

Shandon Presbyterian Church
Child Protection Policy

I. Statement of Purpose.

Leadership in the Church demands the highest standards of moral integrity and personal responsibility. It is a gift of the Spirit that can only be effectively exercised in an environment of trust. As the Gospel witness makes abundantly clear, “From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded.” (Luke 12:48)

Since trust is so fundamental to the wellbeing of the Christian community, Christian people have the right to expect that those they choose as leaders (both lay and ordained) understand and are committed to standards of behavior that are trustworthy. In receiving the Sacrament of Baptism, we enter into a sacred covenant with God and are adopted into the covenant family of the Church (W2.3004, Gen 17:714, 2 Cor. 1:2122). Trust is a key component that exists in this covenant. As the Church and the body of Christ we are united with all the people of God in every place and every time (W2.3005, 1 Cor. 12:1213, Eph. 4:46). We are bound to serve and to respect the dignity of every human being (G1.0200, W2.3004, Micah 6:8). When, therefore, this solemn trust is broken through some form of misconduct, particularly sexual, not only is someone’s dignity diminished and her or his well being seriously harmed, but also harm is done to the community of faith. Where there is no trust, there can be no community.

Shandon Presbyterian Church is committed to maintaining a safe environment for every child and young person involved in its program ministry. We are committed, not only to maintaining a community, but also to building it and not only to maintaining trust, but also to enriching the atmosphere of trust in our community.

In today’s environment, a wellbalanced, proactive prevention policy is necessary for any institution entrusted with the care of children and youth. In response, Shandon has established this Child Protection Policy. The Policy applies to all those who work with children and youth through Shandon programs both on and off campus, including fulltime and parttime staff, Child Development Center (CDC) workers, and volunteers, whether they be church members, visitors, or guests.

II. Statement of Policy

Shandon Presbyterian Church is committed to maintaining a safe environment in which children and youth are nurtured and instructed in the faith, and protected from abuse and neglect, particularly sexual and physical. Our goals are to protect children and youth in church programs, to educate workers and care givers concerning abuse issues, and to protect staff and volunteers, as well as the church as a whole, from potential wrongful accusations of abuse or neglect.

We recognize that children and youth are entrusted to the care of adults in church programs and activities, both on and off the campus, and also in programs operated by others on church property. They will be free to participate in these programs and activities without intimidation, coercion, or abuse of any type. This general policy is applicable to all persons whether compensated staff, volunteers, church members, visitors, or guests.

III. Implementation of Policy

Implementation of the Policy will include:

- * Careful selection of staff, teachers, care givers and others involved in activities with children and youth
- * Orientation and training of these individuals
- * Supervision of these individuals
- * Accurate reporting of incidents of child abuse or neglect
- * Responding to incidents or allegations of abuse or neglect
- * Monitoring the policy and procedures to insure compliance
- * Healing process for the congregation

The Personnel Committee shall be responsible for the oversight, monitoring and enforcement of the Policy.

IV. Selection and Screening of Child/Youth Workers and Volunteers

A. Application process

- 1) Adult volunteers. All adults that wish to volunteer to work with youth/children in Shandon sponsored programs or events must complete the confidential application form included with this Policy and consent to and pass background checks, including criminal and reference checks.
- 2) Youth volunteers. All youth who wish to volunteer to work with youth/children under adult supervision must complete the youth application form and workers pledge.
- 3) Sixmonth waiting period. All applicants must have been a member of Shandon Presbyterian or affiliated with Shandon for a period of six months to be eligible to apply to volunteer to work with children/youth.
- 4) Employee applications. All employees must complete the confidential application form included with this Policy and consent to and pass background checks, including criminal and reference checks.
- 5) CDC worker applications. The Weekday Education Committee shall oversee the application process for CDC workers.

B. Screening Process

- 1) Application review. The Personnel Committee is responsible for oversight of application review. A subcommittee, composed of the Chair of the Personnel Committee, or his/her designee; the Chair of the Ministry of Education, or his/her designee; and appropriate staff as designated by the Senior Pastor, will be responsible for receipt, review, and verification of applications, including reference checks. The subcommittee may also conduct interviews. Applicants approved by the subcommittee will form a pool of volunteers eligible for ministry to children and youth, subject to additional background checks to be performed by the Business Manager.
- 2) Background checks. The Business Manager, or his/her designee, will perform all criminal background checks, including additional reference checks, where appropriate.

3) Confidentiality. The Business Manager will keep each application, subcommittee notes on reference checks and interviews, and the results of any background or reference checks performed by the Business Manager, or his/her designee, in a locked and confidential location. The results of any individual's reference checks and background checks are to be kept strictly confidential.

4) Information of concern. If information of a cautionary nature is revealed through a reference or background check, the person conducting the check shall note this information in writing for the application file and communicate it to the Business Manager. The Senior Pastor and/or his/her designee, the immediate supervisor of the employee/volunteer, and the Business Manager shall consider this information and decide on a course of action. The decision must be documented in writing, dated, and placed in the person's file. In such case, the person's volunteer application may be:

- a) Accepted unconditionally;
- b) Accepted with clearly defined restrictions; or
- c) Denied.

The Senior Pastor, and/or his/her designee, shall inform the employee/volunteer of the decision and its implications.

5) Applications subject to review. Shandon reserves the right to review applications at any time. Background checks or new reference checks may be requested either randomly or because of some concern.

V. Guidelines for Workers

These guidelines shall apply to all individuals who work with children or youth, including staff and volunteers, whether church members or guests. In the event of a conflict with this policy, all CDC employees are governed by child protection standards established by law and the South Carolina Department of Social Services.

A. Two adult rule. Two unrelated adults (over the age of 18) will be present during children/youth activities. In an emergency situation, only one adult need be present for on campus activities if classroom doors are left open (doors with unobstructed, transparent windows may be closed) and if hall monitors are provided for periodic observation. When the parent or guardian participants in the selection of an adult leader in the following circumstances, the presence of a second adult is not required.

- 1. Music lessons given by a member of the staff.
- 2. Meetings of the Confirmand and assigned church member.

B. Youth workers.

- a) No one under the age of 18 may work with infants or toddlers.
- b) Teenagers (6th through 12th grade) who wish to help with extended session must be certified for babysitting through Red Cross or an equal certification program, and must complete and sign the youth application form and worker's pledge.
- c) Certified teens may assist the two adult care givers in child care as aides, but may not be solely responsible and may not be left in a room alone with children. The certified teen must not be related to either of the adult caregivers.

C. Nurseries.

a) A tag system will be used for all nurseries. This system will enable the caregivers in the crib and toddler nurseries to correctly identify a parent or guardian when a child is picked up.

b) Only the assigned caregivers are allowed into the nursery rooms. All others, including parents, friends, guardians, must remain outside the room.

D. Duty to report. Individuals who observe questionable or inappropriate behavior affecting children/youth must report it as soon as possible to the appropriate supervising staff person, volunteer coordinator, or to one of the ministers. The supervising staff person or volunteer coordinator will notify a minister. The minister, or his/her designee, shall document the report in accordance with Section VI below. If the alleged incident involves a minister, a report shall be made to the Chair of Personnel Committee and the Clerk of Session, who will report the incident to the General Presbyter.

E. Awareness. Adults are encouraged to be sensitive to the potential for abuse and to appearances of abuse. They should not hesitate to exercise appropriate responsibility if they observe activities that are, or might appear to be, inappropriate.

F. Continuing applicability. Procedures should be followed before, during, and after events while children are not in the custody of parents or guardians.

G. Injuries/ Accident Reports. For any injury (scratches and bumps too!) to a child under age 18 an accident report should be completed with one copy given to the parent and one copy to the volunteer coordinator or the Director of Children's Ministry. The volunteer coordinator shall give the report to the Director of Children's Ministry. If neither a volunteer coordinator nor the Director of Children's Ministry is present on church premises, the accident report should be left in a labeled box on the desk of the Director of Children's Ministry.

H. Overnight outings. It is our intention to have two unrelated adults supervising any group of youth/children at all times. No minor or group of minors should be left in the care of only one adult. Samesex, adult supervision will be provided for all overnight trips. In situations like a retreat, adult/youth supervision may be accomplished with adult advisors from other churches.

I. Supervision. Each Ministry unit, the CDC, and all staff working with children/youth are responsible for making certain that proper supervision is in place for workers in their programs and activities. Every Ministry Coordinator, the Director of CDC, and all staff working with children/youth are responsible for reporting to the Personnel Committee, by September 30th of each year, that proper procedures are in place within his/her area of responsibility to promote compliance with these guidelines.

VI. Procedure for Reporting and Responding to Allegations of Abuse

The following procedures will be followed in the event of an incident or allegation of abuse:

A. Report. The person reporting the incident will document,

in writing, all known facts and circumstances to the appropriate staff person and a minister within 24 hours of the incident. The incident will be reported to Richland County Department of Social Services or law enforcement as appropriate. If the alleged incident involves a minister, a report shall be made to the Chair of Personnel Committee and the Clerk of Session, who will report the incident to the General Presbyter. Procedures for handling alleged individual ministers are governed by abuse policies approved by Trinity Presbytery.

B. Notify parents/guardians. The Senior Pastor or his/her designee will notify the parents/guardians of the suspected victim as soon as possible of the incident.

C. Document all actions. The Senior Pastor, or his/her designee, and an appropriate staff person, will document all steps taken in the course of handling the reported incident.

D. Minister to all concerned. The church will minister, as possible, to individuals who in good faith make reports of actual or reasonably suspected cases of abuse, to those who are accused, and those who are abused. All reports will be taken seriously, but not judged prematurely.

E. Law enforcement to investigate. Only the appropriate law enforcement authorities will carry out indepth investigation.

F. Report to Insurer. The Senior Pastor or his/her designee will make the appropriate report to the liability insurer for the church.

G. Treatment of accused. Any person accused must be treated with dignity and support. That person will be immediately relieved of further responsibilities until the investigation is completed and allegations are cleared.

H. Statements to the media. The Senior Pastor or his/her designee will be the SOLE spokesperson for the church insofar as media inquiries are concerned. In the event the Senior Pastor is the accused, then the Personnel Committee shall appoint a spokesperson.

I. Confidentiality. To the extent possible, confidentiality of all persons involved will be safeguarded.

VII. Healing the Congregation

"As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which in deed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing songs to God. And whatever you, in word and deed, do everything in the name of Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Col. 3:12-17

At Shandon Presbyterian Church we take every precaution we

possibly can to protect our children, however we have to recognize that incidents may occur. These situations can have a tremendous impact on the individuals, as well as the entire congregation. To help the community of faith deal with this betrayal of trust, these are five main components necessary for the healing process:

1. Truth telling. We have to acknowledge what has happened. Ignoring the issue could only make things worst.
2. Sharing and validation of feelings. There are many emotions that surround the betrayal of trust: shock, anger, disbelief, and fear. In order to help the community of faith acknowledge and validate these feelings as well as find some resolution, we encourage group mediation with a trained pastoral counselor.
3. Education. Commitment to the safety and well being of children and youth is our number one priority. We have to communicate that commitment to the congregation in order for trust to be reestablished. We also must reeducate members on how we can collectively protect our children.
4. Spiritual reflection. In a community of faith we turn to God for guidance and direction, especially during difficult times. We turn to scripture, like the words Paul gave to the Colossians (Col. 3:12-17) during their crisis or the comforting words of Psalm 23 and we pray that the “peace of Christ will rule in our hearts.” We turn to God in prayer and emphasize the grace of Jesus Christ that will lift us up and love us forever.
5. Where do we go from here? Answering the question, “What else do we have to do in order to be able to heal?” As a congregation and as the body of Christ, where do we go from here? What do we need to do to mend ourselves so that we can go about the mission of the church – which is to glorify and serve God?

Confidential
Shandon Presbyterian Church
Application to Work with Children and Youth

As members of this congregation and of the Body of Christ, along with the parents and guardians, we make a covenant to undertake the Christian nurture of each child when they are baptized into the faith. Our commitment to Christian nurture means that we will help care for these children by providing them with a safe and nurturing environment, as well by teaching them the gospel and living out the faith as positive role models, so that in time they will confess their faith in Jesus Christ. It is through this covenant that we apply to serve children and youth.

I. Personal Information

Shandon Presbyterian Member Since: _____ If not a member, how long have you been affiliated with Shandon? Explain affiliation on back.

Name:

Last

First

Middle

Date of Birth: _____ SS# _____

Driver's License #: _____ State issued: _____

Current Address:

Street

City

State & Zip

Years at this address: _____ Home Phone: _____

Work Phone: _____

If you have lived at another address during the past seven years, please list former addresses on back of sheet.

II. Previous Experience with Children/Youth

List all previous church work involving children and youth:
(Church name, address, type of work, dates, etc.)

List all previous nonchurch work involving children/youth
(Name of organization, address, type of work, dates, etc.)

III. References

A. Personal references from Shandon (List two Shandon members who know you and are not related to you.)

B. References from other work with children. (Give name, address, telephone numbers, etc.)

IV. Criminal History

Have you ever been convicted or pled guilty to a crime? Yes _____ No _____

If your answer is yes, please explain on back.

Worker's Pledge, Consent to Background Checks, and Release

I certify that the above information is correct to the best of my knowledge.

I have not been nor am I currently involved in any abuse of a minor nor have I had a conviction or finding related to children or youth rendered against me.

I have received a copy of Shandon Presbyterian Child Protection Policy, have read it and agree to observe all church policies and procedures regarding working with children and youth.

I authorize Shandon Presbyterian Church and/or its agents or employees to make an independent investigation of my background, including checking references and conducting criminal background checks, only for the purpose of confirming the information in this Application and/or obtaining other information which may be material to my qualifications for working with youth/children.

I release Shandon Presbyterian Church and/or its agents or employees, or any

individual or organization that provides information pursuant to this authorization, from any and all liabilities, claims or lawsuits in regard to the information given.

Signature _____ Date _____

Confidential

Youth Volunteer

Shandon Presbyterian Church
Application to Work with Children and Youth

As members of this congregation and of the Body of Christ, along with the parents and guardians, we make a covenant to undertake the Christian nurture of each child when they are baptized into the faith. Our commitment to Christian nurture means that we will help care for these children by providing them with a safe and nurturing environment, as well by teaching them the gospel and living out the faith as positive role models, so that in time they will confess their faith in Jesus Christ. It is through this covenant that we apply to serve children and youth.

I. Personal Information

Shandon Presbyterian Member Since: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Name:

Last First Middle

Current Address:

City Street State & Zip

Home Phone: _____

Drivers License # _____ State _____ SS# _____

II. Previous Experience with Children/Youth

List all previous church work involving children and youth:
(Church name, address, type of work, dates, etc.)

List all previous nonchurch work involving children/youth
(Name of organization, address, type of work, dates, etc.)

III. References

A. Personal references from Shandon (List two Shandon members who know you and are not related to you.)

B. References from other volunteer work with children. (Give name, address, and telephone numbers.)

IV. Babysitter Certification

List the certifications you have for babysitting and date of certification. Provide copy or contact person to verify certification.

V. Criminal History

A. Have you ever been convicted or pled guilty to a crime?

Yes _____ No _____ If your answer is yes, please explain on back.

B. Have you ever been adjudicated delinquent (a juvenile conviction) of any offense?

Yes _____ No _____ If your answer is yes, please explain on back.

Worker's Pledge, Consent to Background Checks, and Release

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I have not been nor am I currently involved in any abuse of a minor nor have I had a conviction or finding related to children or youth rendered against me.

I have received a copy of Shandon Presbyterian Child Protection Policy, have read it and agree to observe all church policies and procedures regarding working with children and youth.

I authorize Shandon Presbyterian Church and/or its agents or employees to make an independent investigation of my background, including checking references, only for the purpose of confirming the information in this Application and/or obtaining other information which may be material to my

qualifications for working with youth/children.

I release Shandon Presbyterian Church and/or its agents or employees, or any individual or organization that provides information pursuant to this authorization, from any and all liabilities, claims or lawsuits in regard to the information given.

Signature of youth applicant

Signature of parent or guardian of youth applicant

Date _____