

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY
INDEPENDENT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
SAVANNAH, GA
OCTOBER 2018

I. PURPOSE

Independent Presbyterian Church (IPC) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the following practices, our goal is to protect the children of IPC from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior, and to protect our paid staff and volunteers from false accusations. IPC's leadership is committed to providing a prompt and compassionate response to any allegation of abuse. The abuse of children will not be tolerated in any form from any individual.

Mission. IPC's youth and children's ministries exist to support and encourage Christian parents as they raise their children in the "discipline and instruction" of the Lord (Eph 6:4). We believe children are "a heritage from the LORD" (Ps 127:3) and as such are entitled to our prayers, love, guidance, and protection (Deut 6:6-9). Jesus highlighted a child's natural vulnerability when he instructed his disciples to welcome children in his name (Mk 9:36-37). Our Lord admitted little children into his presence, embracing them and blessing them, and saying, "to such belongs the kingdom of God" (Mk 10:14). We believe that the promise of the covenant of grace extends to believers and to their children (Acts 2:39). The child of even one believing parent is considered holy (1 Cor 7:14). Our children are baptized into Christ and are members of his visible church. Therefore, the whole congregation is obligated to love and receive them as members of the body of Christ. It is the policy of IPC that we commit ourselves to the safety, welfare, and protection of our children.

II. DEFINITIONS (FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY)

1. Adult — Any individual who is at least 18 years of age.
2. Child or Minor — A person who is under 18 years of age or who is reasonably presumed to be under 18 years of age.
3. Child Abuse — Any action (or inaction) that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:
 - A. *Physical Abuse*: any physical injury to a minor which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, biting.

B. *Emotional Abuse*: emotional injury occurs when the minor is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling, and persistent teasing.

C. *Sexual Abuse*: any sexual activity between a minor and an adult or between minors.

4. Employee — Any individual who is paid by IPC on a full or part-time basis, and is serving in any position involving the supervision of minors.
5. Volunteer — Any individual who is not paid by IPC, and is serving in any position involving the supervision of minors. Volunteers may include, but are not limited to, Sunday School teachers, nursery workers, children’s ministry workers, and safety/security team members. It also includes anyone involved in overnight activities involving minors, in counseling of minors, or in one-on-one mentoring of minors.

III. SCREENING

1. Application — All employees and volunteers who will work with IPC’s children or youth must complete and sign a confidential application form (see Appendix F for Volunteer Application Form). As part of this application, the applicant confers on IPC the right to conduct a criminal background check. IPC retains the right to conduct a criminal background check on all employees and volunteers who are entrusted with the care and supervision of children. Upon review of the application, IPC may also request additional information from the applicant if necessary.
2. Six Month Rule — Applicants must be a member in good standing of IPC for at least 6 months. Exceptions to this rule require a vote of the Session.
3. Exclusions — Men shall not be permitted to help in the Infant Nursery.
4. Applicant Review — The Director of Administration and the Chairman of the Personnel Committee are responsible for screening and approving all applicants. The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in strictest confidence on file at IPC. Background checks of employees and volunteers may be repeated at any time if deemed necessary by IPC.

IV. TRAINING

1. All employees and volunteers must complete IPC's child and youth training before they are allowed to serve. Training will serve to educate participants about the nature and prevention of child abuse. Training will also include IPC reporting guidelines and procedures.
2. All employees and volunteers will be provided a copy of the IPC Child Protection Policy. They will also sign that they have read and understood the policy.
3. Additional training will be offered periodically at the discretion of the Session, the Director of Administration, and the Christian Education Committee.

V. GUIDELINES

1. Always put the safety and welfare of the child first.
2. Two Adult Rule — A minimum of two non-related adult employees/volunteers should be present with minors during church activities. (In the nursery, when employees are present, one of the two adults should be an IPC member.) This includes all activities in the classroom, on the church campus, or any off-site church sponsored activity. IPC realizes that there will be times when an unaccompanied employee/volunteer may be present with a group of minors or with a single minor. In those circumstances (i.e., Sunday School or counseling), doors to the room will be open and windows uncovered or the activity will be conducted in a public space, in view of other adults or minors. As a general rule, however, *one adult should not be alone with one minor child or youth*. A second non-related adult should be within immediate proximity, that is, within direct eyesight or within conversational listening distance. Two exceptions:
 - (1) The children are visible to an employee or church officer (who is making periodic rounds) through a window or open door.
 - (2) Staff or volunteers may meet with a child without other adults present, provided the child is visible to another employee or officer (who is making periodic rounds) through a window or open door, or they are in a public place and have received permission from the child's parents.
3. The individual assigned to security will periodically monitor the hallways and check on the classrooms and nurseries during all Sunday activities.
4. Open Door Policy — Classroom windows will be unobstructed at all times, and parents are welcome to observe any activity with their children. Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

5. Discipline — Employees and volunteers are not permitted to use corporal punishment with any child, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the Nursery Director if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues (See Appendix B for “Guidelines for Discipline & Restroom Policy”).
6. Check In and Check Out — To ensure the safety and security of our children, we utilize a check in and check out procedure for children in the Infant, Crawler, and Toddler nurseries. Each child of members and regular visitors is provided with a name tag when checked into the nursery, which is to be worn on the child’s back. The parent is given a matching name tag. The matching name tag must be presented in order to retrieve the child. Siblings under the age of 13 are not permitted to pick up children from the nursery.
7. Transportation — In order for a minor to ride in a car with an employee or volunteer, his/her parent(s) or legal guardian must sign a travel permission waiver to allow their children to ride with a church employee or volunteer to a specified location. The waiver must be renewed on an annual basis (see Appendix D for additional guidelines for Youth & Student Ministries).

VI. REPORTING

1. Full cooperation must be given to civil authorities (for mandatory reporting laws, see Official Code of Georgia §19-7-5; <https://oca.georgia.gov/mandated-reporting>).
2. The Session of IPC recognizes that all allegations of child abuse must be taken seriously and is committed to acting with forthrightness and transparency while showing due respect for the privacy and confidentiality of involved parties.
3. An employee/volunteer is required to report any allegation or suspected instance of child abuse to a pastor, ruling elder, or appropriate ministry director as soon as possible after the incident. The pastor, elder, or director must in turn report the incident to the Session as soon as possible. **The employee/volunteer should confirm that supervisory personnel have reported the matter to law enforcement agencies and do so him- or herself should he or she have any doubt as to whether the matter has been so reported.**
4. After learning of any allegation or suspected instance of child abuse, IPC’s Session, in consultation with the Pastoral Staff, will evaluate as expeditiously as possible any allegations of child abuse, to report such alleged abuse to the proper authorities, to IPC’s insurance carrier, and to an attorney to represent IPC when appropriate, and to deal with external requests for information (see Appendix A for Abuse Response Protocol).

Policy Approved by IPC Session September 2018

Terry Johnson (Moderator)

Dennis Boatright (Clerk of Session)

Appendices

- A. Abuse Response Protocol
- B. Guidelines for Discipline & Restroom Policy
- C. Guideline for Appropriate and Inappropriate Conduct
- D. Addendum for Youth & Student Ministries
- E. Addendum for IPC Day Camp
- F. Volunteer Application Form

Resources

Child Protection Policy, Capital Hill Baptist Church, Washington, DC

Child Protection Policy and Procedures Manual, Covenant Presbyterian Church, Oak Ridge, TN

Employee Handbook, Independent Presbyterian Church, Savannah, GA

Child Protection Policy, Lookout Mountain Presbyterian Church, Lookout Mountain, TN

Child Protection Policy for Churches, SafeChurch: GuideOne Center for Risk Management, 2016

Child and Youth Protection Policy, Sovereign Grace Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, NC

Summit Kids Leadership Handbook, The Summit Church in Durham, NC

Appendix A

Abuse Response Protocol¹

In the event that an incident of child abuse or neglect is alleged or suspected to have occurred on the premises of IPC or during a church-sponsored program or activity, the following procedure shall be implemented by the Director of Administration and the senior Associate Pastor, unless he is alleged to be involved, in consultation with the Pastoral Staff and the Session.

1. The parent or guardian of the minor will be notified.
2. The employee/volunteer alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with minors pending an investigation.
3. IPC will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists (see Official Code of Georgia §19-7-5; <https://oca.georgia.gov/mandated-reporting>).
4. IPC's attorney and insurance company will be notified.
5. If the alleged abuse involves an ordained pastor at IPC, the Savannah River Presbytery will be notified and the Stated Clerk's office made aware of the situation.
6. IPC will cooperate fully with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities.
7. One person will be selected to act as the official spokesperson for IPC, who will be available to the media to answer questions and to interpret the child protection policy. The use of a prepared statement with the advice of legal counsel shall be the means by which the child protection policy will be described to the public.
8. All reports of child abuse or neglect shall be held in absolute confidence. No person shall communicate any information concerning the alleged event to any person except as necessary to cooperate with an official investigation. Any breach of this confidentiality by an IPC employee/volunteer may be cause for immediate dismissal. The pastor, in consultation with the official conducting the investigation, may authorize limited additional disclosure if necessary to protect other minors from harm in the near future, particularly where the person responsible for the abuse cannot be identified. But in no case shall the identity of the victim or the accused person be disclosed except as required by law. Any person who is found guilty of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position with minors.

¹ Adapted from *Child Protection Policy*, Lookout Mountain Presbyterian Church, Lookout Mountain, TN

Appendix B

Guidelines for Discipline & Restroom Policy²

No form of punishment that involves pain or physical discomfort may be used.

Volunteers should follow the following steps of discipline:

1. Redirection
2. Positive reinforcement
3. Verbal reprimand
4. Timeout
 - a. 1 minute per age of child
 - b. Timeout chair should be located away from play but within sight of adult.
 - c. After three timeouts the parent is sent for.
5. If a child threatens the safety of other children, send for parent immediately and protect the other children. (Minors may be restrained if they are in danger of hurting themselves or others. Disruptive minors may be removed from the group to another part of the room.)

Employees and volunteers are strongly encouraged to use these same guidelines with their own children while at IPC, realizing that our guests and members do not know which children belong to leaders and which do not.

Restroom Policy:

1. Children should ask permission to use the restroom.
2. Children age seven and under should be accompanied by an adult.
3. If a classroom bathroom is not available, adults should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group, if possible, never taking a child to the bathroom alone.
4. The adult should check to be sure the restroom is empty and then wait outside the stall and assist as needed. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.
5. For the protection of all, workers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child.
6. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

² Adapted from *Summit Kids Leadership Handbook*, The Summit Church, Durham, NC

Appendix C

Guidelines for Appropriate and Inappropriate Conduct³

I. Permissible Contact

1. Employees/volunteers should limit their physical contact with minors. Permissible contact includes a pat on the back or on the head, or a handshake. Brief hugs are permissible within sight of others. Avoid any prolonged hugs and stop a hug immediately upon request of the minor. Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms, placing an arm around the shoulders, sitting beside minors, holding hands during prayer, high fives and hand slapping are all appropriate.
2. Gift giving — Accepting and giving gifts from/to minors is permissible when appropriate (Christmas, birthday) but is discouraged as a frequent practice. Report to your supervisor any gifts you receive that seem inappropriately given.
3. Close emotional relationships — Employees/volunteers need to avoid developing close emotional relationships with minors of the opposite sex and exercise extreme caution in dealing with minors of the same sex.

II. Prohibited Contact

1. Sexual abuse — Any physical contact between an employee/volunteer and a minor that would provide, or is intended to provide, any form of sexual gratification.
2. Physical contact — Physical contact between an employee/volunteer and a minor that includes giving massages, kissing, prolonged embracing, and so forth.
3. Physical abuse — Striking, spanking, shaking, slapping or other violent behaviors towards a minor.
4. Pornography — Showing minors images that are pornographic is prohibited. Accidental viewing of pornography when in the presence of minors should be reported to your supervisor immediately. If employees/volunteers become aware of the existence of child pornography in the hands of a minor, they should immediately report this to their supervisor.
5. Verbal/mental abuse — Language that is degrading, threatening, sexual, personally intimate, related to body development or physique, or crude, regardless of how the communication was conveyed (e.g. text messages, email, phone calls, social networking site, etc.) is prohibited.
6. Dating — At no time shall any employee/volunteer pursue a dating relationship with a minor and should be sensitive to minors with “crushes.”

³ Adapted from *Child Protection Policy*, Lookout Mountain Presbyterian Church, Lookout Mountain, TN

Appendix D

Addendum for Youth & Student Ministries

1. No employee or volunteer should be alone in a room with a non-related minor of the opposite gender with the expectation of privacy, ever. This policy includes automobiles. All one-on-one with any minor, regardless of gender, should adhere to the following:
 - a. All one-on-one interaction should occur in an environment that is inherently public. Public means fundamentally two things: 1) that other people are within proximity and 2) these other people have visual and physical access. For example, due to the accessibility of the third floor of Whitaker, a brief conversation after Sunday School, when other people are in the building, would be permitted. However the same should not occur on the more isolated fourth floor. Even third floor interaction would be restricted at other times when other people are not utilizing the building.
 - b. Public establishments such as restaurants, coffee shops or parks are examples of permissible sites for conversation.
 - c. Every situation where a minor will be alone in a car with a same-gender employee or volunteer of IPC's student ministry requires written permission from a parent (texts permitted) and direct verbal confirmation of the parent as the source of the text. All such texts should be forwarded to the Director of Student Ministry with explanation of date, time and reason.

2. Ratio of employee/volunteers to minors — When supervising minors, it is required that a reasonable ratio of employees/volunteers to minors be maintained at all times. The supervisor overseeing the age group shall be primarily responsible for setting and maintaining a reasonable ratio of employees/volunteers to minors giving due regard to all factors present, including the number and age of the participants, the nature of the activities and the location where the activities are taking place.
 - a. For taking students on an overnight event, two non-related adults must be present. After that, a minimum ratio of 1/7 is required.
 - b. For general events off site of the church, or on site when other adults are not present elsewhere on the campus, requires a minimum of two adults present.

3. Overnight procedures
 - a. Overnight activities will require a signed permission statement from the parent/guardian of the minors participating.
 - b. An employee/volunteer may never sleep in the same bed as a minor.

- c. There must be both male and female employees/volunteers present at all non-local, co-ed overnights and at least two same-gender employees/volunteers on same-gender overnights.
 - d. Camping — No employee/volunteer may ever be in or sleep in a tent with non-relative minors.
 - e. Hotel type rooming — Employees and volunteers must stay in separate rooms in a hotel type environment. An employee or volunteer must avoid all instances of being alone in a hotel room with a minor.
 - f. Cabin type rooming — Employees and volunteers must not dress or shower in public areas where full exposure could be witnessed. They must also avoid witnessing full exposure of minors.
 - g. Group showers – If these facilities are necessary to use, then bathing must occur in flights of middle school (grades 6-8) at one time, high school (grades 9-12 and under 18 years of age) at another time, and adults at another time.
- 4. No confidentiality — Employees/volunteers can never promise confidentiality to a minor. Employees/volunteers must report to the Director of Student Ministries if a minor discusses harming himself or others, committing a crime or being abused.
 - 5. Digital privacy — Inappropriate use of cameras, imaging, or digital devices is prohibited. It is inappropriate to use any device capable of recording or transmitting visual images in areas where privacy is expected by participants.
 - 6. Hazing and bullying — Physical hazing and initiations are prohibited. Verbal, physical, and cyber bullying are prohibited.
 - 7. Controlled substances — The use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs and/or mind altering substances with minors is prohibited.
 - 8. Weapons — The use of bladed instruments longer than 3 inches and all incendiaries are prohibited.

Appendix E

Addendum for IPC Day Camp

Please refer to the IPC Day Camp Camper Protection Policy for additional information. The IPC Day Camp Camper Protection Policy is an adaptation of the IPC Child Protection Policy for the unique circumstances of the Day Camp ministry.

Appendix F

Volunteer Application Form (SAMPLE)

Application for Volunteer
The Independent Presbyterian Church of Savannah

All information on this application will be kept confidential. If you have any questions about the application, please call or email Josh Espinosa (912-421-8111; josh@ipcsav.org).

Name _____ Phone _____
 Street Address _____
 City/State/Zip _____ Cell phone _____
 Email _____ Birthday _____
 Occupation _____ Work phone _____

How long have you been attending IPC? _____
 Are you currently a member of IPC? _____

Why do you want to be involved with the Nursery, Children's, or Youth Ministries at IPC?

What experience do you have working with children?

Any additional comments that might be helpful:

I have read and agree to the IPC Child Protection Policy.

 Name (please print)

 Signature Date

Authorization for Release of Information:

I hereby give my permission for The Independent Presbyterian Church of Savannah (I.P.C.) to obtain information relating to my criminal history through courts, law enforcement agency, department, of any city, county, state or federal government or any person or organization having knowledge of my identity. The criminal history record, as received from the reporting agencies, may include arrest and conviction data as well as plea bargains and deferred adjudication. I understand that this information will be used, in part, to determine my eligibility for a volunteer position with this organization. I also understand that as long as I remain a volunteer here, the criminal history records check may be repeated at any time. I hereby authorize I.P.C. or authorized representative bearing this release or copy thereof, to conduct an appropriate check of, including, but not limited to, records, personal interviews, memoranda, reports of other documents, court documents, driving records, for verification. I understand that I will have an opportunity to review the criminal history and a procedure is available for clarification, if I dispute the record as received. I hereby further authorize and acknowledge that a photocopy or fax of this authorization may be considered as valid as an original.

I, the undersigned, do for myself, my heirs, executors and administrators, hereby remise, release and forever discharge and agree to indemnify the I.P.C. and its authorized representative and each of their officers, directors,

employees, members, and agents harmless from and against any and all causes of actions, suits, liabilities, costs, damages, debts, sums of money, claims, and demands whatsoever, and any and all related attorneys' fees, court costs, and other expenses resulting from the investigation of my background in connection with my application to become a volunteer.

I understand that all information gathered will be considered strictly confidential except as otherwise agreed.

Applicant's Signature

Date of Birth

Please Print Full Name

Please Print All Other Dates of Birth Used (if applicable)

Please Print Full Maiden Name (if applicable)

Social Security Number

Please Print All Names Used

Driver's License Number and Issuing State (if you will be driving a church vehicle)

PLEASE PRINT INFORMATION FOR RESIDENCES FOR LAST TEN YEARS:
(use additional paper, if needed. Begin with your present address)

Street City County State Zip Date(s)

City County State Zip Date(s) (Name used at Residence)

City County State Zip Date(s) (Name used at Residence)

City County State Zip Date(s) (Name used at Residence)