

BOUNDARY POLICIES

Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults Policy

*Approved for use by the Presbytery by the Coordinating and Planning Commission, May 14, 2020;
Adopted by the Presbytery of Florida, as revised, on _____, 2026.*

The members of the Presbytery of Florida believe we are called by God to create a safe haven for all minor persons and vulnerable adults participating in activities designed to nurture, protect, and empower them through faith and trust. This commitment includes taking appropriate steps to reduce the risk to minors and vulnerable adults in our care, hereafter referenced collectively as minors/vulnerable adults.

The following policy is established to minimize the risk to minors/vulnerable adults from being subjected to sexual, physical, or mental/emotional abuse. These procedures are also intended to respect the rights of, and afford due process to, persons accused of improper conduct.

Upon adoption by the Presbytery, this policy may be used as a model or standard by sessions and congregations developing their own policies for protection of minors and vulnerable adults within the local session's jurisdiction.

Training relative to this policy shall be required at least every thirty-six months for:

1. Teaching Elders and Commissioned Ruling Elders (CREs) serving congregations;
2. Teaching Elders in validated ministries;
3. Certified Christian Educators;
4. Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders elected to Presbytery service;
5. Candidates for ministry; and
6. Presbytery staff.

Definitions

Minor Person (Minor): A minor in the state of Florida is any individual under the age of 18.

Vulnerable Adult: "A person 18 years of age or older whose ability to perform the normal activities of daily living or to provide for his or her own care or protection is impaired due to a mental, emotional, sensory, long-term physical, or developmental disability or dysfunction, or brain damage, or the infirmities of aging." (www.flsenate.gov/laws/statutes/2012/0415.102)

Paid/Contracted Staff: Any adult who is paid or contracted to work with or in close proximity to minors/vulnerable adults at a Presbytery of Florida function or event.

Volunteer: Any unpaid person who is entrusted with the care and supervision of minors/vulnerable adults, or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight of minors/vulnerable adults.

Sexual Abuse: See Florida Statute at <https://m.flsenate.gov/Statutes/827.071>.

Screening, Training, and Background Checks

One who works with or in close proximity to minors/vulnerable adults, whether on the basis of a paid staff, contractor, or volunteer, shall be subject to:

1. The approval of completed and signed application and background check authorization forms, including a signed form verifying the event policy has been read. The application shall include a minimum of two references.
2. All who work with or in close proximity to minors/vulnerable adults must ordinarily be at least eighteen years old.
3. The applicant's consent to a criminal background check. The Presbytery of Florida will conduct and cover the cost of background checks for all volunteer and paid workers. These checks shall be run no more than six months prior to the event, and may be valid for 2 years, depending on insurance company standards. Note: Contractors will ensure that their workers have passed a Level 2 background check prior to working with or in close proximity to minors/vulnerable adults.
4. All those who work with or in close proximity to minors/vulnerable adults - paid, contracted, or volunteer - must participate in training within the year prior to the event. The training is to be provided by the Presbytery of Florida through the Ministry of Leadership Development and shall cover this protection policy thoroughly, as well as methods of abuse prevention and a detailed plan of reporting. Outside experts may be contracted to provide this training. These trainings shall further cover:
 - What constitutes minor/vulnerable adult abuse and neglect
 - How to recognize signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect
 - Definitions of abuse and reporting
 - Mandatory criminal background checks and the security of those files
 - Explanation of the importance of the application and screening processes
 - Appropriate boundaries with minors, especially regarding adult-to-minor ratios, transportation, and use of technology
 - Overnight events: appropriate sleeping arrangements and restroom/shower facilities use
 - First Aid/CPR requirement: At least one volunteer or paid staff member working directly with or in close proximity to event participants must be certified in first aid and CPR.
 - Other related topics
5. No person may serve as a minor/vulnerable adult worker who has a conviction on his/her/their record of certain felonies or misdemeanors, including, but not limited to, any of the following:
 - Criminal homicide
 - Aggravated assault
 - Crimes related to the possession, use, or sale of drugs or controlled substances
 - Sexual abuse
 - Sexual assault
 - Incest
 - Indecency with a youth
 - Inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance of a minor/vulnerable adult
 - Possession or promotion of child pornography

- The sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a minor/vulnerable adult
- Abandonment or endangerment of a minor/vulnerable adult
- Domestic violence
- Any crime that involves abduction, kidnapping, or unlawful restraint
- Public lewdness or indecent exposure
- Any crime that involves sexual misconduct or sexual abuse, particularly if it involves misconduct or abuse with a minor
- Any crime that involves misuse of technology for sexual purposes, such as collecting or distributing photographs of minors who are naked or in sexual or inappropriate poses (child pornography)
- Any crime that involves the use of force, such as assault or endangerment
- Any crime that involves drinking and driving, such as driving while intoxicated

In addition, if any council, as defined in the current version of the *Book of Order* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), of the Presbytery of Florida is aware that one who wishes to work with or in close proximity to minors/ vulnerable adults has a prior conviction for one of the aforementioned crimes or a related crime, that person shall automatically be ineligible to serve.

For the purpose of protecting minors/vulnerable adults while participating in Presbytery-sponsored events, including Dogwood Acres summer camp and youth events, the Presbytery will facilitate statewide and national criminal history checks through the Volunteer & Employee Criminal History System (VECHS). Additionally, prospective employees, volunteers, or contractors working with or in close proximity to minors/vulnerable adults will be checked through the Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Public website. The criminal history checks (Level 2 Background Screening) requires fingerprinting of the applicant/person to be screened.

Paid or Volunteer Counselors at Dogwood Acres

The Florida Department of Children and Families has specific requirements regarding summer camp background screening. Personnel described as owners, operators, employees, and volunteers working in summer day camps and summer 24-hour camps providing care for children must be screened (Level 2). If an individual has not had or cleared a background check, an employer may not hire, select, or otherwise allow such a person to have contact with any minor/vulnerable adult. Volunteers who assist on an intermittent basis for fewer than 10 hours per month do not need to be screened, if a person who meets the screening requirement is always present and has the volunteer in his or her line of sight.

The Presbytery of Florida requires a Level 2 VECHS background check and screening via the Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Public website.

More information related to Summer Camp requirements may be accessed at:

<https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/child-and-family-services/child-care/summer-camp-screening-requirements>

Expectations for Persons Working with or in Close Proximity to Minors and/or Vulnerable Adults

It is the policy of the Presbytery of Florida to provide events free of any form of sexual abuse and misconduct, including sexual intimidation by any volunteer or Presbytery employee. Sexual abuse/ misconduct, in any form, is unacceptable behavior and is subject to disciplinary action. Sexual abuse,

sexual misconduct, and sexual harassment include, but are not limited to, unwelcome and unsolicited sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, discriminatory torment based on gender or sexual preference, and other undesirable verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature, manifested in person or via any type of digital media.

In particular, sexual abuse and/or misconduct has occurred if:

- submission to any kind of sexual abuse/misconduct is an explicit or implicit term or condition of participation in an event;
- submission to, or rejection of, sexually harassing behavior is used as the basis of employment or other personnel decisions affecting the victim of the behavior;
- sexual abuse/misconduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with the victim's participation in an event or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

Any Presbytery employee or volunteer who believes, in good faith, that there has been a violation of this policy should report the perceived violation as soon as possible. If the perceived violation occurs during a Presbytery-sponsored event, the matter must be reported immediately to the coordinator of the event and the Equipping Presbyter/Stated Clerk for action in accordance with the Presbytery's policy and procedures on sexual abuse/misconduct.

Mandatory Event Rules for Working With Minors and Vulnerable Adults

The Presbytery of Florida shall ensure that the following measures are in place for each event or activity of the Presbytery involving minors/vulnerable adults.

1. Supervision: There will always be one (1) and, when feasible, two (2) adult workers present in groups of minors/vulnerable adults.
2. Ratios: The adult to minor ratio for events is a minimum of two adults for every 17 minors. There shall also be at least one adult of each gender when there is more than one gender in a group. Only in emergency situations may the ratio and gender diversity be compromised.
3. View windows and open doors: When minors/vulnerable adults are in a room with adult workers or volunteers and the door is closed, the door must have a view window installed. If no view window is installed in the door, the door must remain open at all times.
4. Adult workers/caregivers should respect the privacy of the minors/vulnerable adults to whom they provide care. Responsible use of digital devices and cell phones is required in all situations (e.g., taking age-appropriate photographs and movies; not taking photographs of minors/vulnerable adults who are not fully clothed). Adults and minors are required at all times to wear appropriate attire. Training is to be provided to understand age-appropriate behaviors that need to be reported to a caregiver or leader of the event.
5. All volunteers and employees at any Presbytery-sponsored event must also abide by a code of conduct that recognizes the following behaviors as prohibited. Some of these prohibited behaviors include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Display of sexual affection toward a minor/vulnerable adult
 - b. Use of profanity

- c. Discussion of sexual encounters with or around minors/vulnerable adults or in any way involving minors/vulnerable adults in personal problems or issues
- d. Dating or becoming romantically involved with minors or vulnerable adults
- e. Using or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of minors/vulnerable adults
- f. Possessing sexually-oriented materials – including printed or online – at such an event
- g. Telling a minor/vulnerable adult to keep something secret
- h. Staring at or commenting on others' bodies
- i. Initiating inappropriate digital communication with minors/vulnerable adults
- j. Working one-on-one with minors/vulnerable adults in a private setting
- k. Abusing minors/vulnerable adults in any way; including, but not limited to, the following:
 - 1) Physical abuse: hit, spank, shake, slap, unnecessarily restrain
 - 2) Verbal abuse: degrade, threaten, or curse
 - 3) Sexual abuse: expose oneself, or engage in sexually-oriented conversations
 - 4) Shame, humiliate, act cruelly toward others
 - 5) Neglect: withhold food, water, shelter
- l. Permitting minors/vulnerable adults to engage in hazing, bullying, derogatory name-calling, ridicule, humiliation, or sexual activity

Allegation Reporting

- All adults working with or in close proximity to minors/vulnerable adults are to be completely familiar with the procedures for reporting alleged abuse. See <https://www.flsenate.gov/Laws/Statutes/2018/39.201> to read the State of Florida mandates for reporting allegations of abuse.
- Anyone aware of inappropriate behavior involving a minor/vulnerable adult, regardless of where the conduct occurred, must immediately report the questionable activity to the event coordinator.
- If an incident is witnessed or reported, that person must first secure the safety of the minor/vulnerable adult, calling 911, if necessary. The minor/vulnerable adult should not be left alone.
- The coordinator is to immediately notify the Equipping Presbyter/Stated Clerk and should then contact the Florida Division of Children and Families (DCF) at **1-800-962-2873** (DCF Abuse Hotline). Other information regarding reporting is available at <https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/abuse/abuse-hotline>. A report sent to the Stated Clerk constitutes an allegation that must be investigated in accordance with the PCUSA Book of Order.
- The person who observed the offense or who initially learned of it or was contacted by the alleged victim should immediately fill out a written report using the attached Incident Report form.
- The Presbytery will maintain a readily available list of agencies to be contacted.
- The event coordinator shall have "Incident Report" forms available at the event.
- If an accusation by an individual who attended a Dogwood Acres camp or conference is made after the camp season is over, it shall be directed to the Director of Dogwood Acres and the moderator of MDWA, who will then report it to the Equipping Presbyter/Stated Clerk.

A Pastoral Response Team, trained and available through the Ministry of Congregational and Pastoral Care, shall be initiated by the Equipping Presbytery/Stated Clerk through the moderator of MCPC. This Team will then follow its prescribed responsibilities to support all parties throughout the process.

INCIDENT REPORT – PRESBYTERY OF FLORIDA

Phone: 850-535-2335

Please use this form to report incidents of injury, medical emergencies, significant camper misbehavior, sexual abuse/misconduct, workplace/sexual harassment, or endangerment of minors/vulnerable adults. If possible, a report should be completed within 24 hours of the event. Reports of sexual abuse/misconduct have no time limit.

Danger or medical emergency? Call **911** immediately and stay with/near the victim.

Minor or vulnerable adult endangerment? Call the Florida DCF Hotline **1-800-962-2873**.

Submit the completed form directly to:

Dogwood Acres incidents: staff@dogwoodacres.org

All other Presbytery incidents: Presbytery of Florida Stated Clerk or Assistant Stated Clerk:
<mailto:incident@presbyteryofflorida.com>

A **fillable version** of this form is available at: <https://www.presbyteryofflorida.net/resources/>

Date of Report: [Date]

REPORTING PERSON

Full Name: [Name] Address: [Address]

Phone: [Phone Number] E-Mail: [Email Address]

INVOLVED PERSON/S

1. Full Name: [Name] Address: [Address]

Phone: [Phone Number] E-Mail: [Email Address]

2. Full Name: [Name] Address: [Address]

Phone: [Phone Number] E-Mail: [Email Address]

If more space is required attach additional sheet with contact information as above.

INCIDENT TYPE

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Injury | ☐ Sexual Abuse/Misconduct |
| ☐ Behavioral | ☐ Workplace/Sexual Harassment |
| ☐ Medical | ☐ Endangerment of Minors/Vulnerable Adults |
| ☐ Other Incident: [Brief Description] | |

INCIDENT DETAILS

Date of Incident: [Date] Time: [Time] ☐ AM ☐ PM

Location of Incident: [Location]

Describe the Incident: [Describe the Incident]

Action Taken: [Action Taken]

INJURIES

Was anyone injured? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, describe the injuries: [Description of Injuries]

WITNESSES

Were there witnesses to the incident? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, enter the witnesses' names and contact info: [Name(s) / Contact Info]

POLICE / MEDICAL SERVICES

Police Notified? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, was a report filed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Was medical treatment provided? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Refused

If yes, where was medical treatment provided? ☐ On-site ☐ Hospital ☐ Other: [Other]

PERSON FILING REPORT

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____

OFFICE USE ONLY

Report received by : [Name] Date: [Date]

Follow-up action:

Action Taken: [Describe]