

## Child Protection Policy of Independent Presbyterian Church Memphis, TN

IPC's mission is to make disciples of Jesus in Memphis. In order to effectively accomplish this, we endeavor to provide a safe and secure environment for children (under 18 years old).

**Staff and Volunteers** All staff and volunteers who interact with children in IPC ministry events, programs, and/or overnight trips (e.g., Camp Palmer, Edge, RYM leaders; homestay chaperones on choir trips; Lock-ins) must:

1. Ordinarily be regular attenders of IPC for at least 6 months and be communing members or pursuing church membership (which can be verified by a community pastor);
2. Consent to and pass a national (and possibly a state and county) criminal and sex offender background check once every two years;
3. Fill out the IPC Child Volunteer Application form, which may also require an in person interview with a ministry staff person if deemed necessary.

If a volunteer signs up or is needed for a trip or an event and has not had the opportunity prior to the trip or event to complete a background check or have their references verified, they may participate as long as:

1. a ministry director runs a background check in a timely manner;
2. a ministry director calls the volunteer's references;
3. the volunteer fills out the IPC Volunteer Application Form. Ordinarily, a volunteer is never alone with a child and is not in a cabin or room with students on an overnight trip.

**Visibility** As much as possible, ministry with children ought to occur in highly visible areas. Meetings should be in rooms where doors are open, lights are on, and windows allow clear lines of sight into the rooms. Isolated and private spaces must be avoided. Ministry activities are open to parents, who we encourage to make unexpected visits to check on their child.

**Mandatory Reporting Laws** When a volunteer or staff person witnesses, and/or when a child discloses, and/or when a volunteer or staff person knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been physically or sexually abused, the claim must be immediately brought to the attention of the ministry director responsible for that child, who will then communicate with the SR Pastor. The ministry director or Senior Pastor shall make a report to Dept. of Children's Services or other appropriate parties in accordance with Tennessee State Law: 37-1-401 through 37-1-414 and 37-1-601 through 37-1-607.

**Physical Contact** Healthy, caring touch is valuable to children but unhealthy touch is abusive. These guidelines apply:

1. Touch shall be open rather than secretive;
2. Touch should be age-appropriate & generally initiated by the child rather than the adult;
3. Touch should be with the child's permission and any resistance from the child should be respected;
4. Touch should always communicate respect for the child.

**Discipline** Every means of guidance and correction should be loving, and not hinder the faith of a growing child. No form of physical punishment should ever be used (e.g., hitting, spanking, paddling, smacking, punching). Furthermore, discipline should never include yelling, shaming, or belittling a child. If there is a serious incident that requires discipline, it should be handled by the ministry director and the parent of the child involved.

**Reporting Inappropriate Behavior** If anyone witnesses a staff person or volunteer interacting in an inappropriate way with a child, they must immediately go to that person and remove them from the situation to ensure the child's immediate safety. Then they must inform the ministry director responsible for that child, who will then notify the parents of that child and the SR Pastor. If an Elder interacts with a child in an inappropriate manner, the person who witnessed the incident should inform the Clerk of Session and Head of Staff, who will then notify with the parents of the child.

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**Training** All volunteers, staff, and parents shall be made aware of this policy, and ministry directors shall meet with their staff and volunteers at least on a yearly basis informing them of this policy, as well as instructing them in other helpful guidelines and procedures to follow that are specific to each ministry (Nursery, Children and Students) to ensure that all children under our care can grow in their faith in a safe and secure environment.

**Signed Agreement:** Staff & Volunteers must sign that they have received, read and agree with this policy on the Child Volunteer Application.