virtual Meeting Code of Conduct**

Child/Youth workers, ministers, employees, contractors or volunteers ("Adults") of the General Assembly or its Entities must follow any virtual meeting policies or protocols of the General Assembly and these protocols when planning and conducting a virtual meeting on virtual meeting platforms (ex. Zoom, Skype) with one or more Minors:

- Adults should notify the parent or guardian who has legal custody of a minor before inviting the Minor to participate in a virtual meeting.
- No Adult is permitted to meet one-on-one or one Adult with a group of Minors either in a virtual meeting space or a breakout room. There must be at least two (2) Adults in any virtual meetings or breakout room or other virtual meeting space.
- All Adults, Minors, and other participants in virtual meetings shall dress appropriately for the meeting. No meeting participants shall wear inappropriate (that is, sexually suggestive, exploitive or voyeuristic - "Inappropriate") clothing or clothing that displays Inappropriate or offensive (that is, sexually demeaning or suggestive, pornographic, voyeuristic, discriminatory, harassing, bullying, intimidating, threatening, profane or abusive - "Offensive") messages.
- No Adults, Minors, and other participants in virtual meetings are permitted to make displays of Inappropriate or Offensive messages by putting a sign or note in front of the camera in some form or fashion.
- Adults, Minors, and other participants in virtual meetings should be considerate and not carry the phone or device they are using to participate in the meeting into private areas of their meeting space, such as bathrooms, with any camera or microphone on and the meeting is in progress.
- No Adults or Minors are permitted to use the chat function, the name section, or any other feature of a virtual platform for Inappropriate or Offensive purposes during a virtual meeting, including, but not limited to:
  - Displaying inappropriate photographs or images, such as pornography or photographs of anyone who is naked or inappropriately attired.
  - Displaying Offensive or Inappropriate messages.
  - Providing links to Offensive and Inappropriate websites or platforms.
  - Bullying, discriminating against or harassing anyone based upon their race/ethnicity, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, creed, protected disability status, citizenship status, genetic information or religious affiliation.
- No Adult is permitted to use the private chat function of a virtual meeting platform to communicate privately with one or more Minors except when the privacy or dignity of the Minor requires it.
- No Adult is permitted to use other means of communication (such as texting or email) to communicate privately with one or more Minors before, during or after a virtual meeting. No Minor is permitted to use other means of communication (such as texting or email) to communicate privately with one or more Adults before, during or after a virtual meeting. (Exception: to receive reports of concerns or issues or to make reports of inappropriate conduct or sexual misconduct or abuse).
- Adults and meeting organizers are responsible to make mandatory reports of sexual misconduct or abuse as required by the Book of Order (G-4.0302) and under local, state, and federal law.

**SIGNING OF POLICY AND APPLICATION TO SERVE**

Each adult engaged in the leadership of a Presbytery event shall acknowledge receipt of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and Its Procedures. In addition, each person engaged in the leadership of a Presbytery event shall consent to all comprehensive background checks required and shall comply with any consequences of a reported violation of this Policy.

Approved by the Shepherding Council on November 4, 2024

Approved by the Presbytery on February 4, 2025, as amended