

## **Safe Church Policy for Volunteers** (Revised April, 2017)

### **Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church**

#### **General Purpose Statement**

Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church (here after referred to as GSPC) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of GSPC from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

#### **Definitions**

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of nineteen (19) years. The term “worker” or “volunteer” includes volunteer persons (unpaid) who work with children. Program Director refers to the person(s) in charge of a specific GSPC program or activity.

#### **Selection of Volunteers**

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a) **Six Month Rule**

No volunteer will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with GSPC for a minimum of six (6) months, **or** has a character reference from an individual who has been actively involved at GSPC for more than six (6) months. This time allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

b) **Information Request Form**

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a form to be supplied by GSPC. The following will be responsible for obtaining and maintaining the forms:

- Youth Program volunteer forms will be maintained by the Youth Director.
  - GSPC SM Application (Student Ministry)
  - GSPC SM Application, Returning Leaders
  - Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church Volunteer Application Form (VBS)
- Sunday School volunteer forms will be maintained by the Sunday School Superintendent
  - Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church Volunteer Application Form
- Activity Time, Children’s Choir, and all other volunteer forms will be maintained by the CE Committee.
  - Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church Volunteer Application Form

#### **Criminal Background Check**

A national criminal background check is required for all volunteers 19 or older who work with the children in the following areas:

- Youth Group Programs
- Sunday School
- Activity Time
- Children’s Choir

- Vacation Bible School (VBS)

Before a background check is run, prospective volunteers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing GSPC to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to volunteer.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Pastor and Session on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence in a secure location at GSPC. The church secretary will be asked to maintain an updated, alphabetized, master list (names and dates only) of **all** completed background checks.

## Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

**Definitions:** For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

**Procedures:** Volunteers may become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children under GSPC supervision becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the Program Director who will report to the Pastor. The Pastor is responsible to determine if further action is necessary including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by State law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at GSPC or during our sponsored programs or activities, the Pastor will follow the appropriate procedures listed below:

1. Contact the parent or guardian.
2. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will not be allowed to work/supervise children pending an investigation.
3. Civil authorities will be notified and GSPC will comply with the State’s requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. GSPC will cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. Our insurance company will be notified and we will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. The Pastor of GSPC will be the spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse/neglect unless he/she is alleged to be involved. We will seek the advice of legal counsel prior to responding to the media inquiries or responding to the congregation. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking to the media.
6. Pastoral visits will be arranged for those who request it.
7. Any person who is found guilty of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position of working with children or youth.

## **TWO ADULT RULE**

It is our goal that a minimum of two adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during programs/activities. Some youth classes/activities (i.e. Sunday school) may have only one Adult during the session; in these instances, doors to the rooms should remain open or a room with window (to allow others to see in) will be utilized. During Sunday school the Sunday School Superintendent will make every effort to check in on each class during the scheduled class time.

## **Open Door Policy**

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door, a side window beside it, or a half door with the top remaining open. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

## **Activity Time and VBS Volunteers**

The following guidelines apply to Activity Time and VBS Volunteers:

- Must be at least age 15 (12-14 accompanied by an adult)
- Must complete the volunteer application and be screened as specified above.
- Activity time volunteers will be approved by CE committee.

## **Medications Policy**

It is the policy of GSPC not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the Program Director to develop a written and signed plan of action.

## **Discipline Policy**

It is the policy of GSPC not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Volunteers should consult with the Program Director if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

## **Accidental Injuries to Children**

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be notified in addition to the Program Director. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.

## **Training**

GSPC will insure this policy is given to all new volunteers involved with children and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

## **Acknowledgment of Policy**

Volunteers will sign a form stating they have read this policy, and forms will be kept on file. Volunteers will not be allowed to work with children until the form is signed and necessary screening, as specified above, is completed.

This policy was developed by John Bailey, Deanna Hughes, Rhonda Obermeier, and Joani Szudlo in 2015.

GSPC - Safe Church Policy for Volunteers was approved by GSPC Session on December 15, 2015

GSPC – Safe Church Policy for Volunteers was revised April 2017 by Pastor Jeff Warrick, John Bailey and Rhonda Obermeier (Revised portion in yellow highlight for file copy only.)

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## **Transportation Policy**

The following must be followed by all drivers:

- All drivers must be 21 or older, with a valid driver's license for the vehicle they are driving.
- The number of persons in the car should not exceed the number of working seatbelts in the vehicle. Seat belts will be used by all.
- All individuals transporting youth will have had a criminal background check run. The person will have no record of convictions for the past 5 years for DUI, driving with a suspended or revoked driver's license or reckless endangerment.
- The church will maintain copies of driver's license and proof of insurance of all those driving to church sanctioned events.
- Drivers will not drive more than 10 hours in a 24-hour period.
- Drivers will adhere to all traffic and child restraint laws while transporting.
- No cell phones/electronic devices will be used by the driver while operating the vehicle except for navigation purposes. i.e. – GPS
- Drivers will not be alone in a vehicle with a youth other than his/her own child. Therefore, no fewer than three persons, one of them an adult, should occupy a vehicle traveling to/from a church sanctioned event.
- Drivers must understand emergency contact procedures (have list of contacts with them) and maintain contact with the person in charge of the church sanctioned event (i.e. Youth Director, Pastor etc.).
- Drivers will not transport youth to their own homes or go to the youth's home unless it is a church sanctioned event. The three-person rule will apply to all church sanctioned events.

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Transportation Policy adopted by CE Committee April 4, 2018

GSPC SAFE CHURCH POLICY  
REVISED APRIL, 2017

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE # \_\_\_\_\_

I have received and read the GSPC Safe Church Police (revised April, 2017) for Volunteers/Employees and agree to its terms.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes

\_\_\_\_\_ No

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_