

SEXUAL ABUSE POLICY [INSERT CHURCH NAME]

The [insert church name] is committed to the maintenance of a religious environment of trust, and one that is consequently free of all forms of sexual abuse. Sexual abuse includes sexual assault, child sexual abuse, and sexual harassment. Sexual abuse violates the Scriptures and Presbyterian belief and practice as described in the Book of Order. We affirm that God is the source of human dignity; that God calls human beings to positive expressions of mutual affirmation and commitment; that God calls us to promote the dignity of all persons.

This policy establishes the necessary guidelines to provide a safe and secure environment at [INSERT CHURCH NAME] and to protect individuals from sexual, physical, and emotional abuse while participating in [INSERT CHURCH NAME] activities. Most importantly, the purpose of this policy is to guide the staff and volunteers of [INSERT CHURCH NAME] and prevent incidents and allegations of abuse. But if an allegation is made, this policy provides a mechanism to deal with reported concerns and subsequent actions and at the same time protect adult volunteers and employees from unwarranted allegations of abuse.

The victim and/or anyone knowing of sexual behavior that violates the policy herein should seek resolution in accordance with the procedures that follow. All inquiries shall be strictly confidential to protect the privacy of, and minimize suspicion toward, all parties concerned. In the situation of a pastor, the inquiry shall involve Redstone Presbytery. In the case of an elder or member, the inquiry may involve Redstone Presbytery. The Session will handle each case as prescribed by the Book of Order. Any individual found to have violated [insert church name]'s policy against sexual abuse will be subject to appropriate church disciplinary action.

DEFINITIONS

Sexual abuse, also referred to as molestation, is the forcing of undesired sexual behavior by one person upon another. When that force is immediate, of short duration, or infrequent, it is called sexual assault. The term also covers any behavior by any adult towards a child to stimulate either the adult or child sexually. When the victim is younger than the age of consent (18 years of age), it is referred to as child sexual abuse.

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of an overtly or explicitly sexual nature when:

1. submission to such conduct is an explicit or implicit condition of employment, membership, or participation in church activities;
2. submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment, membership, or participation in church activities;
3. such conduct has the purpose or effect of:
 - a. unreasonably interfering with an individual's work, membership, or participation in church activities;
 - b. creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work or religious environment.

Most sexual harassment falls into two categories, verbal and physical.

Verbal harassment may include, but is not limited to:

1. sexual innuendos and comments and sexual remarks about clothing, body, or sexual activities.
2. suggestive or insulting sounds
3. whistling in a suggestive manner
4. humor and jokes about sex
5. sexual propositions, invitations, or other pressure for sexual favors
6. implied or overt threats

Physical harassment may include, but is not limited to:

1. intentional brushing against the body
2. patting, pinching, and any other inappropriate touching or feeling
3. attempted or actual kissing or fondling
4. coerced sexual intercourse
5. sexual assault

Other forms of sexual harassment may include, but are not limited to:

1. leering or ogling
2. making obscene gestures

Sexual harassment most often takes place where there is a power differential between the persons involved (such as in counseling situations, youth leaders and youth, employer and employee). It also may occur between persons of the same status. In any case, [INSERT CHURCH NAME] holds that sexual harassment is intolerable and threatening to the vitality and growth of the victim and our religious community.

PROCEDURE

The Session of the [INSERT CHURCH NAME] shall communicate this policy and procedures to its membership and staff. It is the responsibility of any member of, or employee of, or participant in church activities at [INSERT CHURCH NAME] who believes that he/she has been sexually abused to report and seek a resolution of this problem. All allegations will be taken seriously.

Resolution includes:

1. speaking directly and assertively to the person who is harassing to let that person know that you will not tolerate that behavior; and/or
2. speaking to the pastor and having him/her have a talk with the harasser and tell the harasser to stop the behavior; and/or
3. speaking with the Personnel Committee Chairperson for his/her advice; and/or
4. proceeding with the method of resolution in accordance with the Book of Order should be discussed with the Clerk of Session, Personnel Committee representative, or pastor. A written statement using the attached form (Attachment A) should be submitted to the Clerk of Session, and the judicial procedure specified in the Book of Order shall be followed. A formal complaint against a harasser usually involves an inquiry regarding not only [INSERT CHURCH NAME] but, in the case of a

pastor, shall also involve Redstone Presbytery. The inquiry may involve the Presbytery in the case of a nonpastor. Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality to avoid the destruction of the reputation of the accused and the accuser. The church will refrain from judging the individual as guilty or innocent and will continue to offer support and care while the investigation is ongoing.

Additionally, under certain circumstances, sexual harassment and sexual abuse may involve civil and/or criminal liability. In the case of a child, reporting is mandatory according to state law. PA Law 1292, No. 151, sec. 6311 specifically includes a requirement that clergy report child abuse. In addition, Sec. 6312 also states "...that any person may make such a report if that person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is an abused child." Sec. 6346 further states that that a "...person or official required to report a case of suspected child abuse who willfully fails to do so commits a summary offense for the first violation and a misdemeanor of the third degree for a second and subsequent violation." This law became effective July 1, 1995.

Once a report is made to a Pastor, it is his/her responsibility to take action. If there is any doubt as to whether to report to state authorities, the local office of Children and Youth Services where the incident occurred may be contacted. (Westmoreland County Children's Bureau 724-830-3300 during normal working hours of 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Monday through Friday). Simply ask to speak to an intake worker.

Note of Caution

If the caller is in need only of advice, he/she may identify himself or herself but should not identify the child or the suspect at that point. Once a child's or suspect's name is given, the intake worker is required to investigate.

During the hours the agency is closed, emergency referral may be made to 911. Referrals may also be made to Childline, the PA Child Abuse Registry 24 hours a day by calling 1-800-932-0313.

PREVENTION

In an effort to create the safest possible environment within [INSERT CHURCH NAME], this section describes measures for reducing the risk and preventing child abuse and sexual misconduct. These measures include screening of employees and volunteers expected to be in contact with minors, and establishing standards of behavior, providing training/education, and standardization of procedures for all those expected to be in close and/or significant contact with minors.

Standards of Behavior

All Session members, all Christian Education members (committee members and Sunday School Superintendent/teachers), all Youth Committee members, and all Personnel Committee members shall receive a copy of this Policy and will be expected to read and abide by the policies and procedures set forth herein, and as they may be modified from time to time.

Screening of Staff and Designated Volunteers

Each prospective staff member and long term designated volunteers shall read and acknowledge the policy by signing Attachment B and have a criminal background check and a child abuse clearance.

Standardization of Procedures

Supervision: To prevent inappropriate behavior between minors, two minors shall not be left unsupervised.

When a group of minors being sponsored by [INSERT CHURCH NAME] is on an overnight event, the adult leaders' gender(s) must include at least one of the gender corresponding to the gender(s) of the group. For example, if the youth group is of mixed gender, there would be at least one man and one woman chaperone present. Otherwise, if the minors are all girls or all boys, the chaperones would be at least one woman or one man as corresponds to the gender of the minors.

Acceptable Physical Contact: No touching or other contact or interaction with a minor which is in any way intended to be sexually stimulating is ever acceptable. Care should be taken that physical expressions of affection are not excessive or inappropriate, or imposed upon a minor.

Open Classrooms: Observations of child care rooms and classrooms of minors may be randomly conducted by the staff, or other designated church personnel. Classroom doors with a clear observation pane may be kept closed. Whenever minors are present, class room doors without a clear pane shall be left standing open.

Open Offices: All office and meeting room doors having clear observation panes may be kept shut when occupied but shall remain unlocked whenever occupied by two or more individuals. Office and meeting room doors without clear observation panes shall be left standing open when occupied by minors.

Transportation: Minors should be transported in groups. An unaccompanied adult leader should not drive a single minor (other than his or her own) in a Church-sponsored activity without express permission, preferably in writing, from the minor's parent or guardian or after making repeated attempts to contact the parents. Minors shall not drive other minors without the express consent of both the driver's and rider(s)' parents.

Occasional Volunteers: To the extent practicable, occasional volunteers will acknowledge their reading and understanding of this policy by signing Attachment B.

Approved by the Session
[DATE]

Attachment A

Report of Suspected Incident of Abuse
[insert church name]
[insert church address]
[insert church phone number]

1) Individual observing or receiving disclosure of alleged abuse: (Complete Lines 1 thru 6)

Name _____ Date: _____

2) Victim's name: _____

Victim's age/date of birth: _____

3) Date/place of initial conversation with/report from victim: _____

4) Victim's statement (give your detailed summary here): _____

5) Name of person accused of alleged abuse: _____

Relationship of accused to victim (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other): _____

6) Reported to Pastor/Presbytery*:

Date/Time: _____

Summary: _____

7) Received by Pastor (Sign): _____ Date _____

* If accused is a Pastor, the report must go directly to the Redstone Presbytery

8) Call to victim's parent/guardian/designated family member or friend:

By: _____ Date/Time _____

Summary: _____

9) Call to appropriate local service agency:

By: _____ Date/Time: _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary: _____

10) Call to local law enforcement agency:

By: _____ Date/Time: _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary: _____

11) Other contacts:

Name: _____

Date/Time: _____

Summary: _____

Attachment B

Acknowledgement and Understanding of Policy

[insert church name]

[insert church address]

[insert church phone number]

I have read the [insert church name] Policy and Procedures Relating to Sexual Abuse, understand it and agree to comply with it.

Name (please print): _____

Signature _____ Date: _____