

BOUNDARY POLICIES

Sexual Abuse and Misconduct Policy

Adopted 10/22/96, Amended 2/14/98 and Revised 10/13/12 and 1/26/13

First Reading: February 24, 2026

SECTION I – Introduction

The Presbytery of Florida, Inc. [hereafter, the Presbytery] recognizes and affirms that all church members, officers, nonmember employees, and volunteers of governing bodies and entities of the Presbyterian Church (USA) [hereafter, PC (USA)] are to maintain the Church's integrity at all times. Sexual abuse and misconduct are not only a violation of the principles set forth in Scripture, but also of the ministerial, pastoral, employment, and professional relationship with the Church. It is never condoned. The Presbytery adopts the following guidelines for defining sexual abuse and misconduct, establishing orderly procedures for dealing with allegations and accusations of sexual abuse and misconduct by those persons who are subject to its jurisdiction.

Upon adoption by the Presbytery, this policy may be used as a model or standard by sessions and congregations developing their own policies for dealing with allegations of sexual abuse and/or misconduct 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.

SECTION II – Standards And Definitions

A. Standards of Conduct and Definitions:

1. Sexual abuse and misconduct within the church violate the role of those called to ordered ministry, employees, volunteers, counselors, supervisors, teachers, and advisors of any kind who are called upon to exercise integrity, sensitivity, and caring in a trust relationship (G-4.0301). Sexual abuse constitutes a misuse of authority and power that breaches Christian ethical principles by exploiting a trust relationship to gain advantage over another for personal pleasure in an abusive and unjust manner.
2. Sexual Abuse is the comprehensive term used in these guidelines to include:
 - a. **Child Sexual Abuse**, which includes, but is not limited to, any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult person or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child under the age of 18 and an adult is always considered forced, whether or not consented to by the child.
 - b. **Sexual Harassment**, which is unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or a condition of an individual's employment or their continued status in an institution;
 - Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting that individual; or
 - Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.
- c. **Sexual Malfeasance**, which is sexual conduct within a ministerial relationship (e.g., pastor with a member of the congregation) or professional relationship (e.g., employee with a person of authority; Equipping Presbyter/Stated Clerk with a ministry member). If a congregant, student, client, or employee initiates or invites sexual content in the relationship, it is the responsibility of the pastor, church officer, teacher, or other supervisor to maintain the appropriate role and prohibit a sexual relationship. This definition is not meant to cover relationships between spouses, nor is it meant to restrict church professionals from having normal, mutual, social, intimate, or marital relationships.
- d. **Rape or Sexual Battery**, which is sexual contact by force, threat, or intimidation.
- e. **Sexual Misconduct**, which is offensive, obscene, suggestive language, or behavior that involves unwelcomed touching or fondling that is injurious to the physical, mental, or emotional health of another when committed by a person in a position of trust.

SECTION III – Reporting Requirements

1. The Presbytery regards any allegation of sexual abuse as a grave matter. In responding to allegations of sexual abuse, the Church shall seek healing and shall assure the protection of all persons. To the maximum extent possible, the privacy of all persons shall be respected and confidentiality of communications assured to every degree possible.
2. The PC(USA) assures all persons of fair procedures in the disciplinary process through the provisions of the *Book of Order*. These procedures shall be referenced and available throughout the handling of the allegation(s), even before the initiation of formal proceedings.
3. The Presbytery will treat any written statement alleging sexual abuse as initiating a disciplinary case and will respond according to procedures in accordance with the *Book of Order*. Certain cases may require special handling, such as those involving accusation of child abuse or in situations where more than one governing body of the PC(USA) is involved. (D-7.0102; also D-7.0201d and e)
4. Mandatory Reporting (G-4.0302): “Any member of this church engaged in ordered ministry and any certified Christian educator employed by this church or its congregations, shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when
 - (1) such information is gained outside of a confidential communication as defined in G-4.0301,
 - (2) she or he is not bound by an obligation of privileged communication under law, or
 - (3) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.”
5. **Reporting to the Presbytery:** Reports should be made immediately to the Equipping Presbyter/Stated Clerk of the Presbytery or, if the Equipping Presbyter/Stated Clerk is the accused, to the Assistant Stated Clerk who will report the matter immediately to the Stated Clerk, Synod of South

Atlantic. Reports may initially be given verbally, but must then be provided in written form. An Incident Report is attached to this policy as guidance regarding the details that should be included in the written report. A report sent to the Stated Clerk constitutes an allegation that must be investigated in accordance with the PCUSA Book of Order.

6. Reporting to Civil Authorities: Everyone is a mandated reporter. Mandated reporters are required to call 911, if a threat remains, and then the hotline. If the victim is in immediate danger, call 911 immediately, before reporting it to any other authority. If the victim is safe, immediately call the **Florida Sexual Abuse Hotline at 1 (888) 956-7273**. Local civil authorities should then be contacted, per guidance via the Hotline.

Civil and Presbytery investigations may proceed concurrently, as appropriate to the specific parameters of a given situation.

SECTION IV – Pastoral Response Team

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:
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]