

LEXINGTON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA

**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

**Goal**

As a community of caring Christians, we are a church that cares deeply about the safety of our children, and we strive to provide a safe place for our children to grow and learn of Jesus' love for them. Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of our church and in the realm of God. Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes a child...welcomes me" (Matthew 18:5). We pledge during each baptism to guide and protect our children; this policy seeks to secure their welfare.

**Purpose**

Our congregation is committed to the safety and spiritual growth of our children. We are also committed to protect those staff members and volunteers who work with them from false or unwarranted charges of child abuse. Those adults working with our children serve as role models in the life of the church and should conduct themselves accordingly. This policy considers "child" or "children" to mean anyone eighteen (18) years of age or younger and also includes mentally disabled persons.

**Standards of Conduct**

Respect for the children should be shown by paid staff and volunteers at all times. Paid staff and volunteers shall not physically or mentally abuse any child. Sexual abuse of any kind is prohibited. Common expressions of affection and affirmation (hugs and pats on the back,) physical caregiving (diaper changes or first aid,) and support (prayer) are appropriate in this caring church community. However, care should be taken that physical expressions of affection are not excessive or imposed upon a child without his or her consent.

Whenever possible, two adults should be present with the children for all activities. Likewise, children should be transported in groups rather than alone to church-sponsored activities.

**Implementation of the Policy**

The pastor, the Personnel Committee of Session, the Director of Christian Education, and the Director of Youth Ministries shall oversee the implementation of this policy.

Written information about this policy shall be sent to all church members and posted in the church office. A copy of this policy will be included in Explore class materials.

As a condition of employment and prior to any offer of employment or volunteer assignment, all applications for employment or volunteers (who apply for positions in children's ministry) will be required to complete an application. Applicants for employment and volunteers will be required to state whether they have ever been convicted or pleaded guilty or no contest to a crime involving sexual abuse. A criminal background check also will be conducted on each applicant for employment.

All employees and volunteers must submit a signed and dated statement that acknowledges they have read this policy and agree to abide by it.

All records, including applications and results of reference and background checks, will be kept confidential and stored in secure files.

An explanation of this policy will be included in training and orientation programs annually for all church school teachers, all caregiver volunteers, and all church employees.

Non-members and new members should be paired with experienced volunteers for six months before they may lead church school, youth programs, or other positions relating to the care of children. For our purposes, an “experienced volunteer” is one who has participated in church programming relating to children for six months or more in the life of Lexington Presbyterian Church.

### **Reporting of Misconduct**

Any employee, volunteer, or member of the church who suspects a violation of this policy should immediately report the suspected violation to the pastor, the Director of Christian Education, or the Director of Youth Ministries. A prompt investigation of the reported incident or charge will be conducted by an appropriate person. Written documentation of the allegations and proceedings may be required. Information obtained during the investigation will be treated as confidential, to the extent possible, subject to such disclosures as are required under church procedures or required by law. Upon conclusion of the investigation, appropriate action will be taken.

Retaliation against any person who reports a suspected violation of this policy is prohibited and should be reported immediately. Retaliation is itself a violation of this policy and is subject to appropriate sanctions.

Further action may be taken in accordance with Lexington Presbyterian Church’s personnel policies and the legal requirements of the City of Lexington, Rockbridge County, and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

(Policy approved by Session: May 2004)