

# **Calvin Presbyterian Church**

## **Children's & Student Ministries**

### **Child Safety Policy**

Calvin Presbyterian Church is committed to providing a safe, secure, loving environment for children where parents feel comfortable leaving their child(ren).

**“Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”**  
**Matthew 19:13, 14**

**“Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.”**  
**Proverb 22:6**

In response to scripture we have instituted a policy that reflects our desire to provide for child safety and to stop child abuse as we become aware of it.

The Session of Calvin Presbyterian Church has determined that any and all adults who work on behalf of Calvin with anyone under the age of 18 will be properly selected by an application, reference, criminal background check and an interview before being placed in a ministry position with children. All persons who work with children regardless of their area of ministry are expected to adhere to the following policies. Failure to do so may result in dismissal from their ministry position. *This policy will be reviewed annually by the Calvin Child Safety Committee.* The Child Safety Committee will consist of: at least one staff member, Director of Student Ministries, Director of Children's Ministries and an elder.

#### **1. Approval and identification**

- A. All staff and children's or student ministry volunteers must have a completed and approved application on file in the church office with the exception of temporary volunteers as described on page 3.
- B. All children's or student ministry volunteers must have attended Calvin Presbyterian Church for six months prior to beginning to work with children. Any request for exemption from the six month rule must be reviewed by the Child Safety Committee.
- C. No one with known prior incidents of physical or sexual child abuse, child neglect, child exploitation, or other forms of sexual misconduct will be utilized in any capacity in contact with any child(ren).

#### **2. Number of adults**

- A. When conducting or leading activities at the church an adult leader will not be alone with any one child; in other words there must always be at least one other adult or one other child present. An adult should not be in the restroom alone with a child.
- B. During all children's or student activities that occur away from the church, and during overnight activities occurring at the church, two adults must be present at all times.

- C. The above policy includes situations where a teenager is conducting or leading the church activity and is over the age of 14 years and the child or children with whom the teenager is working are two or more years younger than the teenager.
- D. An exception to the above policy is when the adult (or the teenager over 14 years) is the parent, grandparent, sibling or guardian of the child; or has written parental permission.

### **3. Training & Supervision**

- A. The Director of Student Ministries will supervise volunteers in student programs.
- B. The Director of Children's Ministries will supervise volunteers working with children.
- C. Every children's or student ministry volunteer must complete the Child Safety Policy training annually and have a completed application on file.  
The following topics will be covered:
  - Calvin's Child Safety Policy.
  - Recognizing signs and symptoms of child abuse.
  - State law concerning reporting child abuse.
  - What constitutes child abuse.
  - Correct reporting procedure.
  - The skills of active listening and providing support.
  - The importance of volunteers *not* investigating allegations of abuse (of not asking questions of the alleged victim or the alleged perpetrator).
  - Explanation of the volunteer application and the importance of completing it.
- D. Training will be available annually in August. The Directors of Student Ministries and of Children's Ministries will be responsible for assuring that volunteers complete the training. At the conclusion of training, the volunteer will complete a signed statement that the policy has been read and understood. This statement will be kept in the church office as a record of those who have had the training.
- E. Also, in August, the Directors of Children's and Student Ministries will provide a list of volunteers, with their birth date and driver's license number, to the church office manager who will request criminal background checks.

If unable to attend the training session, the children's or student ministry volunteer must read and sign the form indicating they have read the written policy and have read through the material covered in the training session. For definition purposes an adult is anyone over the age of 18, and a child is anyone under the age of 18.

### **4. Outside groups using the church facility**

Outside groups will be expected to observe the policies and procedures of the Calvin Child Safety Policy or to present their own policy for review.

## **Child Safety Policy Procedures**

### **General**

- A. Whenever a church related activity is in session, two volunteers including at least one adult should be present.
- B. If during activities at the church it is not practical to have another adult or another child present, the adult will ensure that the door to the room remains open and that the activity is visible to others in the church.
- C. The complete Child Safety Policy will be available in the church office.

### **Restroom procedures**

- A. **Adult volunteers** should take children to the restroom in groups.
- B. Children should have as much privacy as possible. Enter a bathroom stall only when absolutely necessary to assist the child, keeping the door open.

### **Children's Ministry**

- A. Temporary volunteers who are working directly with children are not required to complete the Child Safety application and training process.
- B. A core team member who has completed the process must be present at all times with the temporary volunteer.
- C. Temporary volunteers will not accompany children to the restroom or in any other way be alone with a child or children.

### **Nursery**

- A. When possible the upper half of the hall door should be open at all times when children are present.
- B. One adult volunteer attendant may be in the nursery with no more than four infants before an additional attendant is required.
- C. Diapers are only to be changed in designated areas and in the presence of another volunteer attendant.
- D. Attendants may take children from the nursery only to use the bathroom or in case of illness. Illness should be reported immediately to the child's parent(s).
- E. It is recommended that only volunteers who have a completed application and have attended the Child Safety Policy training may be in the nursery room during or after the services. If any other person enters the nursery, the trained volunteer is responsible for supervising that individual.

### **Outside Groups**

- A. All groups currently using the church facility will be given a copy of the Child Safety Policy.
- B. At the time of new requests to use the church facility, a copy of the Child Safety Policy will be given to all outside groups using the Calvin facility.
- C. These groups will sign an agreement to observe the policies and procedures or will provide a copy of their own Child Safety Policy.

### **Youth Group**

- A. Each year youth group leaders should sponsor a class about abuse for members of the youth group. Topics for this class might include date violence, biblical guidelines for dating relationships, awareness of the signs of abuse, a teenager's response to a teenage victim or abuser, or prevention of abuse.

- B. Any meeting between a youth group leader and a youth group member must occur in a public place or in the presence of another adult.
- C. Regardless of the relative ages, it is never appropriate for a youth group leader and youth group member to date each other or develop and foster a romantic relationship.
- D. No gifts, phone calls, or communication of a personal nature other than planned discipleship or contact activities should be directed to a youth group member by a youth group leader.

### **Transportation Procedure**

*This policy applies to adults who may transport non-related youth in church-sponsored programs while serving in ministry to youth.*

- A. All drivers must be at least 25 years of age or an employee of Calvin Presbyterian Church.
- B. Adults must have a valid driver's license and proof of insurance before transporting youth for church activities.
- C. At least one of the following procedures must be in place:
  1. Two adults are present and seated in the front seat of the vehicle when transporting youth.
  2. At least two youth are present in the vehicle.
  3. If an adult who is going to conduct or lead (or who has conducted or led) a church activity is driving a child to or from that activity, either another child or another adult must be present in the vehicle at all times.
  4. The Director of Student Ministries has written permission of the parent or guardian to transport youth when another child or adult is not present.
- D. Drivers need to abide by state requirements for car seat use, seatbelt use and air bag safety.
  1. Youth are to wear seat belts whenever the vehicle is in service. Drivers may not transport more youths than available seatbelts.
  2. Where required by law, car seats must be available for younger children.
  3. For safety, youth under the age of 10 may not sit in the front seat if there is a passenger-side air bag.

Adults or minors who transport family members to church-sponsored events are not subject to this policy. The transportation policy does not extend to parents or guardians who request or give permission for a minor with a valid driver's license to transport non-related youth.

## **Application and Screening Procedures**

### **Paid Staff**

1. Applicant completes Calvin Employment Application.
2. Church Office Manager sends reference request letters and initiates criminal background check.
3. Pastor receives and reviews reference responses, application and criminal background check report. These documents will be kept confidential and will be in a locked filing cabinet in the church office. A positive history of criminal conviction in an area involving children or youth precludes involvement in these ministries.
4. Pastor convenes an interview committee. The candidate is interviewed personally.
5. The candidate is notified personally of an invitation to join the staff or not.

### **Youth and Children's Ministries Volunteers**

1. Volunteers complete the Children's and Youth Ministries Application.
2. Church Office Manager sends reference request letters and initiates criminal background check.
3. Director of Children's Ministries or of Student Ministries receives and reviews reference responses, application and criminal background check report (confidential). A positive history of criminal conviction in an area involving children or youth would preclude involvement in these ministries.
4. An interview committee is formed by the ministry director. The candidate is interviewed personally.
5. The candidate is notified personally of either an invitation to join the ministry team or not.

## Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

In order to provide a protected and secure environment for our children, Calvin Church encourages all youth and children's and student ministry volunteers to bring concerns to the attention of the church leadership. You are not responsible for investigating or proving any incident.

1. Familiarize yourself with the Child Safety Policy of Calvin Presbyterian Church.
2. If you have reason to believe that a child involved in any of the programs at Calvin has been or is likely to be physically harmed or sexually abused, the following steps are to be completed:
  - If you have first-hand information leading to a reasonable suspicion of child abuse, you are responsible to report this to the Department of Human Services, Child Welfare at (541) 757-4121.
  - Describe your concerns to a member of the **Child Safety Committee** (Pastor, Director of Student or Children's Ministries, designated member of Session).
  - Obtain from the church office and complete an Incident Report Form.
  - A copy of the report will be distributed to the members of the Child Safety Committee.
  - Protect confidentiality. Do not discuss the incident with anyone else.

### **Procedure to take once a report has been made.**

The Child Safety Committee's duties will include:

1. Reviewing the incident to determine what response the church should make. The reporting individual retains the responsibility to file a report with the proper authorities, as mandated by Oregon law.

*Oregon Revised Statute 419 B.010 "Any public or private official having reasonable cause to believe that any child with whom the official comes in contact has suffered abuse, or that any person with whom the official comes in contact has abused a child shall report to or cause a report to be made..."*
2. Meeting with any volunteer or staff who has questions about a possible report of child abuse.
3. Notifying the church insurance provider.
4. Possibly seeking consultation with an expert in child abuse.
5. Designating one member of the committee to respond to all inquiries from individuals, media representatives and/or the congregation as needed.
6. Maintaining confidentiality.

Our covenant with the congregation is to "treasure" the children. Therefore, our first priority is the safety of the children and not the comfort of the parents. However, we are committed to the family unit and offering parents any help they might need in creating a "safe, secure, loving environment" at home as well as at church. Though a report must be filed when abuse is suspected, the church claims the right to clergy-penitent privilege. Oregon law provides that a confidential disclosure of child abuse made from a person to clergy is exempt from the reporting requirements of Oregon law. It is a privileged disclosure. If Clergy at Calvin receive such a disclosure regarding the safety of a child at Calvin, they will, however, immediately make a report to the Calvin Child Safety Committee but that report will only indicate generally that a disclosure of child abuse has been made and whether this disclosure presents a present risk to a child. The committee will determine what, if any, further action the church should take.

## Definitions of Child Abuse

As defined by the "The National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse":

### **Physical Abuse**

Non-accidental injury, which may include beatings, violent shaking, human bites, strangulation, suffocation, poisoning or burns. The results may be bruises and welts, broken bones, scars, permanent disfigurement, long-lasting psychological damage, serious internal injuries, brain damage or death.

### **Neglect**

The failure to provide a child with basic needs including food, clothing, education, shelter, and medical care; also abandonment and inadequate supervision.

### **Sexual Abuse**

The sexual exploitation of a child by an older person as in rape, incest, fondling of the genitals, exhibitionism or pornography. It may be done for the sexual gratification of the older person, out of need for power or for economic reasons.

Types of Sexual Abuse

#### A. Involving touching

1. Fondling
2. Oral, genital, and anal penetration
3. Intercourse
4. Forcible rape

#### B. Does not involve touching

1. Verbal comments
2. Pornographic videos or pictures
3. Obscene phone calls
4. Exhibitionism
5. Allowing children to witness sexual activity.

### **Emotional Maltreatment**

A pattern of behavior that attacks a child's emotional development and sense of self worth, such as constant criticizing, belittling, insulting, manipulation; also, providing no love, support, or guidance.

**Children's and Youth Ministry Volunteers  
Approval Form**

Desiring to be a part of the Children's and/or Youth Ministries at Calvin Presbyterian Church and believing that God may be calling me to serve in this capacity, I request approval to serve. I agree to fulfill the commitments of the ministry to the best of my ability. I further agree to be bound by the policies of Calvin Presbyterian Church in the performance of my ministry.

I understand that a criminal history background check will be made, and hereby grant Calvin Presbyterian Church permission to do so.

I have met the following requirements (please initial):

\_\_\_\_\_ Completed Children's and Youth Ministries Application is on file in the office

**OR**

\_\_\_\_\_ Completed Children's and Youth Ministries application is attached

**AND**

\_\_\_\_\_ Read Calvin's Child Safety Policy

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Application and policy are available at [www.calvin-church.org](http://www.calvin-church.org) or in the church office. Please print this page, sign, and return to church office.