



CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES (CPP)
FOR THE CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH MINISTRIES
OF GAINESVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (PCA)

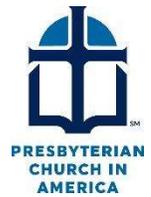


Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	3
<i>Definition of Terms</i>	4
<i>Children’s Ministries Policies & Procedures</i>	6
General Policies & Procedures.....	6
Nursery Policies & Procedures.....	7
Young Children Policies & Procedures.....	7
Youth Policies & Procedures.....	8
<i>Appendix 1: Children’s Ministry Application Process</i>	10
<i>Appendix 2: Guiding Children’s Behavior</i>	11
<i>Appendix 3: Children’s Ministry Organization Chart</i>	12
<i>Appendix 4: Frequently Asked Questions</i>	13
Why are these policies necessary?	13
Where do these policies apply?	13
Where <i>don’t</i> these policies apply?	13
Who may serve in our Children’s and Youth Ministries?	13
Who may <i>not</i> serve in the Children’s and Youth Ministries?.....	14
<i>Appendix 5: Responding to Allegations of Misconduct</i>	15
Reporting	15
Shepherding.....	15
<i>Appendix 6: Guidelines for Registered Sex Offenders Attending Church</i>	17
<i>Appendix 7: Child Protection Policy Attestation</i>	18

Introduction

At Gainesville Presbyterian Church (GPC), we have been called above all else to love the Lord our God with our whole heart, mind, and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves. This includes the children of our church, the adults of our church, and visitors who walk through our doors. Everything in this policy is designed to help us fulfill this highest calling. To this end, we have adopted self-imposed guidelines that create a safe and loving environment for the children of our church while also defining parameters for how we care for children before a problem arises. We believe that we have been called to exercise wisdom and prudence in the care of the children of our church. Our goal is for our children to be raised in the nurture and admonition of the Lord so everybody can glorify and enjoy our Lord Jesus Christ.

Definition of Terms

Approved Volunteer – A person who has fully completed all steps in the Children’s Ministry Application Process and who the Session has approved to work with children and youth based on the information obtained in the application and screening process.

Children’s Ministries Director – A volunteer who has been appointed by the Session with the duties of providing leadership to the Children’s Ministries of GPC.

Children’s Ministries Elder (CME) – A member of the Session who has been appointed with the additional duties of providing oversight to the Children’s Ministries of GPC.

Child Sexual Abuse – Any contact or interaction (visual, verbal, physical, or psychological) between a person and a child/adolescent when the child/adolescent is being used for the sexual arousal, molestation, or gratification of the perpetrator or any other person.

Children’s Sermon Coordinator – A volunteer who has been appointed by the Session to provide scheduling and oversight for volunteers and operations for Children’s Sermon.

Commission for Exceptions – A commission which includes the Children’s Ministries Elder and at least one other officer of the church. This commission is tasked with interviewing and approving non-member exceptions.

Ineligible Volunteer – A status applied to a person who has been determined by the Session to be unqualified to work with children and youth based on the information obtained in the Children’s Ministry Application Process or through other means.

Legal Caregiver – A person who is a child’s legal guardian or custodian.

Limited Approved Volunteer – A person who the Commission for Exceptions has approved to serve only in certain areas or capacities deemed appropriate.

Member – A person who has completed the Inquirer’s Class, been interviewed, and approved for membership by the Session, and who has taken the vows of membership before God to support the church in its worship and work.

National Criminal Records Background Check – A procedure used to check the background of volunteers for criminal activity.

Nursery Director – The Nursery Director is an adult female member who has been appointed by the Session to provide scheduling and oversight for volunteers and operations in the nursery. Her responsibilities include scheduling volunteers for the nursery, determining whether the nursery will be open or not (depending on volunteer support), ensuring that Nursery Supervisors and Volunteers understand and are enforcing the policies and procedures of the Child Protection Policy.

Sunday School Coordinator – A volunteer who has been appointed by the Session to provide scheduling and oversight for volunteers and operations for children’s Sunday School.

Unapproved Members – Members of GPC who have not completed the Children’s Ministry Application Process and are therefore not approved to volunteer with the Children’s and Youth ministries.

Under-age Volunteer – Individuals under the age of 18 who serve in children’s ministries

Youth – Middle-school and high-school aged children

Youth Group Coordinator – A volunteer who has been appointed by the Session to provide scheduling and oversight for volunteers and operations of the Youth Group.

Children's Ministries Policies & Procedures

General Policies & Procedures

To provide a safe and loving environment for our children, the following procedures are provided for children's ministry volunteers:

Safety:

- No one other than scheduled approved volunteers, approved substitutes, and legal caregivers helping to settle their child, may enter the classrooms.
- Approved volunteers will always maintain eyes and ears on all children, with the sole exception of when a child is in the bathroom (see bathroom policy).
- Children should always remain with their class other than when they are picked up by their caregivers or need to use the bathroom (see bathroom policy).
- **Two Adult Rule:** Two adults who have fully completed all steps in the Children's Ministry Application Process and been approved should always be present when ministering to children. Married couples will not be permitted to serve together as the two approved volunteers. If one adult must leave the room, a parent should be asked to stay until the other volunteer returns. No adult should ever be alone with a child behind closed doors. Children ages 12 through 17 may work in a volunteer capacity with younger children but, for safety reasons, must be supervised by two approved adults.
 - Temporary Sunday School Measure: Due to lack of volunteers, one teacher will be permitted per Children's Sunday School class. A hall monitor will be assigned to observe the classrooms during the Sunday School.

Classroom Windows: Windows of classroom doors must remain clear and uncovered so that outside views are not blocked.

Affection: We encourage volunteers to be warm & generally affectionate toward the children in their care. However, there are appropriate and inappropriate forms of affection. Under NO circumstances is a volunteer to kiss a child. High fives, fist bumps, and pats on the back are all great. Hugs are permitted only if initiated by the child. A child sitting on an adult's lap is permitted ONLY in Nursery and Preschool if needed/initiated by the child.

Corporal Punishment: Under NO circumstance will a volunteer employ Corporal Punishment. This includes but is not limited to spanking, hitting, mouth washing, etc. As volunteers, our role is to shepherd the hearts, minds, and souls of the children in our care.

Contacting a Parent or Legal Caregiver: If a child requires the presence of their parent or legal caregiver during the worship service, a volunteer will notify them by text message or through a Deacon/Usher. At no point will a volunteer violate the "Two Adult Rule".

Ministry Closure: The Nursery Director and Children's Ministries Director are delegated authority to close the nursery, classrooms, or other ministries in the event there are one or less children at their discretion.

Nursery

Nursery services are provided for newborn babies through age 3, inclusive. In addition to the procedures listed above in *General Procedures*, the following procedures also apply to the nursery:

A female nursery volunteer will be designated as the nursery supervisor for a given shift. Any problems or breaches in policy will be reported to the Nursery Director (see Figure 1) as soon as possible.

Nursery Safety: The following nursery-specific safety measures are in force:

- Parents or legal caregivers should check their child in at the nursery check-in station and receive identification and pickup badges/stickers for each child upon arrival.
- If it is the child's first time in the nursery, a Nursery Information Form must be filled out (emergency contact, allergy information, diaper information, etc).
- Identification badges/stickers must be checked and matched before a child is released to their parent or legal caregiver at pickup. A parent may not send another adult to pick up their child or children in their place.
- A child must not be removed from the nursery room for any reason other than when he or she is picked up by their parent or legal caregiver or taken to the bathroom by approved volunteers, or according to emergency procedures.
- Should the child exhibit any persistent disruptive or inappropriate behavior, the Parent/Guardian will be asked to take their child. Examples of inappropriate behavior include inappropriate touching, foul language, pestering, hitting, or pushing.
- Diapers will only be changed by a female adult within direct sight of the Nursery Supervisor on the diaper changing station. Volunteers will not walk away from a child on the changing table.

Two Adult Rule: The two adult rule is modified for the nursery in that at least one adult must be female.

Snacks: A standard snack will be supplied in the nursery. A small cup containing a snack and/or water may be provided if the parent provided permission on the Nursery Information Sheet and the snack doesn't violate any allergies or dietary restrictions of the child.

Clean-Up: The volunteers working the nursery for a given shift are responsible for clean-up of any food, crumbs, and soiled diapers or surfaces before leaving the nursery.

Nursing Room: The nursing room that is adjacent to the nursery and is to be accessed and used only by mothers nursing their infants.

Young Children

GPC offers ministries such as Sunday school and children's sermon for pre-school, kindergarten and elementary school aged children. In addition to the procedures listed above in "*General Procedures*", the following procedures apply to this age group:

Bathroom Use:

- For children in pre-school: children using the downstairs bathroom must be accompanied by an adult female who stays in the hallway (unless the adult is that child's parent). The door should be left ajar and the adult should wait outside the door. The adult should only enter if the child asks for assistance. If an adult must assist a child in the bathroom, the door will be left ajar, and another adult in the nursery will be notified.
- For children in kindergarten and elementary school: Children should use the "buddy system" so that as one child needs to use the bathroom, another child of the same gender accompanies him or her to the bathroom, waiting outside the bathroom while they use it. If there are not two children of the same gender present, then an adult female will follow the listed bathroom policy for children younger than 1st grade.

Dismissal:

- For children pre-school or younger: Parents must pick up their child from the classroom.
- For children in kindergarten and elementary school: Parents *can* pick up their child from the classroom, but the Teacher escorts the whole class upstairs to connect with parents.
- Children's Sermon: Since children are dismissed directly from the service and return directly to the service, the children's sermon volunteers are responsible to ensure proper transitions to/from the classroom. During this transition, one Children's Sermon volunteer will be posted in the narthex and the other will be posted in the hall at the classroom entrance to ensure the safety of the children.

Youth

GPC offers ministries such as Sunday School and Youth Group for middle school and high school children. In addition to the procedures listed above in "General Procedures", the following procedures apply to this age group:

One-on-One Time with Youth: Adult volunteers are encouraged to make an effort to develop healthy one-on-one relationships with kids in the youth group. This must be done with great care and caution, and ALWAYS with the permission of the parent. When seeking to spend time one-on-one with a youth, volunteers must:

- Alert the Children's Ministries Elder of the plans,
- Drive directly to the destination and back, and
- Meet in a public location.

Providing Transportation:

- When driving, all traffic laws, and seat belt rules are to be obeyed.
- Parental permission must be obtained prior to transporting a youth to any location.
- Transportation will be directly to the destination.
- Youth will not be allowed to drive a volunteer's car.
- Youth are not to provide transportation for other youth without prior permission from both sets of parents.
- Volunteers are never to be alone in a car with a youth of the opposite sex.
- Volunteers may not provide transportation after midnight, unless it is a youth special event with prior approval.

Overnight Retreats and Events:

- Volunteers will speak with the Children's Ministries Elder to gain permission to plan an overnight event.
- Overnight events will have written details including the purpose of the event, when and where the event will take place, a list of approved leaders, and a list of participants.
- The Children's Ministry Director will provide details to parents.
- The Children's Ministry Director will obtain written permission from parents.

Movies and Entertainment:

- Volunteers will use discernment when viewing movies with youth and will obtain approval from the Children's Ministries Elder.
- Parents will be informed of any movie that will be viewed by the youth.
- Words, thoughts, and actions need to reflect Christ. Youth workers must be careful concerning the activities in which they partake, and about which they discuss, including movies, social media, music, videos, video games, language, and posters.

Language & Humor: Profanity will not be used by leaders or youth. Humor is an important tool in the youth ministry, and should be seen as a means of making connections, engaging the minds of youth, and building relationships. Avoid all humor which is degrading for someone else, sexual in nature, or involves the harsh use of sarcasm. None of this is helpful for creating an environment of transparency and encouragement.

Counseling: When in a counseling role with a youth, always protect confidentiality except in areas which demand parental involvement (such as sexual immorality, addictions, harm to self or others, eating disorders, mental health concerns, etc.). When in doubt, consult the Children's Ministries Elder or a member of Session.

Reporting Behavior: Any suspicious behavior or concerns regarding either a leader's behavior, or a child's well-being should be reported to the Children's Ministries Elder or a member of Session. The Session will, in turn, follow reporting procedures.

Appendix 1: Children's Ministry Application Process

To become approved for volunteering for the Nursery, Children's, and Youth ministries, all applicants will be required to complete the following items:

1. Express Interest in Volunteering to the Children's Ministries Elder, Children's Ministries or Nursery Director, or the Coordinator for the ministry of choice.
 - a. If the volunteer candidate is not a GPC member, the Church Secretary will forward their name/s to the Children's Ministries Elder for the Commission for Exceptions for approval or disapproval.
2. If approved by the Children's Ministries Elder or Commission for Exceptions, the Church Secretary will then contact the volunteer candidate to initiate a National Criminal Records Background Check. If the background check reveals pending or adjudicated criminal charges or any negative information, the report will be referred to the Session for approval/disapproval.
3. **National Criminal Records Background Check** - This check will require consent to perform the following:
 - a. National Criminal Database search
 - b. Nationwide Sex Offender search
 - c. Address Verification
 - d. Re-Verification of criminal records
 - e. Alias names
 - f. County or statewide criminal court search.
4. **Online Child Safety Training** - A mandatory online training course on child safety required during the initial approval process and any ad hoc refresher training required by the Session or the Children's Ministries Elder
5. **Child Protection Policies Agreement: All approved volunteers must read Gainesville Presbyterian Church's Child Protection Policy to familiarize themselves with the particular rules, guidelines, and requirements of serving in Children's Ministry at GPC and sign the written statement agreeing to adhere to these listed policies.**

Appendix 2: Guiding Children's Behavior

Part of shepherding the children that God has placed in our midst is discipline. Inevitably, there will be situations that arise when a child's behavior needs correction. The following guidelines have been adopted to direct children through the process:

- **Appropriate interactions and expectations** will reduce the incidence of behavior problems. Be mindful of the environment. Are children being "set-up" to misbehave? Sometimes, simple changes such as a change in the room structure can help steer the children towards appropriate behavior.
- **Make sure children know expectations for behavior.** Expectations need to be stated clearly and simply. *Example: "Right now we're listening to the story. You need to sit here and look this way".*
- **If inappropriate behavior occurs, state expectations and consequences.** *Example: "Blocks are for building, not throwing. If you throw the blocks again, you will not be allowed to use them" OR "you will need to go play with something else" OR "you're going to be all done with blocks today" OR "we'll need to go take a break from the blocks".*
- **If inappropriate behavior persists, follow through with consequences.** Children will learn quickly that they need to obey when you follow through every time. *Example: The child continues throwing the blocks, so the volunteer takes away the blocks or directs the child to a different activity.*
- Communicate with parents when they pick up their child if there were behavioral or disciplinary concerns during the class or event.
- If the child's still behavior does not change, have an adult find the parent. The parent should take the child from the room for appropriate discipline/correction. It is the discretion of the teacher whether the child may return to the class or event that day.
- **Observe the child's behavior.** What is causing the behavior? Are the child's needs being met? If so, is there a sin that needs to be addressed? *Example: During story time, a child continues to talk even though you have directed him to sit quietly. Is it an issue of disobedience, or has the story extended beyond a child's developmentally appropriate attention span?*
- **Bring them back to the gospel!** Why are they doing what they are doing? We are all sinners in need of the saving grace of God! Take this opportunity to share with the child (at their level) the fact that they are sinners in need of this grace. Then pray with them for forgiveness and a changed heart.
- **Remember to extend grace to the child.** It can be easy to let previous behaviors affect the current situation. Aren't we glad God doesn't do that with us? This is a great opportunity to example the love and forgiveness of our Lord.

Appendix 3: Children's Ministry Organization Chart

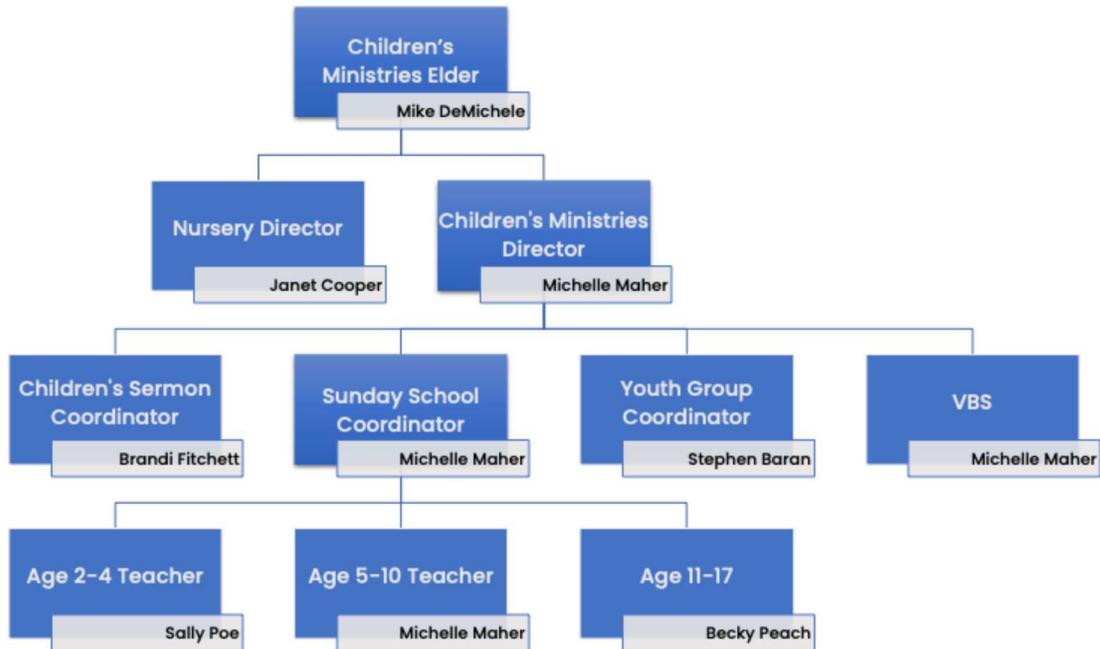


Figure 1: Organization Chart for GPC Children's Ministries

Appendix 4: Frequently Asked Questions

Why are these policies necessary?

Abuse of children is unfortunately far more common than many people may realize, and predators often appear to be trustworthy and upstanding individuals who often intentionally target churches. It is important that we create an environment that eliminates opportunities for abuse while maximizing accountability of church members and volunteers. This is not only to protect our children, but also to guard the souls of people who may be struggling with temptations to sin, to protect adults against false allegations of misconduct, and to defend the name of Christ.

Where do these policies apply?

These policies apply to any activity that is formally sponsored by GPC in which adults and youth are working directly with children ages newborn to age 18. This includes the Nursery, Children's Sunday School, Children's Sermon, Youth Group, Youth Events (to include official and regular events held at a member's private home), Vacation Bible School (VBS), and Retreats.

Where *don't* these policies apply?

While church members and attendees are encouraged to participate in adult Bible studies and small groups that are held in the private homes of members, these events are considered para-church ministries. As such, any childcare provided is arranged by the host and/or parents as they would arrange any other form of babysitting. Therefore, although hosts and attendees are encouraged to exercise prudence and caution when children are present in their homes, they are not bound by the Child Protection Policies of GPC. In addition, these policies do not apply to non-GPC events held at the church building.

Who may serve in our Children's and Youth Ministries?

Approved Members of Gainesville Presbyterian Church (GPC) are invited and encouraged to work with the Children and Youth Ministries. To be approved, one must complete the following screening process:

- Be a member of Gainesville Presbyterian Church who has been attending for at least six months
- Complete a criminal records and sex offender background check
- Sign Child Protection Policies Attestation (see Appendix 2)
- Complete Child Safety Training

Non-members who fall within the following exceptions:

- **Exception 1:** Adults who do not anticipate establishing a permanent residence in the area (i.e. college students and missionaries), but are members of a PCA church,
- **Exception 2:** Adults who do not anticipate establishing a permanent residence in the area (i.e. college students and missionaries) but are members of a gospel-believing church other than GPC and have been attending GPC for more than six months.

- **Exception 3:** Adults who have been hired as employees of the church for the express purpose of providing childcare or assisting a child with special needs.

To serve, each non-member Exception must submit to the following process:

- Interview with the Commission for Exceptions (p. 6)
- Complete a criminal records and sex offender background check
- Sign Child Protection Policies Agreement
- Complete Child Safety Training

Once all the above requirements have been met, the Commission for Exceptions will decide on approval. If an applicant is approved, the applicant will receive “approved” or “limited approval” status, depending on where or how they will be serving. An “approved” status allows applicants to serve in any area of ministry with children. “Limited approval” allows the volunteer to serve only in areas deemed appropriate.

Under-age Volunteers may serve in children’s ministries without undergoing the Children’s Ministry Application Process. Under-age volunteers may serve age groups below their current age. For example, a young child may serve in nursery, or a youth may serve in children’s sermon. Under-age volunteers do not count towards the two adult rule, and their participation is supplemental to the approved volunteers. In addition, the approved volunteers must approve the presence of the under-age volunteer. Upon turning 18 years of age, the under-age volunteer must be a member of GPC and must complete the Children’s Ministry Application Process.

All Officers (Elders and Deacons), Paid Staff, and Children’s Ministries Overseers must complete the full Children’s Ministry Application Process, whether they are volunteering with children or not.

Who may not serve in the Children’s and Youth Ministries?

Non-members may not serve unless one of the specified exceptions applies. Non-members are encouraged to become members to volunteer on a regular basis within the church.

Unapproved members who have not fully completed the Children’s Ministry Application Process may not serve.

Ineligible persons having any previous convictions or pending accusations of a crime against a minor and/or sex offenses, or anyone deemed “ineligible” by the Session may not serve in the Children’s and Youth Ministries.

Appendix 5: Responding to Allegations of Misconduct

Reporting

Mandatory Reporters: All Gainesville Presbyterian Church officers, staff, and children/youth volunteers are “mandatory reporters”, obligated by the laws of Virginia to report suspected neglect or abuse of a child.

1. **Accusation is reported to the Pastor or an Elder.** Misconduct involving a minor should be reported to the Children’s Ministries Elder. He will then complete an Incident Report Form documenting the accusation.
2. The Children’s Ministries Elder will be alerted as soon as possible. Parents will be notified at the discretion of the CME.
3. The Children’s Ministries Elder (CME) will report the accusation to Child Protective Services (CPS). All conversations with CPS are to be documented on the same Incident Report Form.
4. **The accused is removed from working with minors.** This protects the child, as well as the reputation of the accused.
5. The Children’s Ministries Elder will notify the Session.
6. **An Elder will notify GPC’s attorney of the alleged offence.** The attorney will advise when and if the insurance company needs to be notified.
7. Await the report from CPS as necessary.
8. **Only Gainesville Presbyterian Church’s appointed media spokesperson will speak with the press.** This will be a church officer who is appointed by the Session after allegations of abuse have been made.

Shepherding

The church is committed to the shepherding of all those affected by an accusation. As soon as an accusation is made, the Session will seek to care for the alleged victim. After the accused has been interviewed by the legal authorities, the Session will seek to care for the accused.

Alleged victim making allegation of misconduct:

- **Concerning his or her parent(s):** Two Elders (one being the CME) and a woman counselor will meet with the alleged victim to clarify information.
- **Concerning someone other than his or her parent(s):** Two Elders (one being the CME) and the alleged victim’s parent(s) will meet together to clarify information. In addition, a woman counselor may be invited. At the discretion of the parents, the alleged victim may also attend this meeting.

A person other than the alleged victim making an allegation of misconduct:

- **Concerning the alleged victim’s parent(s):** Two Elders (one being the CME) and a woman counselor will meet with the alleged victim to clarify information. In addition, the one making the allegation (if comfortable and willing) may accompany the Elders to this meeting.

- **Concerning someone other than the alleged victim's parent(s):** Two Elders (one being the CME) and the one making the allegation will meet together to clarify information. In addition, the two Elders and the alleged victim's parent(s) will meet together to clarify information. These meetings may be combined if all parties are willing, and the alleged victim may attend at the discretion of the parents. In addition, a woman counselor may be invited to attend these meetings as needed.

Allegations Unsubstantiated by the CPS:

- After reviewing the matter, the Elders who are involved will seek to shepherd all parties through the reconciliation process.
- The one who was accused of misconduct may apply to work with minors at GPC.

Allegations Substantiated by the CPS:

- The matter will be referred to the Session to begin proper shepherding of the victim and the victim's family, the offender, and the church.
- The offender will be restricted from any form of contact with minors at GPC.
- The congregation will be informed of the status of the investigation as deemed appropriate by the Session.

If Questions persist regarding the allegation:

- The alleged offender will remain suspended from working with children and youth at GPC until a definitive conclusion has been made. The Session will continue to investigate the allegations until a clear conclusion can be reached.

Appendix 6: Guidelines for Registered Sex Offenders

Attending Church

It is the duty of the GPC Session and all officers to ensure that any members or guests who are registered sex offenders (RSOs) comply with all federal, state, and local laws as well as the regulations surrounding their probation. This is not only to safeguard the children of the church, but also to care for and minister to the offender and ensure he/she is protected from allegations. As such, the following policies and procedures will apply:

Unapproved Status

- All individuals convicted of a sex crime will be designated as “Unapproved” to volunteer in the nursery, children’s ministries (to include Sunday School, Children’s Sermon, and VBS), and youth group. They will also not be permitted to attend youth or children’s activities.

Suspension

- All individuals accused of a sex crime will be suspended from volunteering with children and youth until they have been acquitted upon the conclusion of an investigation or trial by law enforcement and the civil authorities

Chaperone

- All RSO’s will be accompanied by a designated chaperone while on church property (to include going to and from the bathroom).

Probation Officer

- The GPC Session and Diaconate will work closely with an RSO’s Probation Officer to ensure that the member/guest is complying with all terms of probation and federal, state, and local laws.

Background Checks

- All RSO’s will be required to consent to a background check. This is to ensure that church leadership has a full account of all prior convictions. RSOs will be required to undergo repeat background checks every three years.

Appendix 7: Child Protection Policy Attestation

Gainesville Presbyterian Church
Child Protection Policies Attestation
Mailing Address: 16127 Lee Highway, Gainesville, VA 20155 Phone: 703-754-8791
Please return to sec@gpcweb.org

I attest that I have thoroughly read GPC's Child Protection Policies outlining the rules, guidelines, and requirements of serving in Children's Ministry at GPC. I agree to adhere to ALL policies listed in the Child Protection Policies while serving in a volunteer role at GPC for the safety of the children and families in both our church and our community.

Name (please print)

Signature Date