

Cascades Presbytery Safe Practices Policy

Adopted 3/6/2015

I. Statement of Purpose and Policy

The Presbytery of the Cascades believes it is called by God to provide and maintain a safe, nurturing environment for all children, youth under the age of 18, and vulnerable adults while in its care during any presbytery sponsored or cosponsored event.

Rooted through biblical charges...

- Genesis 1:28, God's call to care for all creation
- Mark 12:30-31, Love God, love one another
- Matthew 18:5, Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me
- Matthew 25:31-46, What one does to the least of these...

Rooted through Book of Order...

- W-2.3013: The congregation as a whole, on behalf of the Church universal, assumes responsibility for nurturing the baptized person in the Christian life,
- F-1.0302 ...participating in God's mission to care for the needs of the sick, poor, and lonely

We provide this policy to be followed by all participants in Presbytery events. We also urge congregations within the presbytery to consider tailoring this policy to meet their particular needs to insure all events in their sphere are safe and nurturing environments.

As a way to seek to avoid abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults, and peer to peer misconduct, all persons working directly with children, youth and vulnerable adults, whether paid or volunteer, at any Cascades Presbytery sponsored or co-sponsored events are subject to the provisions of this policy. Therefore, all such persons are expected to participate in pre-event training and orientation including but not limited to training to increase their sensitivity to the prevention of any form of abuse to and protection of children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

II. Definitions:

1. **"Child,"** as used herein, means any person under 18 years of age.
2. **"Child Abuse"** includes the following harmful conduct by an adult towards a child: (a) causing physical injury to a child, other than accidentally; (b) causing mental injury to a child through cruelty when it results in substantial psychological impairment; (c) any kind of "sexual contact" with a child, as explained below; and (d) soliciting or encouraging a child to engage in sexual conduct for the purpose of recording (by video or any other means) or exhibiting such sexual conduct by a child.
3. **"Sexual Contact"** means touching the sexual or other intimate parts of a child or causing a child to touch the sexual or other intimate parts of the person for the purpose of arousing or gratifying the sexual desire of the person or the child. Such sexual contact with a child is a criminal offense under State laws. A child – that is, anyone under 18 years of age – is considered legally incapable of consenting to any sexual contact.
4. **"Peer-to-Peer Misconduct,"** as used herein, means harmful conduct by one child towards another child. Peer-to-peer misconduct includes (a), (b) and (d) under "child abuse" and any "sexual contact." Sexual contact between a child and another child is misconduct of both except where one child uses force, coercion, threats, or violence, or where one is significantly older than the other child.
5. **"Vulnerable Adult,"** any person who cannot speak or act with reasonable safety on one's own behalf.
6. **"Abuse"** as used in this document are defined as follows:
 - a. **Physical Abuse**, including any unwarranted touch, any physical contact intended to coerce or do harm, any hitting or touching in anger.
 - b. **Emotional/Verbal Abuse**, including insults, name calling, belittling remarks, unfavorable comparisons with other children or youth, shaming, deliberately causing fear, or using speech to hurt.
 - c. **Spiritual Abuse**, including using Scripture or church authority to coerce, control or shame; using threats about condemnation from God or making threats about God withholding love to control behavior.
 - d. **Sexual Abuse**, which is defined as any sexual contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults in a leader's charge, including:
 - (a) . fondling private parts
 - (b) . oral, genital, or anal penetration

- (c) . sexual intercourse
- (d) . forcible rape
- (e) . suggestive sexual comments
- (f) . showing pornography (sexually explicit materials)
- (g) . exposing sex organs
- (h) . allowing children to witness sexual activity

III. Volunteer Selection Screening

The Presbytery of the Cascades recognizes its responsibility and legal liability for accepting volunteers who are safe to work with children and youth. The Presbytery of the Cascades has established requirements and prerequisites for all volunteers working with children and youth. The following screening process shall be followed for all volunteers:

1. Volunteer Application – All persons volunteering in either a children’s or youth ministry event or program must complete an application form.
2. Reference Check – Applicants must provide three references who know how the applicant interacts with children or youth. References may be checked by a designated staff person.
3. Criminal Background Check renewed every three years – This background check can be performed by the church within the presbytery that the volunteer is representing. If the church is unable to conduct a background check the presbytery will conduct the background check for them for Presbytery events only.
4. Sign an acceptance form of the Safe Practices Policy and agree to abide by its terms.
5. Complete the Safe Practices Policy Training Program.

IV. Training and Prevention

Prevention methods and precautions that must be followed in order to eliminate or minimize the opportunities for child abuse or peer-to-peer misconduct during Cascades Presbytery events: The following are MINIMUM standards that each event may adopt for stringent requirements if necessary.

1. All adult staff shall complete online “Safe Conduct” training, to be renewed every three years.
2. Two Adult Rule – Activities shall be conducted within sight/supervision of two or more adult staff persons, at least one of which is five years older than the youth being supervised.
3. Adult staff will respect the privacy of children and youth when changing clothes and showering to the extent safety allows. Supervise private activities in pairs, like showers or changing time.
4. Personal counseling – All staff members will avoid a one-on-one situation “behind closed doors.” If private counseling must be done it should be done separately from the group, but in plain sight. Always be in view of others.
5. Security – All visitors (including parents and supervisors) are required to check in and out with an Event Coordinator.
6. Children and Youth who are minors will only be released to their parent or legal guardian or someone who is authorized in writing to transport them.

V. A reminder as we consider the reporting and follow-up procedures listed in Sections VI, VII and Addendum A: It is important to remember that event leaders are never to take on the role of investigator when learning about an abuse incident. To try to go too deep into the search is to threaten the case if it turns out to be valid. The job of the leaders is to get the facts from the ones reporting the incident, take them down as accurately as possible, and report the incident to the appropriate authorities.

VI. Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Crimes

1. State laws require the reporting of all suspected cases of child abuse not previously reported to the appropriate authorities, whether they occurred at the event or prior to the event.
2. Presbytery procedures require the Event Coordinator to be notified of any suspected child abuse. If the suspect is the Event Coordinator, the report should be made to the Executive Presbyter who oversees the event.

3. Having reviewed the situation, the person responsible for the decision will determine whether there is suspected child abuse, in which case the required reports will be made following the procedures for reporting outlined below.
4. If the person making the initial report believes that a case of child abuse has been overlooked or ignored and has gone unreported, that person should contact the appropriate state authorities.
5. Police should always be notified of any crimes or criminal activities (such as rape or assault), whether the perpetrator is an adult or a child.
6. Detailed procedures for leaders to follow are described in Addendum A, which is made a part of this policy by incorporation by reference. Leaders are to note the particular situation they are facing and use the appropriate procedure noted in Addendum A. Also incorporated by reference and made a part of this policy is the Commitment Form in Addendum B and the Volunteer Application Form in Addendum C.

VII. Response Plan

A sacred trust exists between the Cascades Presbytery and all who are served by its ministry. Abuse of any kind is a matter of gravest concern. Knowledge of such abuse calls for a special response so that the safety of the child/youth/vulnerable adult and the community is assured and healing can take place. This applies whether the occurrence happens at a Presbytery event or is past abuse that is previously unreported.

A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of abuse is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously.

Assure the safety of the alleged victim. Make sure he/she is in a safe place and watched over. Do not confront the accused abuser with anger or hostility but immediately remove him/her from further involvement with children, youth and vulnerable adults until the matter can be investigated. Pastoral support shall be available and offered to all persons involved with the incident. The confidentiality of all involved in an alleged incident shall be protected, both at the event and in the future. In the event that the incident has become public knowledge, the Event Coordinator will use respect and discretion in acknowledging that an incident has occurred and that all involved are safe and being cared for.

In all cases of reported or observed abuse in an activity, the entire staff of that activity shall be at the service of all official investigating agencies.

Addendum A

Procedures to be used in Reporting Abuse

I. Reporting suspected child abuse by an adult

1. Any staff member who either makes the observation of suspected child abuse or who receives information from a participant describing suspected child abuse by an adult should contact the Event Coordinator immediately. The suspected incident should not be discussed with anyone else.
2. The Event Coordinator will begin a written report on the incident.
3. The Event Coordinator (and other appropriate persons) should promptly make an initial inquiry regarding the report, which in most cases will include:
 - a. Taking a statement from the child involved. The Event Coordinator should have one other adult present, who may be the person making the initial report, if that person would put the child at ease. The Event Coordinator should be careful to listen to the child's own words and not to ask any leading questions.
 - b. Talking with the person accused of child abuse. Do not ask any leading questions.
4. Discern from the information gathered whether child abuse may have occurred. To help in the discerning process, the Executive Presbyter may be contacted. If there is **any** reasonable doubt, treat the case as suspected child abuse take the following action and document accordingly.
 - a. Isolate the accused adult immediately;
 - b. report the suspected abuse to appropriate state authorities;
 - c. document and follow all instructions of state authorities;
 - d. advise the person making the initial report that state authorities have been notified;
 - e. and notify the child's parent or guardian as instructed by state authorities.

5. Event staff should observe strict confidentiality regarding the suspected child abuse, even after it has been reported to state authorities. Therefore, care should be taken not to discuss the incident with anyone except when absolutely necessary.
6. A full report must be submitted as soon as possible to the Executive Presbyter, but in no event later than two weeks from the initial report of suspected child abuse.

II. Reporting a disclosure of suspected child abuse which happened prior to the presbytery event by a caretaker, relative, authority person, or other adult

1. Any staff members who receive information describing suspected child abuse that may have happened away from the presbytery event shall contact the Event Coordinator immediately. The suspected incident should not be discussed with anyone else.
2. The Event Coordinator will begin a written report on the incident. The Executive Presbyter may be contacted to help resolve any questions.
3. Report suspected child abuse to the appropriate state authorities.
4. Staff should observe strict confidentiality regarding the suspected child abuse, even after it has been reported to state authorities. Therefore, care should be taken not to discuss the incident with participants or other event staff, except when absolutely necessary.
5. A full report must be submitted as soon as possible to the Executive Presbyter, but in no event later than two weeks from the initial report.

III. Reporting and handling peer-to-peer misconduct at a presbytery event.

1. Any staff member who observes peer-to-peer misconduct at a presbytery event or who receives information from a participant describing such peer-to-peer misconduct should report it to the Event Coordinator immediately. The suspected incident should not be discussed with anyone else.
2. The Event Coordinator will begin a written report on the incident.
3. If the peer-to-peer misconduct does not involve sexual contact, initial inquiry should be made by the Event Coordinator to determine whether the report or claim of misconduct is serious and credible and, if so, what actions should be taken. The following procedure will usually be appropriate:
 - a. Take a statement from the offended child, being careful to listen to the child's own words and not to ask leading questions. The Event Coordinator should have one other adult present, who may be the person making the initial report, if that person would put the child at ease. The Event Coordinator should be careful to listen to the child's own words and not to ask any leading questions.
 - b. Talk separately to the child accused of the misconduct. Do not ask any leading questions.
 - c. Talk separately with any witnesses to the misconduct. Again, do not ask any leading questions.
 - d. If the report or claim does not involve misconduct that physically harmed or seriously threatened to harm anyone, you will need to decide on disciplinary action, if any, which might include counseling, notification of the parents, or expulsion from the event. Document all contacts. The Executive Presbyter may be contacted to help resolve any questions.
 - e. If the report or claim does involve misconduct that physically harmed or seriously threatened to harm another person, isolate the accused child immediately and report the incident to appropriate state authorities; document and follow all instructions of state authorities; if not otherwise instructed by state authorities, notify the parents or guardians of both the offended child and the accused child.
 - f. Staff should observe reasonable confidentiality regarding any incidents of misconduct reported to state authorities. Therefore, care should be taken not to discuss the incident except when absolutely necessary.
 - g. A full report must be submitted as soon as possible to the Executive Presbyter, but in no event later than two weeks from the initial report of suspected abuse.

IV. If the peer-to-peer misconduct does involve sexual contact, initial inquiry should be made by the Event Coordinator to determine whether the report or claim of misconduct is serious and credible and, if so, what actions should be taken. The following procedure will usually be appropriate:

- a. Talk to each child separately, being careful to listen to their own words and not to ask leading questions. The Event Coordinator should have one other adult present, who may be the person making the initial report, if that person would put the child at ease. The Event Coordinator should be careful to listen to the child's own words and not to ask any leading questions.
- b. If there are witnesses, talk separately with them. Again, do not ask any leading questions.
- c. Determine whether the sexual contact resulted from the use of force, coercion, threats, or violence, or whether one child is so much older that the younger child either felt coercion or did not understand what was happening. The Executive Presbyter may be contacted to help resolve any questions.
- d. If the sexual contact did not result from the use of force, coercion, threats, or violence, then follow the steps set forth above for handling cases of peer-to-peer misconduct that do not involve physical harm or the threat of physical harm by one child against another.
- e. If the sexual contact did result from the use of force, coercion, threats, or violence, or age disparity, follow the steps set forth above for reporting to state authorities cases of peer-to-peer misconduct that involve physical harm or the threat of physical harm by one child against another.
- f. A full report must be submitted as soon as possible to the Executive Presbyter, but in no event later than two weeks from the initial report of suspected child abuse.

**Addendum B
Commitment Form**

The Presbytery of the Cascades is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth and vulnerable adults who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the Presbytery.

As a volunteer working with children, youth or vulnerable adults in this Presbytery, I agree to observe and abide by this Safe Practices Policy, to observe the "Two Adult Rule," to participate in training events provided by the Presbytery, and to report promptly abusive or inappropriate behavior.

Signature of Applicant

Print full name

Date

Addendum C
Volunteer Application Form
Presbytery of the Cascades

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

Daytime phone _____ Evening phone _____

Occupation (if employed) _____

Employer (if applicable) _____

Current job responsibilities _____

Previous volunteer experience _____

How are you connected to a local church? _____

Do you have a valid driver's license? _____ Any restrictions? _____

Do you have vehicle liability insurance? _____ If so, are you willing to provide a copy of your coverage for the files? _____

Why would you like to volunteer as a worker with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults?

What qualities do you have that would help you work with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults?

Will you complete the Safe Conduct Online Training before you volunteer with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults?

____ Please supply an email address where the Safe Church Coordinator may contact you with the link for that training
_____.

What additional training have you received in the care and nurture of children, youth and/or vulnerable adults?

Have you ever been convicted of or pled guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony (including but not limited to drug-related charges, child abuse, other crimes of violence, theft or motor vehicle violations)? yes no

If yes, please explain fully

References: Please list three references who are familiar with how you interact with children or youth (people who are not related to you by blood or marriage) and provide a complete address and phone information for each.

1. Name _____

Address _____

Daytime phone _____ Evening phone _____

Relationship to applicant _____ Email _____

2. Name _____

Address _____

Daytime phone _____ Evening phone _____

Relationship to applicant _____ Email _____

3. Name _____

Address _____

Daytime phone _____ Evening phone _____

Relationship to applicant _____ Email _____

Waiver and consent

I, _____ hereby certify that the information I have provided on this volunteer application is true and correct. I authorize the Presbytery of the Cascades to verify the information I have provided on this application by contacting the references and employers I have listed and by conducting a criminal background check. I authorize the references and employers listed in this application to give you whatever information (including opinions) they may have regarding my character and fitness for the job for which I have applied. Furthermore, I waive any rights I may have to confidentiality to the extent that it may be harmful to myself or others.

I have read this waiver and the entire application, and I am fully aware of its contents.
I sign this consent freely and under no duress or coercion.

Date

Signature of applicant

The information below is necessary to run a background check. If you prefer to give this information over the phone, you will be called.

Social Security # _____ Birth date _____