First United Church of Oak Park
Guidelines for the Protection of Children and Youth
From Physical and/or Sexual Abuse

Original document approved by church council January 11, 1996.
Revised October 2004, January 2009

PURPOSE

First United has developed this policy because having the church be a safe place for people of all ages is among the most important things we do.

You, by receiving this policy, are undertaking one of the most important tasks in our church--working with our children and youth. In entrusting this important stewardship to you, we need you to know this policy and its procedures.

In summary:
People working with children/youth should be aware at all times of consistent and healthy boundaries in all interpersonal relationships. Crossing a boundary can be physical, but it also can be verbal or emotional.

We are concerned about maintaining a healthy and nurturing community in every way. One of the simplest things you can do to ensure this policy is followed is never to be alone with a child/youth. There are ways to have a private conversation with a child/youth without losing contact with a group.

Please read this policy carefully, help us share together in upholding its importance, and please contact any of the staff if we can help you understand either the thoughts behind the policy or a way to observe the boundaries drawn here.

Thank you for your care and concern of our whole church community.

SELECTION AND SCREENING

I Selection

Those adults who work in ministry with children and youth are selected in a variety of ways, including volunteering, recruitment by members of the staff or by others involved in like ministry, election by the Church Council or through employment.

II. Screening Forms

Any individual who works in any capacity with children and youth will submit one of the following screening forms (supplied by our insurance company) each year.

A. Personnel Screening Form for those working (in either a volunteer or paid capacity) as Church School Leaders, Youth Advisors, Confirmation Teachers, Child Care Providers, Children's Choir leaders.
B. A brief form for short-term volunteers such as those enlisted from the congregation to work in the nursery on those occasions when the number of adults needed to care for the children in the nursery fall short. A person who works in the nursery more than twice in one year will be asked to fill out the full personnel screening form.
C. A form designed for youth serving as Church School Leaders or Child Care Volunteers.
D. New screening forms will be submitted every three years.

III Screening Process

A. The church will submit completed forms each three years.
B. The staff will annually certify that this process has been followed.
C. Screening Process for Parachurch Organizations
    1. Boy Scouts will be required to follow through on the established BSA procedures.
    2. First United Church Nursery School employees are screened according to the standards of DCFS and the Nursery School Board.
    3. Guild Babysitters will be required to go through the same procedures as Church Child Care Providers.
    4. The Cluster Tutoring program volunteers and Oak Park-River Forest Children's Chorus volunteers and leaders will be required to go through the same procedures as adult church volunteers working with children and youth.
    5 On site PADS volunteers will be required to follow the procedures established by the PADS Board of Directors.
D. The Church shall annually communicate these expectations in writing to the above named groups and any other organization regularly housed at First United Church of Oak Park.
E. Organizations will certify their compliance with this policy by by submitting copies of their screening forms to the church office by October 1 annually.

IMPLEMENTATION AND EDUCATION

I. Church Educators, Child Caregivers, Youth Advisors, Friends in Faith

A. Each paid employee or volunteer working with children or youth will receive a copy of this policy.
B. Each person will receive an annual orientation concerning this policy.

II. Church-Sponsored Child Care (as defined by the Church Council)

A. The Church shall ordinarily provide at least two regular Child Caregivers in the nursery during Sunday mornings, from the start of church school through the end of worship.
B. We require all regular Child Caregivers to attend training with Church School Leaders or watch it on videotape.
C. Child Caregivers are advised to avoid being alone in a room with a child.

III. Parachurch Organizations

A. All Parachurch organizations will provide training on an annual basis to their volunteers and/or employees, giving us the date and time the training event occurs each year.
B. The church will hold in the church records, copies of all screening forms sent to the governing bodies of all parachurch organizations, as well as any addendum forms.

    1. Boy Scouts
        BSA provides its own screening and training for volunteers, and provides its own on-site supervision.
    2. PADS (Public Action to Deliver Shelter)
        PADS provides its own screening and training for volunteers, and provides its own on-site supervision.

IV. Nursery School

The First United Church Nursery School is charged with providing its own training for teachers and workers, according to the standards of DCFS. The FUCNS will notify the church of the dates for the Child Protection Training on an annual basis.

V. Church School Leaders

A. Church School Leaders receive support and supervision at regular Leader breakfasts.
B. Church School Leaders are required to receive child protection orientation annually.
C. Church School Leaders are advised to avoid being alone in a room with a child.

VI. Youth Fellowship Advisors, Quest (Confirmation) Leaders and Friends in Faith

A. Youth Advisors receive support and supervision at advisory meetings.
B. Youth Advisors are also required to receive child protection training annually.
C. Youth Advisors shall follow the two-person rule except in extraordinary situations and conduct interactions in the company of two or more youth at a time.
D. No Youth Advisor shall ever be alone in a car with young person.
E. If a youth feels s/he needs individual attention we strongly advise the following:
    1. grant such a request within view of others in the group (e.g. at a distance, on the other side of an open field, at the opposite end of the meeting space) OR
    2. tell other Youth Advisors of the situation and where he or she can be found with the student. If a youth and an Advisor exit from the group, the Advisor and youth will inform other Youth Advisors of both their exit and return. **This notification is essential and required.**

F. Quest Friends in Faith should always meet confirmands in public places such as restaurants or church.

<u>REPORTING PROCESS</u>

I. The Church will follow the State of Illinois guidelines concerning the Legal Aspects of Reporting
    A. Mandatory Reporters: church ministers, teachers, social workers, psychologists.
    B. State Agency to receive report is DCFS.
    C. Local Agency to receive report is Oak Park Police Department.

II. Educational Aspects of Reporting
    A. Education is required due to variability of reports. Education is required of church officers, paid staff, and volunteers as incidents of sexual/physical abuse can occur in a variety of ways.
    B. Education is necessary so there is a clear understanding of how such reports are channeled. The following people should receive training:
        1. Pastoral Staff
        2. Church School Leaders
        3. Child Care workers
        4. Junior and Senor High Advisors and other Youth Workers
        5. Other groups as needed
    C. Education shall involve recognizing symptoms of child sexual/physical abuse. Employees and volunteers will be familiar with the signs necessary to initiate reporting process.
        1. Behavioral signs
        2. Physical signs

3. Verbal signs

III. Reporting Procedure

A. All reports will be made to more than one person and shall include the Head of Staff/Lead Pastor and another member of the pastoral/professional staff. Any incidents involving a church worker/staff violation shall be reported to the Head of Staff/Lead Pastor and another staff member. Any incident involving the Head of Staff/Lead Pastor shall be made to the Moderator of Church Council and another member of the pastoral/professional staff.

B. A written record will be made by the reporter after the authorities are contacted. A report will include

Name of parties involved.
Allegations made by accuser
Response made by accused
Names of witnesses or others, who to their knowledge, have information about the incident.
Copies of any relevant documents
Recommendations for further action or needed assistance as determined by the pastoral/professional staff.
Confidentiality shall be given to all parties involved where legally possible.

C. In all cases the sole spokesperson to the media and congregation is the Lead Pastor. All requests for further information shall be referred to the Lead Pastor. In any case involving the Lead Pastor is accused, all inquiries will be referred to the Ordaining Body.

D. Church-sponsored groups will be expected to report to the church any incident or suspicion of incident and will be expected to follow their own guidelines regarding reporting and offer a written report to the church of having fulfilled their guidelines.

EDUCATING THE CONGREGATION

We recommend the following procedures for educating the congregation of our policy:

- Council acceptance of the guidelines be reported in the Messenger Bell
- OWL (Our Whole Lives) program for junior highs and their parents include reference to the policy
- Resources available to all, including a copy of the policy, in the church library

SCREENING FORM FOR TEENS WORKING WITH MINORS

This form is to be completed for any position (paid or volunteer) involving a youth in a supervisory role of minors. This is being used to provide a safe and secure environment for the activities or programs of the church.

Name_____
Last First Middle

ID or DL#_____Date of Birth_____

Present Address_____

City_____State_____Zip Code_____

Phone_____Email_____

School_____Grades_____

If less than one year:
Previous Address_____

City_____State_____Zip Code_____

Phone_____Email_____

School_____Grades_____

I understand that in serving as a volunteer for the _____ _____ I am willing to abide by the Child Protection Policy to insure the safety of children and youth in this church.

_____
Signature of Youth Volunteer Date

I do not know of any reason why my child should not serve as a volunteer worker with minors. S/he does not demonstrate any signs of being a potential risk to the church.

_____
Signature of Parent/Guardian Date