

CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in Central Presbyterian Church (CPC) programs and activities.

1. Communication/Awareness

This policy shall be disseminated widely to the CPC community through publications, public discussion, educational opportunities, sermons, training programs, and other appropriate means of communication that will raise awareness and create a safe environment for our children. Specifically, the most current version of our policy shall be:

- posted on the CPC website and/or on MyCentral.
- made available in print form upon request.
- highlighted in Family Ministries newsletters regularly.
- provided in new member packets.

2. Training

Central Presbyterian Church will provide training on this child protection policy to all new staff and volunteers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on a regular basis. All staff and volunteers will be strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

3. Employee and Volunteer Screening

- 3.1 In keeping with our values of protecting the children in our care, CPC will administer screening procedures for any person whom the church employs or any person who volunteers with family ministries.
- 3.2 Central Presbyterian Church aims to hire employees and recruit volunteers to work with children who fit our vision, culture, theology, and values. Central Presbyterian Church is a member of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), a conservative, traditional denomination. The EPC is a family of churches, reformed and Presbyterian, defined by shared core values and bonded by the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The EPC is a church family centered upon the good news of what God has done for the world through His Son, Jesus Christ.
- 3.3 An individual will be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with children after s/he has been involved with CPC community for a minimum of six (6) months.
- 3.4 All individuals seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous CPC affiliation,

CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at CPC.

- 3.5 A national criminal background check is required for all employees, regardless of position, and volunteers, as defined above. Central Presbyterian Church limits, but does not withhold completely, opportunities to serve children for any community members who have offenses on their background check that are not related to children (e.g., DUI).
- 3.6 Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position. (This step may not always be required for those working in a role that does not involve formal teaching/discipleship.)
- 3.7 Upon completion of the application, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at CPC. (This step may not always be required for those working in a role that does not involve formal teaching/discipleship.)
- 3.8 Central Presbyterian Church will search for the applicant's appropriate social media presence. (This step may not always be required for those working in a role that does not involve formal teaching/discipleship.)

4. Protective Practices

4.1 General Guidelines for Interaction Between Adults and Children:

- 4.1.1 Central Presbyterian Church prohibits all staff members from engaging in arranged, private interactions with children/students met in CPC ministries outside the context of those ministries. This includes, but is not limited to, babysitting, tutoring, coaching, etc., when parents are not present. Staff members who are parents of CPC children/students may interact with the peers of their own children outside of CPC ministries with parent permission.
- 4.1.2 Interactions with children should always be observable and interruptible. Central Presbyterian Church prohibits its volunteers and staff from spending time with children alone without a caregiver's consent, without a supervisor's knowledge, or in any isolated setting. During all programming and activities where children are present, a minimum of two unrelated adult leaders will be present in observable spaces at all times.

CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

4.2 Registration and Attendance:

- 4.2.1 Registration information will be collected for all children who attend activities and programs. The registration will record who may safely pick up a child from an event and other helpful information about the child, such as emergency contact information and allergies.
- 4.2.2 Attendance will be taken at all events. Once a child's attendance is recorded for an event, it is CPC's responsibility to supervise children in attendance from the time they are dropped off until the time they are picked up by a caregiver. Central Presbyterian Church staff and volunteers will ensure that safe pick-up and drop-off practices and procedures are observed for children of all ages. Children 6th grade and older may be released without parental sign-out from regular ministry events.
- 4.2.3 Children 5th grade and younger must walk with a parent or older student (6th grade and older) to and from programming spaces. All children must remain in observable areas in the buildings or in confined play areas.

4.3 Restroom Guidelines:

- 4.3.1 Parents are encouraged to take their children to the restroom before or after class. Restrooms used by children should be marked as "Children's (or Student's) Restrooms" and are off-limits to adults. For the protection of all, leaders should never be alone with a child or student in a bathroom with the door closed. All diaper changes and potty-training efforts are to remain observable.
- 4.3.2 If a child, 5th grade and younger, needs to use the restroom during programming:
- The leader should check the bathroom first to make sure that no adults are using it before allowing the child inside. The leader sends the child into the restroom and tells the child s/he will be waiting in the hallway.
 - One leader monitors the hallway while the other leader stands in the classroom doorway, both maintaining a line of sight with each other.
 - One leader should maintain a line of sound or sight with the restroom at all times, listening in case the child calls for assistance.
 - If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the leader should ask the child if s/he needs help by calling from the hallway. If the child requires assistance, the leader should notify another leader (perhaps from another classroom) before entering the restroom to assist the child quickly. Another leader should help maintain a line of sound while the first leader assists the child in the restroom.

CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

- The main restroom door must remain propped open in multi-stall restrooms to retain proximity of sound.
 - Leaders who assist children in restrooms should inform parents during pick-up.
- 4.3.3 If a student, 6th- 12th grade, needs to use the restroom during programming:
- The main restroom doors must remain propped open in multi-stall restrooms to retain proximity of sound.
 - Adult leaders should not be in the restroom when students are present. Leaders should use the adult restroom or communicate with each other when they need to enter the restroom.
 - Leaders should frequently monitor the restroom hallway, maintaining a line of sight or sound as often as possible.
 - If a student is taking longer than seems necessary, the leader should call from the hallway to the student asking if s/he needs help. If the student requires assistance, the leader should notify another leader before entering the restroom. Only female leaders may assist female students and only male leaders with male students. Another leader must help maintain a line of sight and sound while a leader assists a student in the restroom.
 - If a student required assistance in restrooms, leaders should inform parents within 24 hours.
- 4.4 Safe Touch: Unwelcome touch is never allowed. Adults should always understand and respect that children do not always welcome touch. Central Presbyterian Church requires that all touch between an adult and a child is appropriate and observable.
- 4.4.1 Central Presbyterian Church desires to show healthy affection to all children. Examples of healthy affection are:
- displays of affection that are observable and interruptible
 - high-fives/fist bumps
 - pats on the shoulder
 - quick/side hugs
- 4.4.2 Central Presbyterian Church prohibits the following touch:
- any touch that is unwanted by a child
 - physically abusive, including all corporal punishment
 - sexually abusive, such as touching private parts
 - any intimate or unusual touch, such as touching stomach or thighs
 - tickling
 - wrestling
 - lap sitting (for ages 3 and older or without a parent's permission)
 - prolonged hugs

CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

4.4.3 Central Presbyterian Church discourages staff and volunteers from carrying children over the age of 3 years old, except in cases of emergency.

4.5 Discipline:

4.5.1 Corporal punishment is prohibited, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Staff and volunteers should consult the Director of Family Ministries if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues. Central Presbyterian Church encourages positive and preventative discipline, in both words and actions. Examples will be discussed in regular leader training sessions.

4.5.2 Staff and volunteers are prohibited from displaying favoritism or singling out a child for punishment. If a leader or parent feels a child is in need of individual attention for the purpose of discipleship, please see the Individual Shepherding section of this policy.

4.6 Safe Communication:

4.6.1 Central Presbyterian Church requires that all communication, both in person and digital, between an adult and a child is appropriate. Digital communication should mainly be done through group messages and/or with the parents copied. Private communication between staff/volunteers and children should be short and infrequent. Staff/volunteers will immediately inform parents of patterns and/or concerns. Prolonged conversations between staff/volunteers and children should take place in person and in public following the guidelines established in the Individual Shepherding section of this policy.

4.6.2 Central Presbyterian Church encourages positive verbal interactions, including:

- encouragement
- kind words
- positive reinforcement
- appropriate jokes

4.6.3 Central Presbyterian Church acknowledges that sexual language is more than mere jokes, but a serious boundary violation. As such, it prohibits:

- sexually suggestive language, racy jokes, sexual innuendo, descriptions of sexual experiences/habits
- uploading, downloading, or viewing of pornography
- music, video games, and videos/movies with sexual themes

CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

- 4.6.4 If CPC staff or volunteers want to give a lecture or organize a program to help children/students understand age-appropriate questions about their body or sexuality, the event must be planned in advance and parents notified beforehand. When children/students raise questions about their body or sexuality, CPC staff and volunteers will answer the question at hand in an age-appropriate way and inform the child's parents as well as a supervisor.
- 4.7 Transportation: The following guidelines should be followed when transporting children:
- Written parent permission must be in place. Written permission may include group text messages that include a staff member.
 - A child should never be alone in a car with a staff member or volunteer.
 - The driver must travel directly to the destination as planned with no last-minute/impulsive stops.
 - The driver should never be using a cell phone when driving children.
- 4.8 Student Childcare Workers: At times it is necessary or desirable for students (paid or volunteer) who are under age 18 to assist in caring for younger children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to student childcare workers:
- Must be 6th grade or above and at least 2 grades older than the children they are serving. Nursery workers must be 16 years old.
 - Must be known/screened with a personal interview by a staff member.
 - Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.
- 4.9 Medication Administration: Non-prescription medications will not be administered to children under CPC care. Prescription medications for a non-contagious condition or after a child is determined to no longer be contagious may be administered at the request of a parent. These medications will be kept by the designee of the Director of Family Ministries and administered according to the instructions on the original prescription bottle. Parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions, such as asthma or severe allergic reactions, should address their situation with the Director of Family Ministries to develop a plan of action.
- 4.10 Accidental Injury: In the event that a child/student is injured while under the care of CPC, the following steps should be followed:
- For minor injuries and bruises, leaders will provide first aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent and/or guardian of the injury at pick-up.
 - For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple first aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be contacted in addition to the leader's supervisor. If warranted by circumstance, an ambulance will be called.

CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

- For all injuries to children, an accident report must be completed by the leader present.

4.11 Sick Child: It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at CPC. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child in the care of CPC. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Child has nasal discharge (thick or continual clear discharge, green, or yellow).
- Child has vomited or had diarrhea within the last 24 hours.
- Child has been on an antibiotic for less than 24 hours.
- Child has a fever or has been on fever-reducing medicine within the last 24 hours.
- Child has an unexplained rash or showing signs of pinkeye or any type of infection.

Children who are observed by staff or volunteers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent/ guardian will be contacted to pick up the child immediately.

5. Individual Shepherding

- 5.1 Individual shepherding occurs when a child, parent, and/or leader feels s/he would benefit from individual discipleship by an adult leader.
- 5.2 Leaders providing discipleship must:
- Be a designated student ministry leader
 - Have successfully received discipleship training as provided by student ministry staff or through some other approved program
 - Be approved by the Director of Family Ministries
- 5.3 Before discipleship begins, the leader and parent must agree on a discipleship plan which will include the following:
- Written parental consent by at least one parent
 - Starting and ending dates
 - Goals
 - Documentation of meeting times. Meetings should always occur in a public setting (library, restaurant, youth house café) and never in a private residence unless a parent is present.
- 5.4 Documentation of leader notes will be presented to parent and Director of Family Ministries at the end of the discipleship time frame, if not before.

6. Off-Site Trips and Events

6.1 General Guidelines: Parent/Guardian permission forms and medical consent forms must be completed prior to all off-site trips. The two-adult rule must be followed throughout the trip with any foreseeable exceptions clearly stated and approved in advance by the parent/guardian. The total number of adults on each trip will be adjusted according to the requirements of the planned activities. Under no circumstances may one adult alone take or accompany children/students on an overnight outing.

6.2 Rooming Arrangements:

6.2.1 In situations where one large sleeping area is provided (such as at Spring Storm and Lou Connect), two leaders of the same sex shall accompany children or youth of the same sex.

6.2.2 In trips which require smaller, hotel-size rooms (such as at Lou Serve and RYM high school trip), two leaders of the same sex will have rooms that are adjoining the student rooms when possible or will at least be in proximity of sound of the student rooms.

6.3 Medical:

6.3.1 Each child/student and adult staff/volunteer leader must submit a completed medical/insurance form. Each child's form must be signed by a parent/guardian. A designated leader should have a copy of all medical forms, which should be kept on the event site for the duration of the event. All leaders should have access to information concerning specific medical conditions and concerns of participants.

6.3.2 Whenever possible, all off-site activities should have an adult staff/volunteer leader with current first aid/CPR certification. First aid supplies will be available on the event site. All leaders will be informed of the location of first aid supplies.

6.3.3 Required prescription medication will be kept by a designated leader and administered to children/students according to stated directions on the container. Any accidents, unplanned medication administration, medical emergencies, or injuries will be documented and communicated to parents.

CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

7. Abuse

- 7.1 Abuse is a misuse of authority and power that breaches Christian ethical principles by misusing a trust relation to gain advantage over another for personal pleasure in an abusive, exploitative, and unjust manner. Even if someone such as a church member, client, employee, or student initiates or invites sexual content in the relationship, it is always the responsibility of the pastor, teaching or ruling elder, officer, employer, volunteer, counselor, supervisor, teacher, or adviser to prohibit a sexual relationship.
- 7.2 Abuse, in any form, will not be tolerated by CPC. The goal of this policy is to establish proper preventative measures to protect individuals against sexual misconduct, as well as to specify courses of action in the case of allegations or an actual incident regarding sexual misconduct. Sexual misconduct involves not only unwelcome touching and demands for sexual favors, but also any unwelcome sexually-oriented behavior or comments which create a hostile or offensive environment.
- 7.3 Sexual Abuse: Defined as physical contact with a sexual or intimate part of the body, or other forms of sexual activity, conducted without consent, or engaged in for the purpose of sexual gratification or to degrade or abuse.
- 7.3.1 Physical contact includes, but is not limited to:
- Touching, grabbing, patting, slapping, pinching, rubbing, fondling, groping, poking, or other forms of contact, whether over or under clothing.
 - Rubbing one's genital area up against another person or touching another person with one's genitals, whether over or under clothing. This includes instances when an individual acts as though the rubbing was inadvertent but in fact it was intentional.
 - Sexual intercourse of any kind.
- 7.3.2 Sexual or intimate body parts include, but are not limited to:
- Breasts
 - Buttocks
 - Genitals
 - Groin area
 - Upper thighs
- 7.3.3 Other forms of sexual activity include, but are not limited to:
- Photographing, videotaping, or making any other visual, descriptive, or auditory recording of sexual activity or sexual or intimate body parts.
 - Displaying to another person any writings, photographs, videotapes, or other visual or auditory recordings of sexual activity or sexual or intimate body parts.

CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

7.3.4 Lack of consent may involve, but is not limited to:

- Explicit indication of lack of consent.
- Physical/verbal force or intimidation, whether express or implicit.
- When one individual is an adult and the other individual is a child. Children can never legally consent to sexual activity with an adult.
- Being too intoxicated to say “no”.
- Being asleep.
- Lack of knowledge of the activity’s occurrence.
- Not having the physical or mental capacity to consent.

7.3.5 Consider the possibility of sexual abuse if a child has:

- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- Difficulty, pain or blood in the genital area when walking, sitting, or using the bathroom
- Discharge from the penis or vagina
- Injuries (e.g., bruises, tearing, bleeding), itching, or swelling in the genital, vaginal, or anal area
- Urinary tract infections, yeast infections, sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy

7.3.6 It is atypical for children to engage in the following sexual behaviors:

- Placing mouth on sex part
- Asking others to engage in sexual acts
- Trying to have intercourse or imitating intercourse
- Undressing others, especially if done forcefully
- Imitating sexual positions with dolls
- Inserting an object into vagina or anus, especially if child continues to do so despite pain
- Manually stimulating or having oral or genital contact with pets
- Making sexual sounds
- Inserting tongue in mouth when kissing

7.4 *Physical Abuse:* Defined as non-accidental physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) as a result of grabbing, pushing, punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting (with a hand, stick, strap, or other object), burning, or otherwise harming a child, that is inflicted by a parent, caregiver, or other person who has responsibility for the child. Such injury is considered abuse regardless of whether the caregiver intended to hurt the child. Physical discipline, such as spanking or paddling, is not considered abuse as long as it is reasonable and causes no bodily injury to the child.

CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

- 7.4.1 Consider the possibility of physical abuse if you notice:
- Frequent injuries of any kind (e.g., bruises, cuts, fractures, burns), especially if the child is unable to provide an adequate explanation of the cause of injury.
 - Injuries may appear in distinctive patterns such as grab marks, human bite marks, cigarette burns, or impressions of other instruments.
 - Injuries that present on both sides of the head or body, as accidental injuries typically only affect one side of the body.
- 7.5 Emotional Abuse: Defined as acts toward a child that cause or have a substantial likelihood of causing harm to the child's physical, psychological, social, spiritual, or moral development.
- 7.6 Spiritual Abuse: Defined as abuse administered under the guise of religion. Including, but not limited to:
- Use of religious ideology, precepts, tradition, or sacred texts to harm a child.
 - Compelling a child to engage in religious acts against his/her will.
 - Abuse that occurs in a religious context (e.g., church).
 - Abuse perpetuated by a religious leader (e.g., pastor).
 - Invocation of divine authority to manipulate a child into meeting the needs of the abuser.
- 7.6.1 Consider the possibility of emotional/spiritual abuse if a child:
- Shows a pattern of bed-wetting or bed soiling that has no medical cause and is not age appropriate.
 - Expresses frequent psychosomatic complaints (e.g., headaches, nausea, abdominal pains).
 - Has not attained significant developmental milestones or suffers from severe developmental gaps.
 - Dresses differently from other children in the family.
 - Has deprived physical living conditions compared with other children in the family.
 - Has severe symptoms of depression, anxiety, withdrawal, or aggression.
 - Has severe symptoms of self-destructive behavior (e.g., self-harming, suicide attempts, drug or alcohol abuse).
 - Is overly compliant, too well-mannered, too neat and clean.
 - Displays attention-seeking behaviors or displays extreme inhibition while at play.
 - Copies negative behavior and language used at home while at play.
- 7.7 Neglect: Neglect can be manifested in a variety of forms, including:
- Physical: Failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate supervision.
 - Medical: Failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment.

CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

- Educational: Failure to educate a child or attend to special education needs.
- Emotional: Inattention to a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting the child to use alcohol or other drugs.

7.7.1 Consider the possibility of neglect if a child:

- is obviously malnourished, listless, or fatigued.
- begs, steals, or hoards food or complains frequently of hunger.
- is consistently dirty or has severe body odor.
- lacks sufficient clothing for the weather.
- suffers an untreated illness, injuries, health (e.g., unfilled cavities), or serious educational needs.
- regularly has broken or missing eyeglasses, hearing aid, or other necessary aids or equipment.
- stays at school outside of school hours.
- is frequently absent or has significant academic struggles.
- is inappropriately left unsupervised.
- abuses alcohol or other drugs.

7.8 *Polyvictimization*: Central Presbyterian Church takes all indicators and suspicions of child maltreatment seriously. We are aware of the research on polyvictimization, which tells us that children who are maltreated in one way are at significantly increased risk of being maltreated in multiple ways. Therefore, as our church becomes aware of an indicator or report of a child being maltreated in one way, we will be alert to the possibility that this child might also be maltreated in another way, and will take steps to protect the child from known risks and be extra attentive to and supportive of the child.

7.9 *Impact of Abuse*: Though a child's injuries may be hidden from the untrained eye, child sexual abuse and other forms of child maltreatment can result in immediate and/or lasting impact in all realms of the person's well-being. Understanding how child sexual abuse can traumatize the child and have lasting impact in the life of a surviving adult is a critical first step in preventing abuse and responding compassionately. Not every child will display the impact of their maltreatment and not every adult will experience the long-term consequences of their traumatic childhood experiences, but all are at increased risk.

7.10 *Perpetrators of child maltreatment*: People who sexually abuse children utilize authority, trust, or physical force/threats to gain access and control over children so they can perpetrate the abuse. The three primary categories of people who sexually abuse children are the stranger, the acquaintance, and the intra-familial offender.

CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

8. Reporting

8.1 When adults report suspected child abuse, their report could save a child's life. In contrast, silence about suspected abuse brings incredible harm to victims and emboldens offenders. All adults are expected to report observations of abuse, policy violations, and any "abnormal situations" within 24 hours.

8.2 Reporting Abuse:

8.2.1 By Missouri law, mandated reporters of child abuse are physicians, nurses, social workers, day care staff, teachers, ministers, and law enforcement officials. Mandated reporters also include any other person with responsibility for the care of children. All members of CPC take a vow to act on the best interest of her children and are considered responsible for their care. Therefore, members of CPC are required by state statute to report abuse/neglect when they have reasonable cause to suspect a child has been or is being abused/neglected, or if a child is observed as being subjected to such conditions or circumstances. Reports of suspected abuse should be made within 24 hours. Reports can be made by phone at 1-800-392-3738.

8.2.2 After a church member has reported abuse, CPC asks that they notify the Senior Pastor or the Executive Administrator, who will then notify the Governance Commission Chair, the Human Resources Oversight Commission Chair, and the Director of Family Ministries, in coordination with legal counsel.

8.2.3 Under the following circumstances, CPC will consult with GRACE to determine if an independent review should be pursued:

- When a suspicion of child maltreatment is reported to the civil authorities and they decline to investigate or prosecute the alleged abuses.
- A district attorney has not pursued legal prosecution because no suspected criminal behavior is reported; however, CPC leadership believes the individual's behavior might still violate the church policy, be immoral, be inappropriate, or be unsafe.

8.2.4 If an investigation is deemed necessary, CPC will retain an organization that meets the following criteria:

- Completely independent of CPC.
- Experienced in proper investigation techniques.
- Up-to-date on child maltreatment research.

CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

- 8.2.5 Additional steps that will be followed as necessary:
- Staff will be terminated immediately from employment.
 - Volunteer will immediately and permanently be removed from volunteer status and church discipline will be initiated in accordance with the EPC book of order.
 - Appropriate pastoral care and professional intervention for victims, their families, and others involved in congregational and employment settings.
 - Appropriate pastoral care for the accused will be provided in consideration for conflict of interest.
 - Crisis management team will be formed and tasked with the responsibility for communicating relevant information to respective families, groups, individuals, and other organizations if/as appropriate.
- 8.3 Reporting Policy Violations: Central Presbyterian Church takes policy violations seriously. Any staff, volunteer, parent, or church member who witnesses a violation of this policy which does not fall into the category of abuse is expected to contact the staff person over that area of ministry and the Director of Family Ministries.
- 8.4 Reporting Things that "Don't Seem Right": We value the intuition of everyone in the CPC community. Anyone who witnesses or hears of something in relation someone else's emotional, spiritual, or physical health that just "doesn't seem right" or that can be described as "abnormal" is expected to contact the staff person over that area of ministry and the Director of Family Ministries.
- 8.5 Accountability: The Director of Family Ministries is accountable for the oversight of the CPC Child Protection Policy. The Director of Family Ministries and/or staff members will communicate any above reports to other leaders and volunteers as necessary.

Last approved by: Family Ministry Center Team and Staff

Date: (fill in)

CENTRAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Acknowledgement of Receipt and Understanding

I acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the Central Presbyterian Church (CPC) Child Protection Policy and understand that it is my responsibility to follow it carefully and uphold it for others as well.

I also understand and acknowledge that my employment or volunteer status at CPC is “at will” and that, just as I may terminate my employment or volunteer status at any time with or without notice or cause, CPC may do the same.

I understand that a violation of the CPC Child Protection Policy will result in disciplinary action up to and including being separated from employment, volunteer status, and/or church membership.

Staff/Volunteer Signature

Date

Staff/Volunteer Name (printed)

This form should be signed and returned to CPC Business Office for filing.

Author

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