

Approved by the SIPC Session on Tuesday, August 16th, 2016

I. Statement of Purpose The purpose of this policy is to ensure as safe an environment as possible for children and youth when they are in the care of the people who are Shelter Island Presbyterian Church during meetings, retreats and other church-sponsored events.

II. Definitions and references:

A. Child Abuse: is any treatment of a child under the age of 18 that threatens the child's safety or leaves the child's life with physical or emotional scars. It constitutes any physical contact, sexual contact or communication by any adult through the use of authority over a child. Abuse can also occur between two children. It is still abuse, even if a child cooperates out of ignorance, innocence or fear.

B. Child Maltreatment: is when the responsible person is not providing minimal care for the child, with the result that the child's physical, mental or emotional condition has been impaired or is in danger of becoming impaired. This includes excessive corporal punishment or abandonment of the child, or loss of control of one's own actions due to drugs or alcohol.

C. Child Sexual Abuse: includes but is not limited to any contact or interaction between an adult and a child wherein the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult or of a third person. The behavior may or may not include touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced, whether or not consented to by the child.

D. Sexual Harassment: includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal and physical conduct constitute sexual harassment when submission to such conduct is made, either implicitly or explicitly a condition of an individual's employment or status or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment based on the declared judgment of the affected individual.

E. Sexual malfeasance: Genital contact with those for whose spiritual welfare one is responsible by one's position in the church. Mutual seduction resulting in mutual victimization is also considered misconduct.

F. Sexual impropriety: Sexual advances toward those for whose spiritual welfare one is responsible by one's position in the church. Such behavior can be verbal or physical conduct of an inappropriately sexual nature (e.g: risqué jokes, innuendoes, insults, ingratiating and over solicitous behavior, including sexually inappropriate visits and phone calls, seductions and fondling).

III. Requirements Related to Teachers and Volunteers The Session will assure itself that any person who serves as a teacher or volunteer with programs that serve children and/or youth at SIPC is qualified to do so.

- A. Teachers and volunteers will be persons who have been participating members of Shelter Island Presbyterian Church for at least six months, or who have been an active part of this congregation for at least one year. Teachers will be considered all those called by the Session and commissioned as teachers for the year. All teachers and volunteers will be a minimum of four years older than the students they are instructing.
- B. Any person in any volunteer role with children or youth will be required to complete the Paid Staff / Volunteer Information Sheet (Form 1) and receive training in the Child Protection Policy by the SIPC head of staff. Exceptions for one-time or short-term volunteers may be made only by the pastor. All church officers, including elders and deacons, as well as staff members, shall receive training in this policy.
- C. Teachers will not dismiss or ask a child to leave the classroom before the scheduled end of Church School or other event. Up through 5th grade, two children (buddy system) are required to go to the hallway restrooms or anywhere else in the buildings and grounds.
- D. Windows in all doors are to be left uncovered or the door left open. As often as practicable, two qualified adults will supervise or lead an activity involving children or youth. When a group meets in a closed space, two qualified adults must be present.
- E. When children or youth go away on day trips, overnight events or attend overnight events in the building, they must be chaperoned by at least 2 adults over the age of 25. The usual ratio for trips and/or events is one adult for six children or youth, minimum two adults. Adult advisors for off-site and in-house overnight events must complete an Adult Advisor Event Form and Covenant.
- F. Any person who drives children or youth must be a responsible, licensed driver at least 25 years of age and must complete a Volunteer Driver Form. An adult driver should transport at least two children or youth; no adult driver should transport only one youth or child, unless the driver is the parent of that child. Any vehicle used to transport children or youth must be legally registered and fully insured. The Event Coordinator shall be responsible for driving and supervisory assignments during the trip. Prior to return, no vehicle will leave until all participants are accounted for.
- G. All information and release forms submitted by volunteers and employees will be kept locked in a file cabinet in a pastor's office with access provided only to the pastor.
- H. Security background checks and/or character reference checks for persons 18 and older may be conducted, with the assistance of an appropriate agency as needed. The results of security background checks will be kept in the locked file cabinet in a pastor's office and will be destroyed periodically. Background checks are valid for three years of service.

IV. Requirement of Parents/Guardians for the Safety of Children or Youth

- A. Children attending church school through 5th grade shall only be released to the registering parent(s) or to a person authorized by the parent.
- B. Any time a child or youth leaves the church property for any kind of field trip, either in an auto or by other means, or participates in an overnight event at the church or elsewhere, the parents/guardians are required to sign a permission slip, including a medical release form.

- C. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to assure the safety of their children when setting up transportation to and from church or to/from off-site events when transportation is not provided by the church.
- D. Children or youth are the responsibility of their parents/guardians when not engaged in class or church programs.

V. Requirements Related to Church Employees

- A. All church employees and teachers/volunteers in direct contact with children or youth will be required to complete the Paid Staff / Volunteer Information Sheet and attend training in this Child Protection Policy. This training shall be conducted on a regular basis and as needed by the SIPC head of staff.

VI. Policy Oversight and Administration

- A. The Session shall be responsible for the oversight of this policy, including the coordination and scheduling of training, assuring implementation, and use of the policy throughout the church. This policy and its implementation shall be reviewed annually by the Session.
- B. The Session shall designate an “Administrator” to maintain a list of qualified teachers and volunteers, coordinate timely renewal of forms and training, and facilitate the checking of character references as needed, consistent with the requirements of this policy.
- C. All sensitive materials – including completed volunteer forms and the results of criminal background checks – shall be reviewed only by a pastor and a person designated by Session.
 - 1. Forms must be submitted in a timely manner. Such forms shall be reviewed by the pastor. If the pastor determines that the prospective volunteer is not qualified to work with children or youth, such information shall be communicated to the prospective volunteer, allowing the prospective volunteer to withdraw his/her application. If the volunteer chooses not to withdraw, the Pastor will inform the Administrator that the prospective volunteer is not qualified to serve. The ineligible volunteer will not be permitted to work with children or youth and will not be included on the list of qualified volunteers.
 - 2. The results of any criminal background check must be submitted to a pastor in a timely manner. Such results shall be reviewed by a pastor. If the pastor determines that the prospective volunteer is not qualified to work with children or youth, such information shall be communicated to the prospective volunteer, allowing the prospective volunteer to withdraw his/her application. If the volunteer chooses not to withdraw, the Pastor will inform the Administrator that the prospective volunteer is not qualified to serve. The ineligible volunteer will not be permitted to work with children or youth and will not be included on the list of qualified volunteers.
- D. For any program or activity when children or youth are not with their parents, the church member, volunteer, or committee planning such program or activity (“Event Coordinator”) is responsible for submitting to the Administrator in a timely manner the names of all adults who will be volunteering with the program or activity and for ensuring that all adults have been deemed qualified under this policy.

VII. Reporting Violation of this Policy

- A.** The following acts are prohibited by this policy and will not be tolerated or accepted during any activity or program sponsored by SIPC. Any observation or personal knowledge of such violations must be immediately reported to the pastor (or the moderator of session, if the church is without a pastor) or the clerk of session. Should the activity of concern involve a pastor, then the matter should be reported to the General Presbyter of Long Island Presbytery.
1. Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of sexual conduct toward a child or youth or in the presence of children or youth;
 2. Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any adult and a child or youth;
 3. Inappropriate sexual advances or activity between an older child and a younger child;
 4. Infliction of physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a child or youth;
 5. Physical neglect of a child or youth, including failure to provide appropriate supervision in relation to the activities of SIPC;
 6. Emotional or psychological mistreatment of a child or youth, including verbal abuse;
 7. Possessing obscene or pornographic materials at any function of SIPC;
 8. Possessing or being under the influence of any illegal substances;
 9. Consuming or being under the influence of alcohol while leading or participating in a program or activity for children or youth at SIPC;
 10. Any kind of verbal remarks with sexual connotations, overtones, or innuendo directed to or about a child or youth;
 11. Carrying any type of weapon on church property.

Any violation of this policy will result in immediate dismissal from participation in all activities and programs of SIPC involving children or youth.

- B.** Anyone who witnesses an occurrence in violation of this policy should consider the following recommendations as to how such a situation should be handled to insure the security of the child or youth involved and to protect against physical, emotional, or psychological injury to all persons involved:
1. Report the incident immediately to a pastor or the clerk of session;
 2. Do not leave the child or youth(s) unsupervised while reporting the incident;
 3. Do not personally confront the alleged or accused violator of the policy;
 4. The moderator of session will be solely responsible for all communications on behalf of the church and shall maintain a confidential, written report of the allegation and action taken.

In the event anyone personally witnesses an occurrence in violation of this policy, or receives a report of a violation, that person will be asked to complete an Incident Report.

- C. In accordance with the laws of the State of New York, any and all reports of neglect or abuse, as defined by New York State law, will be immediately forwarded to the appropriate authorities. Furthermore, the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA) imposes a mandatory reporting requirement upon all pastors (teaching elders), elders (ruling elders), and deacons of SIPC, and certified Christian educators employed by SIPC.
- D. Compliance with the reporting requirements of this policy, set forth above, does not complete the obligation one may have to report the incident to the appropriate civil authorities.
- E. Session shall be informed that an incident report has been made.

VIII. Defining and Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

- A. For purposes of this policy, child neglect and child abuse shall be defined as in the New York State Family Court Act, Section 1012:
 - 1. A neglected child is a child less than 18 years of age whose physical, mental, or emotional condition has been impaired or is in imminent danger of becoming impaired as a result of the failure of his parent or other person legally responsible for his care to exercise a minimum degree of care in supplying the child with adequate food, clothing, shelter or education...or medical, dental, optometrical or surgical care, though financially able to do so or offered financial or other reasonable means to do so; or in providing the child with proper supervision or guardianship, by unreasonably inflicting or allowing to be inflicted harm, or a substantial risk thereof, including the infliction of excessive corporal punishment; or by misusing a drug or drugs; or by misusing alcoholic beverages to the extent that he loses self-control of his actions; or by any other acts of a similarly serious nature requiring the aid of the court...; or who has been abandoned...by his parents or other person legally responsible for his care.
 - 2. An abused child is a child less than 18 years of age whose parent or other person legally responsible for his care inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon such child physical injury by other than accidental means which causes or creates a substantial risk of death, or serious or protracted disfigurement, or protracted impairment of physical or emotional health or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily organ, or creates or allows to be created a substantial risk of physical injury to such child by other than accidental means which would be likely to cause death or serious or protracted disfigurement, or protracted impairment of physical or emotional health or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily organ, or commits, or allows to be committed an offense against such child defined in article one hundred thirty of the penal law; allows, permits or encourages such child to engage in any act described in sections 230.25, 230.30 and 230.32 of the penal law; commits any of the acts described in sections 255.25, 255.26 and 255.27 of the penal law; or allows such child to engage in acts or conduct described in article two hundred sixty-three of the penal law...

- B.** Church employees and volunteers are required to report any allegation where there is reasonable suspicion to believe that a child has been or is being neglected or abused by a parent or other person legally responsible for the care of that child. The employee or volunteer shall report such suspicion to a pastor or the clerk of session, who will then report it to a pastor. Nothing herein contained shall be deemed or construed to prevent any employee / volunteer from reporting any suspicion directly to New York State Child Protective Services Hotline.
- C.** If a child is suspected of being neglected or abused by an SIPC employee or volunteer at any time, or by any person while on church property or engaged in a SIPC-sponsored activity, the person making the allegation must report it to a pastor or the clerk of session (or, if the pastor is the perpetrator, to the General Presbyter of the Presbytery of Long Island). Nothing herein contained shall be deemed or construed to prevent any employee / volunteer from reporting any suspicion directly to New York State Child Protective Services Hotline.
- D.** As a member of the Presbytery of Long Island, the pastor will comply with the reporting and incident guidelines detailed in “The Presbytery of Long Island Policy on Sexual Misconduct” and attend the mandatory training in the policy at the earliest date offered. All incident reports required by the Presbytery’s policy must be forwarded to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery in compliance with the Presbytery’s policy.

I understand that as a leader in this congregation, I am have been charged as a steward to children and youth. By signing this document, I affirm my dedication to join SIPC in its commitment to the welfare of children and youth. Furthermore, this signature affirms that I have received training in the above policies of SIPC and covenant to conduct myself accordingly.

please print name

date

please sign name

This signed copy of the SIPC Child Protection Policy will remain on file in the office of the SIPC head of staff.