

**Johns Creek Presbyterian Church, USA**  
**Child & Youth Protection Policy**  
**Approved June 18, 2012**

**I. PURPOSE**

When people brought little children to Jesus, he took them in his arms and blessed them (Mark 10:16). Because Johns Creek Presbyterian Church, USA recognizes that we are a reflection of God's love to those in our care, we take seriously our responsibility to them. We view ourselves as partners with parents, seeking to provide quality care and instruction in our ministry with children of all ages. The following guidelines are set forth to provide a safe and nurturing environment in which we can bring our children to the Savior. Everyone who teaches, helps or cares for children under the sponsorship of Johns Creek Presbyterian Church, USA must understand and follow these policies and procedures. Be aware that the document that follows represents minimum requirements. Individual programs may impose additional guidelines as appropriate to their ministry setting.

**II. SCREENING OF EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS**

**A. Screening Procedures for Childcare**

We employ an agency and the employees are screened and must have the following agency specified qualifications:

- Caregivers are 19 or over
- Caregivers have paid professional experience in childcare.
- References are thoroughly checked via phone or email.
- Caregivers are required to pass our in-depth qualification process including: filling out an application, have an extensive interview, have all references checked, take a childcare assessment test, and criminal background check.
- All attend an orientation where philosophies and policies such as professionalism, safety, and promptness are discussed.
- Caregivers must have a valid driver's license and current car insurance.
- The agency conducts a criminal background check in each state that the caregiver has lived in.
- The agency runs a motor vehicle report in the state where their current driver's license is held.
- The agency runs a social security trace to get independent verification of information such as social security number, residence history and past employment.
- All Caregivers are bonded through the agency.
- The agency requires all Caregivers to become certified in infant and child CPR.
- The employees will receive a copy of the JCPC Child and Youth Protection Policy and will sign that they understand and follow this policy.  
(JCPC may also require the Caregivers to go through our background check confirmation as well.)

**B. Screening Procedures for Children's Programs**

- Communication with Ministry Team Leader or Staff
- Lead volunteers for programs must be a regular attendee for 6 months.
- Online Application and Background Check to be renewed every 2 years.
- Annual Training (online or in person) will include:
  1. Child Protection Policy overview and sign form acknowledging having read it.
  2. Two Adult Policy
  3. Open Door Policy
  4. Ratios
  5. Training focusing on teacher preparation

### **C. Screening Procedures for Youth Programs**

- All Youth Advisors, Teachers and Volunteers must have completed the required JCPC Background Check and the results been approved by designated JCPC Personnel.
- The Director of Youth should interview each individual to understand their prior work with Youth and desire for supporting the program.
- All parent drivers for Youth functions must have a current valid Driver's license and routine driving record check should be obtained for all drivers on a periodic basis.
- All Adults must complete the JCPC Event Permission Form prior to any off site, overnight event and provide a signature statement that they have read, understand and comply with the JCPC Child and Youth Protection Policy.
- All Adults will complete an Annual Youth Advisor/Teacher Training, online or in person, to be administered by the Director of Youth or designee.

### **D. Screening Procedures for the Academy of Fine Arts Instructors**

- Academy of Fine Arts Instructors sign the Employment Agreement
- Instructors undergo a check of Professional and Personal References
- Instructors undergo a JCPC Background Check

## **III. SUPERVISION**

### **A. Two Adult Policy**

The goal is to have at least two adults supervising all church sponsored programs and activities involving children and youth. Adults should remain in sight of one another at all times. Adults in leadership roles are expected to avoid situations where they are alone with children and youth by having leadership teams of at least two adults for all activities. The presence of two or more adults prevents awkward circumstances where child abuse could occur or be alleged, allows shared leadership, and facilitates appropriate discipline. This two-adult policy extends to all overnight and off campus-related events. Under no circumstances can one adult alone take or accompany children or youth on an off-campus outing.

Adults are to avoid being in a one-child, one-adult situation. This rule can be eased if other adults are close by and can visually observe activities at all times. If it is necessary for a youth to get home after an event, the adult should have obtained written permission or have a verbal confirmation from a parent/guardian to inform them of the situation before transporting the youth.

When one-on-one interactions between a child or a youth and employee/volunteer are necessary, care must be taken to conduct the meeting in an environment that provides visibility by others. In situations where it is necessary for an adult to be alone with a child, the adult should notify another adult before and after the period during which he/she is alone with the child.

One caregiver employee, if they are from a qualified agency, can supervise children. If the caregivers are volunteers, then two people are needed to supervise children.

A confirmation mentor and confirmation student can only have a one on one meeting when they are in an environment that provides visibility by other adults. The parent must have knowledge of the meeting whereabouts and time frame. If for any reason the mentor is transporting the confirmation student, they must have signed permission from the parent.

The exception to this two adult policy is music lessons in the Academy of Fine Arts. Please see Section G.

### **B. Ratios**

In group activities with greater than 24 youth, the adult/youth ratio should be 1:12.

### **C. Open Door Policy**

At no time should anyone working with children or youth have a one-on-one meeting behind closed doors unless a window allows unrestricted viewing into the room. For your protection, keep the door at least partially open.

### **D. Event Permission Form**

This form should be completed for church groups anytime they are hosting an off site activity.

### **E. Policies for Childcare**

#### 1. Supervision

- Direct supervision is by the JCPC Childcare Coordinator
- Indirect supervision is by the JCPC Christian Education Director
- The CE Director or his/her assignee will carry a nursery pager each Sunday morning from 9:00am to 12 noon, in case of a nursery emergency

#### 2. Nursery Guidelines

- Each child is signed into the nursery by the parent; the child and their belongings are tagged with a nametag
- Each Caregiver is required to wear a nametag
- Sunday morning ideal ratios are: 1 Caregiver to 3 children, ages 0-3 years
- We will have two Caregivers in the nursery on Sunday mornings
- During major holidays there will be three caregivers
- The classroom across the hallway from the nursery will be used as an overflow room for the older nursery children and there will be one Caregiver in each room
- The nursery is for ages 0-4 years

### **F. Policies for Children and Youth**

#### 1. Drop Off & Pick Up Policy

Children will be welcome to enter our classrooms when adequate supervision is available. Generally, teachers will be in classrooms 10 minutes prior to class.

Parents of 2 year olds through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade children are asked to sign in their child on the classroom sign-in sheet and indicate their location during Sunday School. They will also be asked to list their preferred pick up method.

Parents of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade through 5<sup>th</sup> grade are asked to sign a form at the beginning of the year stating their preference for child release/pick up. The form will offer parents the opportunity to indicate whether they will let the child leave on his/her own or have a parent or older sibling pick up the elementary aged child.

#### 2. Bathroom Policy

Most classrooms for younger ages (nursery through 5 years old) have bathrooms located in the rooms.

If a younger child needs assistance in the classroom bathroom a teacher, staff member or an approved volunteer may enter to assist observing the following guidelines:

The door should be left at least partially open while the teacher, staff or volunteer is assisting the child.

Older Children will use hallway bathrooms.

Teachers, staff and approved volunteers may escort a group of children to the bathroom and should leave the hallway door open.

At the approved volunteer's discretion, older children can utilize hallway bathrooms one at a time with the teacher's permission.

Avoid taking a child to the bathroom alone, take another child along as a "buddy" if needed.

## **G. Policies for Academy of Fine Arts**

1. The JCPC Academy of Fine Arts subscribes to the highest standard of conduct as is fitting for its mission, purpose, and goals. All lessons, classes, and camps are taught on the campus of Johns Creek Presbyterian Church in secure areas and in a classroom with a door outfitted with a window to provide easy viewing by parents and supervisors.

A parent or responsible person (16+ years) must accompany any student and remain outside the classroom during the activity. Children under the age of 16 years of age may not wait alone outside the classroom either before or after the activity. Siblings of students are never to be left alone or allowed to wander the campus without supervision. All parents must sign that they understand and follow this policy.

2. JCPC is dedicated to providing excellent instruction provided by educators who are experts in their field. All of our instructors go through an interview and background check and are committed to upholding the high standards of instruction and the policies of Johns Creek Presbyterian Church, as set forth by the JCPC Academy of Fine Arts Board. All instructors must sign a written acknowledgement that they have read and agree to comply with the Academy of Fine Arts' Policies and Procedures. All instructors must sign a written acknowledgment that they have read and agree to comply with the JCPC Child and Youth Protection Policy.

## **H. Policies for Boy Scouts**

1. JCPC Chartered Units of Boy Scouts of America (BSA) shall comply with the adult volunteer screening, two-deep leadership, adequate supervision, tour permits, event transportation, pickup and dropoff, bathroom use, and all other youth protection guidelines of the BSA.

2. JCPC Chartered Units of BSA must complete the Use of Property document, JCPC Background Check for adults on a biannual basis, and sign an Acknowledgement Form that states the unit (Scoutmaster and/or Committee Chairman) has read and agrees to comply with the JCPC Child and Youth Protection Policy. Maintenance of current Youth Protection Certification through the BSA specifically meets the JCPC Annual online or in-person training requirement of this policy. The cost of background checks required to meet this policy shall be reimbursed to JCPC by the chartered units.

## **I. Outside Groups using JCPC Facilities**

1. Outside groups that have a one time use of the facility must complete the Application for Use of Property document and agree to abide by the terms stated therein.

2. Outside groups, that involve programs with children and youth and have an ongoing use of the facility, must complete the Use of Property document, JCPC Background Check for adults, Sign an Acknowledgement Form that states they have read the JCPC Child and Youth Protection Policy, and complete the online training

## **IV. RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT**

### **A. Reporting the Abuse or Neglect**

1. All volunteers and employees of Johns Creek Presbyterian Church as well as childcare workers, outside group leaders and employees shall immediately report to two members of the Executive Team any allegations or suspicions of abuse or neglect of minor children (0-17 years old) which they become aware of during their duties at Johns Creek Presbyterian.

2. The Executive Team includes: Pastoral staff, Program staff and Clerk of Session.

3. A report is called for if a child:

- Verbally complains about or mentions in passing, specific acts of neglect or abuse (physical, sexual or verbal) or exposure to sexual activity, pornography or abuse of others
- Verbally complains about, or mentions in passing, vague references to having to do bad things or having bad things/secret things done to him or her
- Alludes to abuse or neglect in writing, in prayer requests, or in drawings

- Has injury (e.g. a patch of missing hair, a burn, or a bruise) that can't be adequately explained or which the child attempts to hide or deny
- Has an inordinate number of explained or unexplained injuries
- Has an age inappropriate interest in or knowledge of sexual matters or acting out sexual behavior
- Is frequently dirty or smelly or inadequately dressed, has bad teeth or hair falling out, is undernourished, does not receive appropriate medical care for injuries
- Reports or evidences difficulty urinating or discomfort sitting
- Reports or evidences an atypical fear or discomfort of being with particular people

4. All allegations or suspicions of abuse or neglect shall be kept confidential and be discussed by Executive team members as indicated in this Protection Policy (IV. A. 2.). Once reported, the reporting volunteer or employee of Johns Creek Presbyterian Church shall complete and submit a "Suspicion of Child Abuse or Neglect" Form. These forms are available from the Minister/Director of each Ministry area, the Senior Pastor, another member of the Pastoral staff or Clerk of Session.

## **B. Responding to a Child**

1. If and when a child first speaks to you about abuse or neglect, be sure to take his/her word seriously. Don't deny or minimize the problem. Stay calm and listen. Offer emotional reassurance that it was right to tell you and that it is OK to talk about what may be bothering them. Do not promise you will not tell anyone. If the child asks, tell with whom you will discuss the problem.

2. As a volunteer or employee of Johns Creek Presbyterian it is not your responsibility to interrogate the child to get "all the facts" or to attempt to substantiate any allegation or suspicion of abuse or neglect. Your responsibility is to listen, to ask a few questions so you have some understanding of what the child has said to you, to offer reassurance that it is OK to talk about what's bothering the child and to immediately report your concern to two members of the Executive Team. The two members of the Executive Team will then complete their own form and share with the team. You should refrain from posing questions that suggest certain hypothetical facts. Studies have shown that suggesting facts to a child may plant false memories. Ask only open-ended questions such as, "What happened?" and "What else happened?"

## **C. Review Committee**

When a report has been made and the "Suspicion of Child Abuse or Neglect" Forms have been completed, a member of the Executive Team shall, within twenty-four hours of the report, (1) notify Georgia Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services, (2) JCPC's insurance company and (3) a Review Committee shall be assembled.

1. The Review Committee shall consist of two members of the Executive team, an attorney, a physician on a pro tem basis, and the Program Staff member to which the allegation or suspicion was reported.

1. The Review Committee will make an assessment within twenty-four hours, and make a recommendation of what steps should be taken to the Executive Team. The Review Committee should lean toward outside consultation and reporting of all alleged misconduct- especially if the alleged misconduct was by a staff person. Only the Review Committee has the authority to terminate the process of investigation and intervention.
2. The Senior Pastor and all members of the Pastoral staff, the Program Staff member who submitted the Suspicion Form and their direct supervisor and insurance company shall be given copies of the suspicion forms, informed of the initial assessment of the Review Committee.
3. Only those persons designated by the Executive Team will be authorized to speak to any outside consultants or agencies (e.g. Insurance Company or the Department of Child and Family Services), the alleged abuser and victim and their families, to the Johns Creek

Presbyterian community, the press or the community at large about any allegations or suspicions of abuse.

4. All those authorized by the Executive Team will comply with Georgia law regarding mandatory reporting of suspected abuse or neglect and will cooperate with any state or local investigations and the agents of the insurance company.
5. Unless the parent or legal guardian of the minor child may be involved in the alleged abuse or neglect, the parent or legal guardian will be notified and pastoral care offered to all those affected.
6. Any employee or volunteer who may be involved in the alleged abuse or neglect will be immediately relieved of any ministry responsibilities that involve children or youth.
7. Any employee or volunteer not found innocent of the alleged abuse or neglect will be removed from their ministry with children or youth.
8. JCPC employees and volunteers are expected to cooperate fully with the investigation authorities, such as the Child Protective Services Unit of the Department of Social Services, with guidance from the JCPC attorney.
9. All JCPC employees and volunteers will refer any inquiries regarding the situation to a member of the Executive Team. A member of the Executive Team, shall be the only person authorized to release any information regarding an allegation except where the law requires others to release information, such as to a protective services investigator or a police officer.
10. All JCPC employees and volunteers are expected to avoid denial, minimizations or blame during the period of investigation of the allegation.

#### **D. Addressing Known Offenders**

At Johns Creek Presbyterian Church, we seek to live in covenant with God and with one another and to be a redemptive community to all who are members. We also acknowledge that redemptive action and responsible action can, at times, be in tension or even in seeming opposition. We embrace this fact as a natural part of seeking to be the church in the world. We adopt these procedures for ministering to those among us who are known offenders of children and youth while maintaining our focus on protecting the children or youth of our church.

1. Known offenders are required to make their status and any terms of probation known to the Executive Team.
2. The Executive Team will appoint a group of 3-5 members to establish appropriate boundaries, in writing, governing the life of the offender within the church, including areas on campus where he/she may go unaccompanied. Group members will receive training in protection of children and youth and in dealing with known offenders. No decisions made by this group will conflict with any provisions of the JCPC Child & Youth Protection Policy.
3. The known offender will give written acknowledgement and acceptance of JCPC's Child and Youth Protection Policy and of the boundaries imposed.
4. At no time is a known offender to be assigned to ministries with children and youth.
5. At no time is a known offender to congregate with children and youth.
6. At no time is a known offender allowed in areas of the church or grounds dedicated to children and youth, or in use primarily by children and youth.
7. As circumstances warrant, the Executive Team may identify a known offender to church employees and volunteers whose ministries should be informed of this fact.
8. Known offenders will receive the normal pastoral care afforded to any member.

9. Should a known offender disregard any boundaries or conditions set by the Executive Team and their appointed group, the violation will be handled through the Rules of Discipline in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

## **E. Summary of Responsibilities**

### 1. Volunteer or employee

- respond to the child or youth (see Section B above)
- report to two members of the Executive Team (Pastoral Staff, Program staff, Clerk of Session)
- complete "Suspicion of Child Abuse or Neglect" Form and give to two members of the Executive Team
- keep the identity of the child, the conversations, and the report CONFIDENTIAL

### 2. Director/Minister of the Ministry Area

- discuss the "Suspicion of Child Abuse or Neglect" Form with the volunteer or employee
- complete form and give them to another member of the Executive Team.
- keep the identity of the child, the conversations, and the report CONFIDENTIAL

### 3. Executive Team

- notify two members of the Executive Team of the concern and give copies of the "Suspicion of Child Abuse or Neglect" forms
- call insurance companies claim team
- assemble Review Committee
- inform the Pastoral staff and Program Staff of the initial assessment of the Review Committee
- give copies of the Executive Team's Final Report to members of the Review Committee, the Senior Pastor or other members of the Pastoral staff
- keep the identity of the child, the conversations, and the reports CONFIDENTIAL

### 4. Review Committee (see section C.2 above)

- make an initial assessment within 24 hours
- make a recommendation of what steps should be taken to the Executive Team
- keep the identity of the child, the conversations, the reports, the assessment and the recommendations CONFIDENTIAL

### 5. Pastoral staff members of Executive Team

- make final decision of what steps should be taken
- authorize as appropriate persons to speak to any outside consultants or agencies (e.g. the Department of Child and Family Services), the alleged abuser and victim and their families, to the Johns Creek Presbyterian Church community, the press or the community at large about any allegations or suspicions of abuse.