

# *Abuse Prevention Policy*

## **Statement of Purpose**

In an effort to protect all people who attend Grove Presbyterian Church and its events, all individuals who work or volunteer at Grove Presbyterian Church, and Grove Presbyterian Church itself, we deem it necessary to adopt the following Church Policy for all church sponsored activities.

The membership of Grove Presbyterian Church recognizes our role as God's servants to love and nurture God's children (Luke 18: 15-17). The House of God is a sanctuary where the children of God may seek shelter and worship in safety (Psalm 27: 4-5). As Presbyterians, we are directed by The Book of Order (the Great Ends) to provide: "Shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God" and to be an example "of the Kingdom of Heaven and the world". (G-1.0200)

## **Parent/Church Partnership**

Parents are reminded that, although steps are taken to provide a safe church environment, not all areas of the church building and grounds are childproofed. Many groups and organizations not related to Grove's Church family use the building that may result in the presence of non-church members during church activities. Therefore, parents are encouraged to watch children carefully by accompanying children to and from classrooms or meeting areas, by letting the supervising person know you are leaving/picking up a child, by monitoring trips to the restroom and by keeping children supervised. Any changes in a child's medical needs, emergency contacts, or custody are to be communicated to the church office. If we all work together and communicate with one another, the safer our children will be.

## **Definition of Child Sexual Abuse**

"Child sexual abuse is any sexual involvement with a minor child, including any form of sexual contact or exploitation in which a minor is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator...child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent (and) is an exploitation of the child's vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuse is fully responsible for the actions. (It) involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially and developmentally ready. Child sexual abuse includes behaviors that involve touching and non-touching aspects." (Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church, P.13, by Richard R. Hammer, Steven W. Klipowicz and James W. Cobble, Jr., 1993, published by Church and Law Tax Report.)

## **Selection and Screening of Paid Staff & Volunteers**

No person who has been convicted or pled guilty to child abuse or a violent crime shall ever be allowed to supervise children and/or youth. All paid staff positions involved in supervising, transporting or leading overnight activities involving youth and/or children shall submit to Grove's "Primary Screening Procedure".

## **Primary Screening Procedure**

*Related Application:*

Paid Staff – Applicant Information/Reference Form

*Reference Check:*

Criminal Records Check and Child Abuse History Clearance (PA ACT 34 & 151) will be done for all paid staff positions. This procedure may also apply to volunteer applicants. Primary screening information may be reviewed annually by the Staff Advisory Committee to determine continued suitability.

## **Supervision of Paid Staff & Volunteers**

There will be two (2) persons when possible supervising youth and children. This team of two (2) persons will not be comprised of any married couples if at all possible. In the case of children's events and the nursery, it will be either two (2) adults, or one (1) adult with one (1) teen helper. In those circumstances in which it is not possible to achieve our goal of two (2) persons present, the door(s) must remain open with the room easily observable and accessible by others. All persons supervising youth and children shall participate in training about this policy and child sexual abuse prevention at the beginning of their service. It is recommended that paid staff review this policy and training requirement annually. The Staff Advisory Committee will review the performance of all paid employees annually. The Youth Ministry Committee & Children's Ministry Committee will review the performance of all volunteers annually. Reasonable efforts will be made to ensure that all children under the age of 16 will only be allowed to leave the church or related church function with a responsible parent or with a person previously approved by a responsible parent. A "responsible parent" is the parent who has legal custody.

## **Volunteers**

Volunteers must regularly attend Grove Church a minimum of six (6) months before serving with youth and/or children. Primary volunteers are those in charge of youth and/or children and must be at least 18 years of age. Secondary volunteers are those who assist the Primary volunteers.

## **Church School**

Substitutes for Church school classes must be selected from a Session approved list when possible. Children Grade 4 and younger should be escorted to and from Church school and worship by a parent or age appropriate sibling or individual named on the Youth/Child Information form. If a child (grade 4 and under) needs to use the restroom during Church school, the child will be accompanied. If a young child needs assistance in the restroom from an adult, the door will always be left open.

## **Children and/or Youth Events**

Must be supervised by a minimum of 2 adults when possible. All youth/children must have a signed Consent Form to attend any event held off the church premises. Volunteer drivers must comply with Grove's Transportation Policy. All vehicles and drivers must comply with Pennsylvania State Laws.

## **Nursery**

There will be two (2) persons supervising the nursery. This team of two (2) persons will not be comprised of married couples or family members. All children must be escorted to and from the nursery. Children should be signed in and out by the responsible parent or those designated by them.

Only responsible parents, or those designated by the responsible parent, may remove the child from the nursery.

## **Church School Enrollment/Permission Forms**

All parents must fill out Church School Enrollment/Permission forms, which will be kept on file in the Church office. These forms will be available to any person supervising any event the youth/children attend. All youth/children will submit signed permission forms for all activities leaving the church premises. Leaders leaving the church premises with youth/children will take the Permission forms on trips off the church property. The information provided on the Church School Enrollment/Permission form will be shared on a need to know basis only. The Church School Visitor Form tracks children visiting Grove Church School.

## **Reporting/Response Procedures of Child Abuse**

All persons who reasonably suspect or have proof of child abuse shall report to the Pastor or other designated individuals immediately and/or as soon as you are able, with the following exceptions: The Pastor is suspected of abuse. If the Pastor is suspected of child abuse, the person will report to the Clerk of Session.

Designated Individuals shall include: The Pastor, Director of Children's Ministry, Director of Youth Ministry, and Clerk of Session. After the person who witnesses the abuse has alerted the Pastor/Mandated Reporter (or if the Pastor is accused, the Clerk of Session) he/she will contact the Child Line Abuse Registry at 1-800-932-0313. The Pastor/Mandated Reporter will be there to support the witness.\* The Pastor and Clerk of Session will maintain records of such investigation. All calls from the media will be referred to Church's designated legal counsel.

Clergy are specifically named as required reporters in the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Act.

[\* Complete Report of Suspected Child Abuse (Form CY 47) prior to making the phone call.]

**Child Line Abuse Registry**  
**1-800-932-0313**

## **EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

1. Treat any fire alarm as a real fire
2. Take attendance book
3. Exit according to your room's fire exit plan
4. One teacher should take lead and the other the end of the line
5. Turn off lights, close windows, shut classroom door
6. Stay to side of hallway so two classes can exit at once
7. All classes except 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> meet on pathway at west side of Kirk House
8. 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> meet at end of step path on grove side of church
9. Members in the Great Room class go to Toddler room to help Sandy with infants and to preschool to help with preschoolers.
10. Count children and check with attendance
11. DCM/DYM/Pastor will check building
12. Person discovering fire calls 911
13. Wait for instructions from DCM/DYM/Pastor

## **LOCK DOWN PROCEDURE**

Since not all rooms have a phone, each classroom should have a cell phone accessible at all times. Teachers need to register their cell phone number with the Director of Children's Ministry so that the church office has this list. Teachers need to program the church phone number, 275-0692 or 275-1965, and the Director of Children's Ministry cell, 850-2844, into their cell phones. There are 3 levels of lock down which can be called over the PA system.

Grove Yellow:

Use extra caution in supervising children.

NO children should be in the hallways or bathrooms unaccompanied by proper adult supervision.

Grove Red:

All adults and children are to stay within their classroom

Shut classroom door

Cover the door window and if possible gather children out of any window view

Maintain silence

Wait for Grove Green Page meaning that everything is safe again

Grove Green:

Everything is at normal safety level again.

A Grove Yellow or Orange can be called by anyone recognizing a need. A Grove Green needs to be called by Pastor, Director of Christian Education, or Director of Youth Ministry after the church campus has been found to be secure. Training on the use of the paging system to be given yearly at Church School Staff orientation.

*These codes are not to be confused with a page requesting evacuation of the building covered under evacuation procedures.*

(Discussed and approved at Session Meeting November 5, 2007)

## **SAFE CHURCH PROCEDURES**

- Every classroom/group meeting must have 2 teachers in it. We strive to have 4 teachers on every team making this ratio possible. A substitute list is also available to help reach the ratio. Parents can also be asked to help out. If the 2 person rule can not be met, the classroom door must be left open.
- Children in grade 4 or younger must be supervised during trips to the water fountain and bathrooms. If a child needs assistance in the restroom, the door must be left open.
- Children in Pre-Kindergarten through fourth grade classes should be picked up by a parent, one of the choir directors, or by an individual named on the Youth/Child Information Sheet.
- At least one teacher from each age level's morning team must attend the Opening Worship with the children to coach worship and to escort the children safely down to classroom.
- Children's choirs exit sanctuary to choir room at close of worship to ungown. Parents pick children up at the choir room.
- For childcare during church school hour and worship, Sandy Lewis and one other person must always be present. If the number of children warrants it, other adults need to be drafted. Someone needs to check with Sandy before service begins because once children are dropped off she cannot leave to ask for help. Child care children are signed in and out by the guardian.
- Fire drills will be conducted 2 times a year (Oct/Mar). Fire exits for each room are posted. See evacuation procedure.
- Updated records must be maintained. That is why it is important that new children complete either the Youth/Child Information form (as an enrollment form) or a visitor form.
- Teachers must be familiar with individual child needs and concerns. For this reason your classlist includes special concerns. Take time to get familiar with them but maintain CONFIDENTIALITY.
- As volunteer teachers, and advisors we are asked to complete a volunteer information/reference form. Paid staff complete clearance forms as well.
- Become familiar with the reporting procedure.
- The primary volunteer in charge of a class/group must be at least 18 years of age. There is no age restriction on secondary volunteers.

## **SNACK POLICY**

Snacks are not seen as a regular requirement of the church school hour. Teachers may use snacks as a teaching method when a food or eating activity helps to illustrate the message being taught. Healthy snacks should always be the preferred choice. In the child care room, snacks are offered at the half hour and allowed out for 10 minutes and then put away. Children are encouraged to sit while eating the snack. It is requested that no gum or snacks be present in the choir rooms as it is dangerous to eat and sing as well as messy. Teachers must always check the children's information sheet for food allergies.

## **NO PEANUT FACILITY**

Grove is a no peanut and no peanut product facility. Such items are NOT to be used for snacks or crafts inside or outside the building. Please also check snack items for "contains peanuts" or "made on a peanut line."

## **SAFE CAMPUS GUIDELINES**

- Photographs of children will not be made public without their parent or guardian's permission
- Recordings where video or audio along with still photographs are not permitted by the media unless given direct permission by the pastor.
- The membership directory will not be distributed to any organization or business for purposes of soliciting church members.
- In the event of a high risk person attending church activities, the following steps will be taken and recorded in writing:
  1. The pastor will learn as much as possible about the individual's circumstances, both directly with the person and by referral information.
  2. The pastor in consultation with Staff Advisory Committee will meet with the individual and establish conditional permission to attend certain activities; this may require an escort appointed by the pastor as well as informing Session, Staff, and Deacons of a high risk situation.
  3. If these conditions (agreed to in writing) are violated, the pastor may inform the person by mail that they are no longer welcome to attend. They can be cited for trespass if they return.