

Southminster Presbyterian Church

Safe Church Policy

Final - Session Approved 10.17.16

Edited 11.14.16

Central to the mission of Southminster Presbyterian Church is to nurture, shelter, and provide safe spiritual, emotional and physical fellowship for children and youth. In order to do that, it is necessary to have policies and procedures that protect all parties (children, youth, staff, leaders and all participants) in programs for all.

The following policy is designed to ensure safety and to build and maintain trust. The policy is implemented during Southminster Presbyterian Church sponsored events, with the exception of those for the Child Care Center and the Nursery School, who have their own state regulations and policies.

I. DEFINITIONS

A. PERSONNEL

- (1) An "adult" is any person who is 18 years or older.
- (2) A "child" refers to anyone from birth to the end of 5th grade.
- (3) A "youth" refers to anyone currently in the 6th through the end of 12th grade.
- (4) A "leader" is any adult (Age 18+) who has direct contact with children and youth. Examples are, but not limited to, volunteers who teach Sunday school, confirmation class and/or children's church; volunteers who work with youth groups, participate in extended overnight trips with children and youth, VBS volunteers, and volunteers who have regular, ongoing contact with children and youth
- (5) A "visitor" is an individual who is not directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance, or control of children and does not have routine interaction with children or youth.
- (6) A "clearance officer" is the clearance administrator for Southminster Presbyterian Church.
- (7) The "staff" are those paid employees of Southminster Presbyterian Church.

B. PROPERTY

- (1) A "church" refers to Southminster Presbyterian Church (799 Washington Road Mt Lebanon, Pennsylvania).
- (2) The "campus" is the property owned by the church including Southminster House, Windy Ridge, the vehicles, both owned by the church and private vehicles, used for transporting children, youth, staff and leaders to and from church sponsored events.

C. COMMITTEES

- (1) "Disciple Making Committee" refers to 3 session members, the Children and Family Ministries Director, the Youth Director, and other committee members.
- (2) The "Background Check Committee" consists of two active elders serving on the Disciple Making Committee and one non-staff member. The committee will be resourced by the Senior Pastor or the designated pastor on call, Director of Children and Family Ministries, the Youth Director and the clearance officer.

D. CHURCH SPONSORED EVENT

Any regularly scheduled event on the church campus and trips approved by the Session including but not limited to: retreats, mission trips (national and international), off campus music events, off-campus field trips with Church School or the youth group.

E. CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

According to Pennsylvania State Law, an abused or neglected child is any child whose parents or other persons responsible for his/her care do the following:

- (1) cause or threaten to cause a non-accidental physical or mental injury.
- (2) neglect or refuse to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, emotional nurture or health care.
- (3) abandon the child.
- (4) neglect or refuse to provide adequate supervision in relation to a child's age and level of development.
- (5) commit or allow to be committed any sexual act upon a child, including incest, rape, indecent exposure, prostitution or allow a child to be used in any sexually explicit visual material.
- (6) create an imminent risk of serious physical injury, sexual abuse as defined by Pennsylvania Statute or sexual exploitation of a child because of any recent act or failure to act.

II. A LEADER'S CODE OF BEHAVIOR

- A. In the work of ministry of Southminster Presbyterian Church, we, as adults and youth leaders, recognize that Jesus affirms and values each child. Jesus said, "whoever welcomes one child in my name welcomes me." (Matthew 18:5-6) Jesus said that we are not to allow children to stumble. We are to guide, encourage and nurture God's children so that they will develop a relationship with Jesus Christ.
- B. The public needs to know that Southminster Presbyterian Church is committed to protecting children and youth who are entrusted in our care and to ensure that those overseeing children and youth maintain responsible conduct of behavior. This includes promoting a healthy environment for all who participate in church sponsored activities.

- C. We are called to “live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:1-3)
- D. In this spirit, the staff and leaders of Southminster Presbyterian Church will:
- (1) represent the Church in a faithful, authentic and loving way, supporting the teachings, disciplines and tradition of the Christian Church;
 - (2) exhibit the highest Christian ethical standards and personal integrity in their day-to-day work and personal lives;
 - (3) conduct themselves in a professional manner in both church and work environments, avoiding any flagrant or public misconduct;
 - (4) hold one another accountable to conduct and standards appropriate to their respective roles;
 - (5) foster the dignity of each person and be committed to the best interests of others;
 - (6) respect the integrity of all individuals and protect the confidentiality of all information to which they have access;
 - (7) abstain from taking advantage of any relationship with a child/youth for their own benefit;
 - (8) abstain from physical, sexual or emotional abuse towards anyone;
 - (9) abstain from neglecting a child who is in their care;
 - (10) pray for the children, youth, and families of the church community.

III. PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE

A. Screening and Training

Prior to working with children and youth in any program, all church staff and leaders shall have:

- (1) signed a disclosure statement (see Appendix A & B) indicating that the person has received, read and agrees to comply with the Safe Church Policy and with the Code of Behavior.
- (2) completed all required clearances and background checks. Additionally, FBI fingerprinting is required from all paid staff members. As of the date of this policy, they are:
 - (a) Report of Criminal History from the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP)
 - (b) Child Abuse History Clearance from the Department of Human Services (Child Abuse).
 - (c) leaders who HAVE NOT been a resident of Pennsylvania for the last 10 years shall also complete a Finger-Based Criminal History (FBI).
 - (d) leaders who HAVE been a resident of Pennsylvania for the last 10 years shall swear and affirm in writing that they have not disqualified for service based upon criminal conviction.

- (3) It is the individual's responsibility to ascertain and submit the required clearances to the clearance officer.
- (a) If the required background checks come back clean, the clearance officer is permitted to give approval for the leader to begin service.
 - (b) If the background check reveals any prior offenses, then the matter shall be referred to the Background Check Committee who:
 - i. will review the results of the background check to determine whether the person is suitable to work with children/youth.
 - ii. may choose to meet with the person to question him/her directly, but is not required to do so.
 - iii. will make the final decision that may be reviewed by the executive session of the Session of Southminster Presbyterian Church.
- (4) The following individuals are exempt from clearance requirements: Any individual who is deemed a visitor in their limited role in interacting with youth and children.
- (5) Staff and leaders are encouraged to take part in the Child Abuse Prevention and Mandated Reporter Training which can be taken online www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu.
- (6) All leaders are required to attend a Safe Church training workshop that will be conducted by a member of the Southminster staff with other church leaders who will utilize resources provided by the Department of Health and Human Services. It will be offered as needed.
- (a) The content will be reviewed annually by the Disciple Making committee.
 - (b) All staff and leaders must attend a workshop every 5 years or as required by the Disciple Making Committee in the event of a significant change in state law or a significant change in church policy.
 - (c) All background checks must be renewed every 60 months or as required by Pennsylvania State Law.

B. Adult Supervision

Our goal is to provide a safe physical, emotional and spiritual environment for all. The church appreciates volunteers of many ages working with children and youth and will permit leaders to assist in appropriate situations once the following policies are met:

- (1) All leaders must have been affiliated with Southminster Presbyterian Church as demonstrated by participation in the worship and programming of the church or through affiliation with Southminster Presbyterian Church for a reasonable time before they will be permitted to serve as a leader with children and youth.
- (2) Open Door Policy - Each room set aside for children and youth on campus shall have a door with a see through window in it or a half door. The top half of all half doors shall remain open.

- (3) Rule of 3: There should be at least two leaders with a group of children or youth. A leader may be alone with a group (2 or more children/youth) in a room or open area that complies with the Open Door Policy as long as there is at least one other adult (staff member, parent, or other leader) in the building who is aware of their presence.
- (4) A leader may meet one-on-one with a child/youth in a room or open area that complies with the Open Door Policy and as long as there is another adult in the immediate vicinity (within earshot) who is aware that the meeting is going on.
- (5) A leader may be one-on-one with a child/youth in emergency situations (restroom trips, calming an upset child) as long as the other leader(s) are notified just prior to and immediately after the situation is resolved. If the emergency situation will require more than 5 minutes and if the child or youth's parent or guardian is not available, another leader should be asked to assist with the situation.
- (6) A leader may provide transportation to/from campus for a church sponsored event with the consent of a parent/guardian.
 - (a) Leaders are strongly discouraged from being alone in a vehicle with child/youth. If at all possible, there should be a second child/youth or another leader in the vehicle as well.
 - (b) Leaders have the responsibility of making sure parents know the location of child/youth.
 - (c) Driver must be at least 21 years old. Clearances and background checks are required along with a valid state driver's license.
- (7) A leader shall not meet with a child/youth in a private location where there are no other adults immediately present. Public places, such as restaurants and coffee shops, are acceptable places to meet as long as there are other adults immediately present.
- (8) There must be at least two adults accompanying children/youth on any overnight trips. If both male and female children or youth are present, male and female adult leadership is required. When staying overnight, every effort should be made to not have an adult sharing a room with a child or youth. If appropriate accommodations are not possible, use discretion with the leader(s) on sight.
- (9) Staff and leaders are never to give gifts to individual children/youth without the prior knowledge of the parents.
- (10) Staff, leaders and others must show discretion before touching another person. Physical contact with youth should occur only when appropriate and should not occur in private.

Electronic Communication Guidelines

- (1) Direct Contact - It is permissible for leaders to make contact with children and youth through electronic non-vocal means pursuant to the following stipulations:
 - (a) Parents/Guardians are aware that the communication is taking place.

- (b) The communication is either public or there is a record of it stored electronically.
 - (c) A leader should make every attempt to not delete electronic communication that has been sent or received from a child/youth.
 - (d) Any form of communication which does not allow for some kind of record (such as Snapchat) is not recommended by staff and leaders.
- (2) Any staff or leader who is active on social media may “follow” and “be followed by” children/youth connected to the church pursuant to the following stipulations:
- (a) They have the consent and knowledge of the parents/guardians
 - (b) If staff and leaders choose to participate in social media in such a way that children and youth are aware of their participation, they should be mindful of what they are posting and how it might reflect on them as leaders in the church.
 - (c) If staff and leaders choose to “follow” children/youth social media accounts, they shall be cautious in how they interact to avoid any type of behavior that could be seen as demeaning, inappropriate, or abusive.
 - (d) The staff and leader must accept all friend requests from church leadership and parents, unless there is a specified reason to deny the request made in advance.

IV. Persons Who Must Report Abuse

According to Pennsylvania State Law, the mandate to report child abuse is imposed on any individual who comes into contact with children/youth in the course of his or her work or professional practice. Staff and leaders who perform services for Southminster Presbyterian Church should also consider themselves to be mandated reporters if they come into contact with children and youth during the course of their volunteer work. These mandates are criminally enforceable under Pennsylvania law. Legal immunity is granted to any individual who, in good faith, makes a report of suspected child abuse, even if he/she was not under a legal obligation to do so.

V. Incidents to be Reported

A. Persons Who Must Report Abuse

- (1) Alleged past or present physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect of a child will be reported, regardless of where the incident occurred. Child abuse disclosed directly to a mandated reporter must be reported to the proper authorities. In addition, second-hand reports of abuse that are received by a mandated reporter must also be reported to the proper authorities if they afford the mandated reporter “reasonable cause to suspect” that child abuse has occurred.
- (2) The mandate to report applies to all child abuse, not just abuse that has been perpetrated by church personnel. Possible abusers could include for example, parents, relatives, older siblings, neighbors, youth group or sports leaders, family friends and other children. It is recommended that any doubt concerning the application or interpretation of these provisions should be resolved in favor of

reporting. The civil authorities will determine the particulars and take appropriate action.

B. General Procedures for Reporting

A mandated reporter is obligated to immediately notify the person in charge when abuse is suspected or has been disclosed so that the immediate process of reporting can be supported. A failure to report is a serious matter. All reports of child abuse are to be made immediately to the 24-hour Child Abuse Hot Line (CHILDLINE).

(1) Childline: call **1-800-932-0313** or electronically:

www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home

- (2) If you reported the abuse by phone, file a CY-47 report within 24 hours with local Child Protection Services (See Appendix C)
- (3) Provide a copy of CY-47 form to the Pastor.
- (4) In the event of likely imminent danger, contact local police. A written report is to be made within 48 hours and sent to the Child Protective Services agency in the county in which the abuse occurred.
- (5) Under the new law, the DHS (Department of Human Services) will notify the mandated reporter of the results of the investigations within 30-60 days.
- (6) Do not discuss the situation with the alleged offender. You are not the investigator.
- (7) Confidentiality: Any communication regarding a child abuse case must be limited to the proper reporting authorities until such time as a clear determination of the allegation has been made.

C. Reports regarding abuse includes:

- (1) The name, age, address and school of the student.
- (2) The name and address of the student's parent or guardian.
- (3) The name and address of the school administrator.
- (4) The name, work and home address of the perpetrator.
- (5) The nature of the alleged offense.
- (6) Any specific comments or observations that are directly related to the alleged incident and the individuals involved.

D. If a Southminster Presbyterian Church staff member or leader is suspected:

- (1) Upon learning of the alleged abuse the pastor on call of Southminster Presbyterian Church must be informed within 24 hours.
- (2) Notify Southminster Presbyterian Church's liability insurance company (Cincinnati Insurance Company: 877-242-2544).
- (3) The accused individual will immediately be suspended from their responsibilities that involve direct contact with children pending the investigation and resolution of the

accusation. In the event the accused is a staff person, this suspension shall be with pay and benefits.

(4) The Pastor in partnership with the staff person on call of Southminster Presbyterian Church shall contact CYS (Children and Youth Services) within 24 hours of learning of the alleged abuse.

(5) Meetings with impacted parties shall be arranged as needed.

VI. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this policy is to ensure a safe environment for all children and youth who are served by Southminster Presbyterian Church. By articulating a code of behavior through training and education, guidelines for prevention, recognition of child abuse and through a clear procedural response, Southminster Presbyterian Church strives to establish an environment where the emotional, physical, and spiritual safety as well as the spiritual growth of our children can be strengthened and nourished.

Southminster Presbyterian Church
Safe Church Policy

Appendix A

Print Name Here: _____

AFFIRMATION

As a staff member/leader in children and youth ministries; or as a staff person who works with children and youth, I affirm my commitment to support Southminster Presbyterian Church as a safe place for children and youth. I recognize that Southminster Presbyterian

Church has adopted the above Safe Church Policy. I have read and understand the policy, support it, and agree to abide by it. I affirm that I will do my part in providing a nurturing Christian environment in which our children and youth can develop in faith and in trust.

- I certify by my signature that I have not to my knowledge been the subject of any investigation, complaint or legal or church related action involving a reported instance of abuse of children or youth, and I have never been refused, resigned from or been asked to resign from a position for reasons related to such sexual abuse.

- I have been the subject of any investigation, complaint or legal or church related action involving a reported instance of abuse of children or youth, and I have never been refused, resigned from or been asked to resign from a position for reasons related to such sexual abuse. I offer the description of the situation on the back of this sheet of paper for your review.

Signature: _____

Name (Printed): _____

Date: _____

Appendix B
Addendum

I have been the subject of an investigation or instance of alleged abuse of children or youth as follows (provide a summary of the factual circumstances):

The outcome of the matter was as follows:

The name and address of other persons knowledgeable of these circumstances are:

Signature: _____

Name (Printed): _____

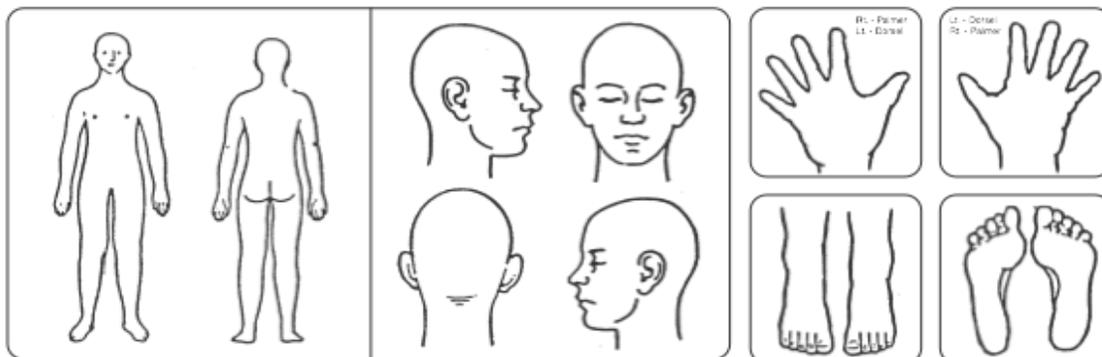
Date: _____

Appendix C

REPORT OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE (CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICE LAW - TITLE 23 PA CSA CHAPTER 63)

PLEASE REFER TO INSTRUCTIONS ON REVERSE SIDE. EXCEPT FOR SIGNATURE. PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE

1. NAME OF CHILD (Last, First, Initial)		SOC. SEC. NO.	BIRTHDATE	SEX <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F
ADDRESS (Street, City, State & Zip Code)			COUNTY	
1A. PRESENT LOCATION IF DIFFERENT THAN ABOVE			COUNTY	
2. BIOLOGICAL/ADOPTIVE MOTHER (Last, First, Initial)		SOC. SEC. NO.	BIRTHDATE	TELEPHONE NO.
ADDRESS (Street, City, State & Zip Code)			COUNTY	
3. BIOLOGICAL/ADOPTIVE FATHER (Last, First, Initial)		SOC. SEC. NO.	BIRTHDATE	TELEPHONE NO.
ADDRESS (Street, City, State & Zip Code)			COUNTY	
4. OTHER PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILD		SOC. SEC. NO.	BIRTHDATE	RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD SEX <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F
ADDRESS (Street, City, State & Zip Code)			COUNTY	TELEPHONE NO.
5. ALLEGED PERPETRATOR (Last, First, Initial)		SOC. SEC. NO.	BIRTHDATE	RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD SEX <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F
ADDRESS (Street, City, State & Zip Code)			COUNTY	TELEPHONE NO.
6. FAMILY HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION (Excluding Above Names)		RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD	NAME (Last, First, Initial)	RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD
A.			D.	
B.			E.	
C.			F.	
DESCRIBE INJURIES/CONDITION AND WHY YOU SUSPECT ABUSE/NEGLECT. INCLUDE EVIDENCE OF PRIOR ABUSE TO THIS CHILD, SIBLING OR PERPETRATOR. (PLEASE REFER TO OPPOSITE SIDE FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION). PLEASE NOTE EXACT LOCATION OF THE INJURY(S) ON MODEL BELOW.		COUNTY WHERE ABUSE OCCURRED	DATE OF INCIDENT	



CY-47 - 6/96

Code of Behavior for Leaders

Print Name Here: _____

In the work of ministry of Southminster Presbyterian Church, we, as adults and youth leaders, recognize that Jesus affirms and values each child. Jesus said, whoever welcomes one child in my name welcomes me. Jesus said that we are not to allow children to stumble. We are to guide, encourage and nurture God's children so that they will develop a relationship with Jesus Christ (Matt 18:5-6).

The public needs to know that Southminster Presbyterian Church is committed to protecting the children and youth who are entrusted in our care and to ensure that those offering services are in a right relationship with those who are receiving services. This includes promoting a healthy environment for all who participate in the activities at the church or outside the church.

We are called to "live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:1-3).

In this spirit, I will:

- (1) represent the church in a faithful, authentic and loving way, supporting the teachings, disciplines and tradition of the Christian Church;
- (2) exhibit the highest Christian ethical standards and personal integrity in my day-to-day work and personal life;
- (3) conduct myself in a professional manner in both church and work environments, avoiding any flagrant or public misconduct;
- (4) hold others accountable to conduct and standards appropriate to the respective role as a leader in the church and community;
- (5) foster the dignity of each person and be committed to the best interests of others;
- (6) respect the integrity of all individuals and protect the confidentiality of all information to which I have access;
- (7) abstain from taking advantage of any relationship with a child/youth for their own benefit as well as my benefit;
- (8) abstain from physical, sexual or emotional abuse towards anyone;
- (9) abstain from neglecting a child/youth who is in my care.
- (10) As a leader at Southminster Presbyterian Church, I agree to these guidelines when I work with the children/youth in and outside the church.

Signature: _____