

# SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION & RESPONSE PROGRAM

STONY POINT CHURCH • 2330 BUFORD ROAD • RICHMOND, VA 23235 • 272-8111 • STONYPPOINTCHURCH.ORG

The following policies and procedures have been adopted and are practiced at SPC for the promotion of our church's purity and peace; and for the protection of its children and the people who serve them.

## GOALS

- To promote the purity and peace of the Church
- To avoid appearances of evil
- To protect children and youth from abuse
- To protect adult volunteers and staff from false accusations of abuse
- To establish a system of response for alleged victims of sexual abuse and their families
- To establish a system of response for alleged perpetrators of child sexual abuse
- To minimize the possibility of false accusations of child sexual abuse made against volunteers and staff

## DEFINITIONS

- Staff: Any pastor, minister, preacher, cleric, or church employee who is paid
- Children/Youth/Minor: Any person who has not reached his or her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday
- Adolescence: the transitional period between puberty and adulthood, extending mainly over the teen years and terminating legally when the age of majority is reached
- Adult: Any person who has reached his or her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday
- Volunteer: Any unpaid person participating in church activities and who is entrusted with the care or supervision of minors or directly oversees and/or exerts control over minors and adults
- Sexual Abuse: The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any minor or adult to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct or rape, and in cases of care-taker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other forms of sexual exploitation of minor or adult, or incest with a minor or adult, or as defined by federal and state law. This includes and is not limited to unwelcome sexual remarks, jokes, advances, leering, whistling, or sexual gestures; sexual touching, fondling, molestation, assault, or other intimate physical contact; compelling another person to engage in a sexual act by threats or fear or undue influence; and providing or displaying pornographic materials to another person.
- Child Emotional Abuse: Verbal or non-verbal conduct including mental exploitation, degrading communication, or humiliating or threatening conduct that may or may not include bullying or as defined by state law.

## PROTECTION AND PREVENTION

- Volunteer Application Form: All volunteers are required to complete and submit an SPC Volunteer Application Form before they serve in ministry to children and/or youth at SPC.
- Volunteer Interviews: All volunteers must be interviewed by SPC Staff before they serve in ministry to children and/or youth at SPC. If detrimental information is uncovered but the applicant remains desirable, this information will be discussed with the applicant and documented on the application.
- Screening: All staff and volunteers who are entrusted with the care and supervision of children and/or youth at SPC are required to submit to a Background Investigation before they serve in ministry to children and/or youth at SPC. This Background Investigation will research questions of identity and sexual criminal history.
- Two-Adult Rule: All adults who care for or supervise children and/or youth will work in teams of two or more. No adult will be alone with a child and youth. If one adult needs to leave an activity temporarily, doors must be left fully open until both adults are present. Staff and volunteers will only speak to minors one-on-one in public settings where they can be seen by other people. No one-on-one pastoral care will be conducted on isolated environments.
- Inappropriate Touching: All touching will be based on the needs of the minor, not on the needs of the staff or volunteers. In the event that a minor initiates inappropriate physical contact, the staff or volunteer will inform the minor that such touching is inappropriate.
- SPC staff and volunteers will not engage in the physical discipline of minors in their care or supervision.
- SPC staff and volunteers will not abuse minors in any way, including but not limited to physical, verbal/mental, emotional, and/or sexual abuse of any kind.
- Staff and volunteers will not provide alcoholic beverages, tobacco, drugs, contraband, or anything prohibited by law to minors.

## **SUPERVISION AND REPORTING**

- An adequate number of staff and volunteers will be present for all events involving minors. Supervision will increase in proportion to the perceived risk of the activity.
- SPC Staff and/or volunteers will monitor facilities during activities involving minors.
- When taking children to the restroom, staff and volunteers will accompany the child to the restroom, remain outside the facility, and escort the child back to his or her activity.
- Before taking minors off campus, SPC will provide parents with information about the outing and obtain written parental permission, including a signed medical treatment form and emergency contacts.
- When minors go on outings, SPC will use a “buddy system” of peer monitoring and support.
- All co-educational activities and outings will be supervised by teams of male and female staff and volunteers.
- When staff or volunteers are transporting and/or meeting with individual minors, they will obtain written (note, email, text) parental permission.
- If staff or volunteers recognize an inappropriate relationship developing between a minor and an adult, he or she will maintain clear professional boundaries and refer to someone with supervisory authority.
- Any staff or volunteer who observes abuse of a minor must take appropriate steps to immediately intervene to protect and assist the minor. The observing staff or volunteer must also report the abusive conduct to the proper authorities (Chesterfield County Social Services/Child Protective Services – contact information below) and an SPC officer or staff member as soon as possible.

## **DISQUALIFICATION FROM SERVICE**

While people with criminal backgrounds are most welcome to participate in and contribute to the worship and work of SPC, the following offences ordinarily disqualify a person from the care, supervision, control, or oversight of minors at SPC. But depending on the facts of a particular case, appeals may be made, exceptions granted, and special conditions for service established by the Session.

- Any history of misdemeanor or felony conviction or pending criminal offences as defined by state law that is classified as sexual assault, indecency with a minor or adult, assault of a minor or adult, injury to a minor or adult, abandoning or endangering a minor, sexual performance with a minor or adult, possession or promotion of child pornography, enticing a minor, bigamy, incest, drug related offences, or family violence.
- To seek an appeal, contact the Senior Pastor.

## **RESPONSE TO SUSPECTED SEXUAL ABUSE AT SPC**

- Reports of suspected sexual abuse at SPC should be made to any church officer and/or staff member as soon as possible.
- All reports of suspected sexual abuse at SPC will be taken seriously and reported immediately to the SPC Session and to Chesterfield County Child Protective Services for prompt investigation.
- SPC will be appropriately respectful to the needs and feelings of those who allege abuse and to those who have been accused of sexual abuse.

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# **CHESTERFIELD COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICES – CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES**

## **WHAT IS ABUSE?**

Section 63.1-248.2 of the code of Virginia defines an abused or neglected child as any child less than eighteen years of age:

- Whose parents or other person responsible for his care creates or inflicts, threatens to create or inflict, or allows to be created or inflicted upon such child a physical or mental injury by other than accidental means, or creates a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or impairment of bodily or mental functions;
- Whose parents or other person responsible for his care neglects or refuses to provide care necessary for his health. However, no child who in good faith is under treatment solely by spiritual means through prayer in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination shall for that reason alone be considered to be an abused or neglected child;
- Whose parents or other person responsible for his care abandons such child;
- Whose parents or other person responsible for his care commits or allows to be committed any act of sexual exploitation or any sexual act upon a child in violation of the law; or
- Who is without parental care or guardianship caused by the unreasonable absence or the mental or physical incapacity of the child's parent, guardian, legal custodian or other person standing in loco parentis

## TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE

- **Physical Abuse** - is defined as any act which, regardless of intent, results in non-accidental physical injury. Inflicted physical injury most often represents severe corporal punishment. Physical abuse can range from minor bruises and lacerations to severe neurological trauma and death.
- **Physical Neglect** - is defined as the failure to provide for a child's physical survival needs to the extent that there is harm or risk of harm to the child's health or safety. Physical neglect is often chronic in nature and includes inadequate nutrition, clothing, shelter, hygiene, supervision, and medical or dental care.
- **Sexual Abuse** - is defined as acts of sexual assault and sexual exploitation of minors. Sexual abuse encompasses a broad range of behavior and may consist of many acts over a long period of time or a single incident. Sexual abuse is generally perpetrated by someone known by the child and often does not involve violence. Victims include males and females that range in age from less than one year through adolescence. Specifically, sexual abuse includes: incest, rape, intercourse, oral-genital contact, fondling, sexual propositions or enticement, indecent exposure, child pornography, or child prostitution.
- **Mental / Emotional Maltreatment** - is defined as a pattern of acts by the caretaker which results in harm to the child's psychological or emotional health or development. The child typically demonstrates dysfunction as a result of the caretaker's behavior. A psychological assessment is recommended in helping determine mental abuse. Emotional maltreatment can include patterns of rejection, intimidation, ignoring, ridiculing, or isolation.

## HOW TO REPORT SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

When you suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, you should make a report as soon as possible to the local Department of Social Services. You may call the Chesterfield - Colonial Heights Department of Social Services, (804) 748-1100, during normal business hours. There is also a social worker available on-call after hours to handle emergency concerns. This worker can be accessed through police dispatch. Reports can be made to the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (1-800-552-7096), seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Provide as much of the following information when reporting an incident:

- The name, addresses, and telephone number of the child and parents or other person(s) responsible for the child's care
- The child's birth date or age, sex and race
- A description of the nature of the injuries or condition
- History of prior reported incidents of injuries or maltreatment of the child or siblings
- Reasons for suspecting abuse or neglect
- If medical or other emergency services are necessary
- The names and ages of other persons who live with the child and their relationship to the child
- The name, address, and telephone number of the suspected abuser and his/her relationship to the child
- Any other pertinent information
- Your name (however reports may also be made anonymously)

Anyone may report abuse or neglect; however, under Virginia law, certain professionals are required to report. Mandated reporters include teachers, doctors, law enforcement, therapists, and others responsible for the care of children.

Reports may be made anonymously. However we encourage callers to leave their names so they may be contacted if additional information is needed. Also, the results of the investigation will be provided.

The identity of the caller is not revealed during the investigation. It is only revealed under order of the court in extremely rare situations. Section 63.1-248.5 of the Code of Virginia provides protection from criminal and civil liability to the following persons unless it is proven that these persons acted with malicious intent: any person making a report of child abuse / neglect; and any person who participates in a judicial proceeding resulting from either making a report or taking a child into immediate custody.

After a report of suspected abuse or neglect is received, the report is assessed for validity. Before a referral for a family assessment or investigation, a determination must be made that the allegations meet the definition of abuse and neglect, the victim is currently under the age of 18, there is a caretaker relationship between the victim and the alleged abuser / neglector and that the abuse occurred under the local department's jurisdiction.

If a report is determined to be invalid, it does not mean that we disagree with the caller's concern, but rather that the call did not meet the above stated criteria for assessment. If the call is screened out for assessment, the caller will be notified and the information is maintained for one year. If a caller does not agree with this decision, the caller is encouraged to report any additional information or to clarify the concern.