

# ST. ELMO PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

### I. Purpose of Policy

Believing that children are our sacred trust from a loving God, we should joyfully answer the call to provide a nurturing Christian environment that will encourage our children's faith. To that end, St. Elmo Presbyterian Church (SEPC) and its members are committed to the safety, welfare, and protection of all children, youth, and volunteers participating in the programs and activities of the church.

SEPC has established this policy and its procedures to provide the security and welfare of the children and to outline expectations of staff and volunteers. This policy is also intended to be a source of information for parents as to what the church policies are so that parents can freely choose to participate in various programs. Despite our best efforts, we cannot guarantee that no harm will befall a child; however, it is our sincere hope that adherence to this policy will minimize the risk of any type of abuse.

### II. Definition of Terms

- A. Child abuse is the intentional wrongful treatment of a child which results in injury to the child. Some examples of evidence of physical injury may include scars, bruises, wounds, etc.
- B. Child sexual abuse involves the intentional touching of, penetration of, or intrusion upon a minor's genitals or other intimate parts; the exposure of the perpetrator's genitals, or other sexual acts for the purpose of sexual gratification of the adult; the sexual exploitation of a minor.
- C. SEPC refers to St. Elmo Presbyterian Church.
- D. "Minor" is a child under 18 years of age.
- E. "Staff" for this policy will be paid workers who serve in SEPC ministry to minors.
- F. "Volunteers" are people who serve in an area of ministry on an occasional/unpaid basis.

### III. Procedure

SEPC will seek to prevent the abuse of children when they are participating in church programs. Preventive measures include **screening, training and supervision** of all workers.

- A. **Screening.**
  - 1. Staff: All staff must undergo a primary screening, which will consist of a background check, and the completion of a confidential written application, including questions regarding child abuse. The written application will be submitted to the head pastor who will check references and follow up as appropriate, or delegate that task.
  - 2. Volunteers: Volunteer screening will be required of volunteer workers, consisting of a brief volunteer application and follow up by staff if necessary.
- B. **Training.** All members and regular attenders who work with children will be given a written copy of this policy. They will be asked to read this policy when applying for service. Specific Training can be found in Appendix A
- C. **Supervision**
  - 1. It is our desire that activities with children will include at least two (2) workers who have been screened. However, there will be occasions, especially with youth when one on one discipleship will be occurring or transportation will be provided where this will not be the case. If parents have concerns about that situation then that concern should be brought up to the head pastor or session.
  - 2. Whenever possible, activities away from the church property will require a signed permission statement from parents or guardians of the children participating.

3. All classrooms should be visibly accessible from outside the classroom.
4. Each of the paid staff will make periodic observation of childcare rooms and classrooms during the times when programs are being conducted.

#### **IV. Reporting Child Abuse and/or Child Sexual Abuse**

All known or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse on church property or at church activities are to be reported to the head pastor who will immediately report it to the session. Should an allegation involve the head pastor, such allegations should be reported to a session member who will immediately report it to the session. In every event, police should be contacted as appropriate. Workers and all others involved should be reminded that such information, especially the names of persons involved, will be held in strict confidence.

*This policy has been approved by the head pastor and session and will be implemented through his leadership and delegation to the paid staff and or Christian Ed. Ministry Group.*

## Appendix A

### **Training Guidelines**

1. Avoid being alone in any room with any child. Whenever possible make sure there are two adults in a room.  
When meeting with an individual is necessary, attempt to meet in an open area or in a room with windows or door view glass. It is best to keep doors open and/or windows clear.
2. Being alone in a car with a child should be avoided whenever possible.
3. Common expression of affection (hugs), affirmation (pats on the back) support or physical caretaking (diaper changing/helping small children in the restroom) are appropriate in a caring community; however expressions of affection should not be excessive or imposed upon others.
4. Make sure all your speech is appropriate for ministry. Be careful not to use sexual language, personal intimacies, or crude language.
5. Make sure games and programs are safe and appropriate.
6. Corporal punishment should not be practiced.
7. A First Aid kit can be located in the kitchenette.
8. Wash your hands regularly to avoid the spread of germs.

*Revised January 2011*

Appendix B

**VOLUNTEER SCREENING FORM**

This screening form is a confidential, mandatory part of a process to help the church provide a safe, nurturing environment for our children and youth. Persons responsible for the supervision and care of our children are in a special position of trust and confidence.

**Screening Questions**

Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a felony or misdemeanor? If yes, please explain \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever committed or been convicted of sexual or physical abuse on a child? If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

Is there anything in your history that would affect your ability to appropriately work with children?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been accused or convicted of child abuse, or a crime involving actual or attempted sexual molestation of a minor? If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

If you prefer, you may choose not to answer the questions above and discuss your answers in confidence with the head pastor.

**Child Protection Policy Acceptance and Release Statement**

I have read the St. Elmo Presbyterian Church Child Protection Policy and accept it.

The information contained in this form is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize the release of any information which pertains to any records of convictions contained in any police department or law enforcement files maintained on me. I hereby release all such law enforcement agencies from any and all liability resulting from such disclosure.

I agree to be bound by the policies of SEPC on behalf of the church. I acknowledge that these policies do not constitute a contract between the church and myself, and that SEPC is not responsible for the individual acts of any worker.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (print name), accept the responsibility to nurture the Christian faith and well-being of the children and youth of SEPC, and to care for them as Christ cares for me.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

***Please return this form to the appropriate youth/child staff member or if you would prefer the head pastor.***

**ST. ELMO PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
APPLICATION FOR WORK WITH CHILDREN**

This Application is a confidential, mandatory part of a process to help the church provide a safe, nurturing environment for our children and youth. Persons responsible for the supervision and care of our children are in a special position of trust and confidence.

**Personal Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone # (H): \_\_\_\_\_ (W): \_\_\_\_\_

**Church or Youth Work Experience**

Names and addresses of churches attended on a regular basis during the last five years:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

All previous church and non-church work involving young people (name, address, type of work performed, dates):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Any talents, training, education, etc. that have prepared you to work with young people:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Personal References

Please furnish personal references including previous churches where you have served.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

## Screening Questions

Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a felony or misdemeanor? If yes, please explain \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever committed or been convicted of sexual or physical abuse on a child? If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

Is there anything in your history that would affect your ability to appropriately work with children?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been accused or convicted of child abuse, or a crime involving actual or attempted sexual molestation of a minor? If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have any complaints or allegations of misconduct involving children ever been made against you? If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I understand that St. Elmo Presbyterian Church may contact the churches and references I have provided as part of SEPC's consideration of this application. I hereby release from any liability any person or organization that provides information.

I certify that the information I have provided is true and correct. If it is found that the answers given are untrue, I understand that it may be cause for dismissal.

Applicant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Return to the Pastor or Children's Ministry Director/Nursery Director

*Revised January 2011*