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CHILD/ YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY  
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Special thanks to the churches and organizations who contributed to the creation of this policy:  
 The Presbytery of Donegal; Covenant Presbyterian Church, Malvern; Eastminster Presbyterian Church, York; Carlisle United Methodist Church; Central Presbyterian Church.

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## **Background**

Donegal Presbyterian Church, a member congregation of the Presbytery of Donegal and the Presbyterian Church USA, is committed to the spiritual nurture of the children and families in our congregation as they grow to love and serve Jesus Christ. To facilitate such nurture and growth we must create safe spaces and safe relationships for that development—it is part of our baptismal promise.

We also join the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in the commitment to protect the children in our care. The following resources are developed from best practices from churches and child-welfare agencies around the country and are in compliance with PA State Child Protective Service / Mandatory Reporting Laws as of September 2015.

**Purpose:** Our purpose for establishing this policy is to demonstrate our commitment to the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all children and youth at Donegal Presbyterian Church. It also serves the purpose of establishing safeguards for the adults that serve children and youth. This policy applies to all programs involving children and youth while in the building or on the grounds of Donegal Presbyterian Church or while participating or serving in an off-site event or trip sponsored by Donegal Presbyterian Church.

### **Definitions:**

Term	Definition
“child” or “children”	Any person(s) under the age of 18
“adult”	Anyone 18 years of age or older
“child abuse” (as defined under Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law)	“(i) Any recent act or failure to act by a perpetrator which causes non-accidental serious physical injury to a child under 18 years of age. (ii) An act or failure to act by a perpetrator which causes non-accidental serious mental injury to or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under 18 years of age.  (iii) Any recent act, failure to act or series of acts or failures to act by a perpetrator which creates an imminent risk of serious physical injury to or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under 18 years of age. (iv) Serious physical neglect by a perpetrator constituting prolonged or repeated lack of supervision or the failure to provide

	essentials of life, including adequate medical care, which endangers a child’s life or development or impairs the child’s functioning.”
“children’s activities”	Any activity or program in which children are under supervision of staff persons or volunteers
“youth activities”	Any activity or program specifically for children in grades 6 through 12. However, youth are still considered children for the purposes of this policy.
“staff person”	Any person employed by Donegal Presbyterian Church.
“volunteer”	A person 18 years of age or older, unpaid, who assists with the care, supervision, or guidance of children or who routinely interact with children as a part of a church activity under the supervision of staff.
“helper”	Any person between the ages of 15 and 17 who serves in a volunteer role.

**Employees and Volunteers**

**Screening Procedure for Donegal Presbyterian Church Staff and Volunteers:**

- 1) Staff persons and volunteers: All staff persons and volunteers who as part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, accept responsibility for a child or have direct contact with children shall be required to complete and provide certification of the following clearances every 5 years:
  - Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check (Act 34)
  - Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance through the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (Act 151)

- FBI Criminal History Report (Act 114) —this step requires finger prints. \*If a staff person or volunteer has lived in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania consecutively for the last 10 years a notarized affidavit is acceptable.
- Signed Participation Covenant Agreement

All volunteers and staff persons who, as part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, accept responsibility for a child or have direct contact with children shall be required to demonstrate an active relationship with Donegal Presbyterian Church for at least 6 months prior to serving in a supervisory role in children or youth activities. In the case of new staff hires references deemed adequate by the Pastor will replace the six-month waiting period.

\*Background checks must be repeated every 60 months.

(The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania may change the requirements for clearances at any time. For the most up to date information please check [www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov](http://www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov))

\*Donegal Presbyterian Church will reimburse volunteers for the financial cost involved with any clearance checks upon request by the volunteer and documentation showing completion of the clearance check(s).

\*All volunteers and staff persons must be at least five (5) years older than the children/youth with whom they are working.

## **Working with Children**

### **Supervision**

In order to provide a safe haven and not jeopardize our ministries, the following procedures are required.

- 1) A minimum of two unrelated adult staff and/or volunteers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during programs and activities at or sponsored by Donegal Presbyterian Church. This may include the presence of an adult “roamer” who moves in and out of rooms, provided all doors remain open, and the children are above the age of four.
- 2) In addition to the two-adult rule, Pennsylvania funded daycare, preschool, and others programs must adhere to these requirements. These are strongly recommended staff to child ratios for all other groups:

Similar Age Levels	Staff	Children/Youth	Maximum Group Size	Total # of staff required for Max Group Size
Infant	1	4	8	2
Young Toddler	1	5	10	2
Older Toddler	1	6	12	2
Preschool	1	10	20	2
K-5 <sup>th</sup> Grade	1	12	24	2
6 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	1	15	30	2

- 3) Each room or space where children are being cared for will have a window in the door or the door will be left open. All activities should occur in open view. Should the children's activity be an outdoor program or occur in a setting which makes it difficult to comply with this Policy, the staff person in charge of the activity shall take appropriate measures to make sure that the setting suits the activity, and the children are properly supervised.
- 4) Youth ages 15-17 may serve as "helpers" with children at least 5 years younger than themselves. These "helpers" are exempt from background checks; however, they must be responsible and always work in the immediate vicinity of an adult supervisor.
- 5) Overnight activities require at least one adult of each gender when both girls and boys are present. Leaders must assure that the children/ youth are given appropriate privacy in areas of sleeping, changing and bathing.
- 6) All activities that take place away from Donegal Presbyterian Church shall have completed permission forms signed by the parents/ guardians.

In certain situations requiring one-on-one mentoring, children may be with one adult in a public space (such as a common area in the church, an ice cream parlor, restaurant, or public lobby) with the written permission of the child's parent. The adult should notify a Donegal Presbyterian staff member prior to the meeting with the time and location of the meeting.

#### Check-in/ Check Out Procedure

For children below Grade 3, a security check-in [check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be signed in and out by a parent / guardian. If someone other than the parent / guardian will pick up the child that must be noted and authorized at sign in. Ministry leaders are encouraged to ask for identification if they do not recognize the adult picking up a child.

#### Discipline Policy

It is the policy of Donegal Presbyterian Church not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents give permission for it. There will be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline toward children. Workers should consult with ministry leaders if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

#### Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all the children at Donegal Presbyterian Church. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with symptoms of fever, diarrhea, vomiting, green/ yellow runny nose, eye or skin infections, or other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease should not be dropped off.

Children who are observed by our staff or volunteers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request the child be picked up.

#### Food/ Allergy Policy

With the rise of life-threatening food allergies in children, snacks and meals should only be provided to children who have a complete permission slip that notes allergy information on file. If the church is providing snacks, all children present should have access to a snack safe for

them, or none should be given. In the event that children do not have documentation on file, parents should be asked to provide food and snacks for their children.

### Medications Policy

It is the policy of Donegal Presbyterian Church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medication to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Exceptions to the medication policy may be granted in the case of life-saving medications such as an Epi Pen, inhaler, or glucose tab with an acceptable documented plan signed by a parent/ guardian.

In the case of overnight events the medication policy will be modified so that children and youth can receive their medication. Prescriptions in their original bottles with written and signed instructions will be provided to the adult in charge of the trip. Over-the-counter remedies such as aspirin may be administered by a trip leader with signed parental/ guardian consent.

### Confidentiality of Medical Information

Information regarding the medical conditions of children is confidential and is only made available to the adults responsible for care of children/ youth when it impacts care. In the event information about a contagious illness needs to be shared with others who may have been unknowingly exposed to a sick child, the confidentiality of the children and families will be observed.

### Restroom Guidelines

Workers / volunteers should escort children to a hallway bathroom. Children should never be taken to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty and then allow the children inside. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary the worker / volunteer should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If the child requires assistance the worker should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall open as he/ she assists the child. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, workers should never be alone with the child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have children visit the bathroom prior to dropping them off for a class or program.

### Transportation of Children/ Youth

Children/ youth may be transported off-site as part of a church sponsored activity provided there is prior written consent from a parent/ guardian (most often in the form of a permission slip), and an up-to-date participant health form is kept with a responsible adult leader on the trip at all time.

A parent or volunteer who is providing transportation must be at least 21 years of age, provide a copy of his/her driver's license, and proof of insurance for the vehicle being used in addition to the Commonwealth required clearances noted earlier in this policy.

### Alcohol and drug use policy for employees and volunteers at DPC:

\*At no point may any employee or volunteer of Donegal Presbyterian Church be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while supervising, transporting or assisting with children and youth activities on behalf of Donegal Presbyterian Church.

### Physical contact policy:

Respect, safety, and appropriate boundaries are the guiding principles for physical contact between childcare workers and children. The guidelines below are intended to avoid contact that is or may appear threatening or inappropriate.

Love and affection are part of church life and ministry. There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children.

Examples of positive and appropriate forms of affection:

- Brief hugs or side hugs
- Pats on the shoulder, back or head
- Handshakes
- High-fives, hand slapping and fist bumps
- Verbal praise
- Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of children or youth
- Arms around shoulders
- Holding hands while walking with small children
- Sitting beside small children
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children
- Holding hands during group prayer

The following forms of affection are considered inappropriate with children and youth in ministry settings because many of them are the behaviors that child molesters use to groom children and their parents for later molestation or can be, in and of themselves sexual abuse:

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Kisses
- Holding children over three years old on the lap
- Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff only areas or other private rooms
- Touching knees or legs of children or youth
- Wrestling with or tickling children or youth
- Piggyback rides
- Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult
- Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth
- Any form of unwanted affection
- Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth
- Private meals with individual children or youth

## **Reporting Suspected Child Abuse**

As of 2015, the Pennsylvania Mandatory Reporter laws clarify and expand the individuals who qualify as mandated reporters of child abuse. People in the following positions will be defined as mandated reporters:

- Clergy members, including ministers and other spiritual leaders
- An individual, paid or unpaid, who on the basis of the individual's role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, accepts responsibility for a child. These individuals include those serving at youth camps or programs, sports or athletic programs, outreach programs, enrichment programs, troops, clubs, or similar organizations

When an incident of child abuse occurs or allegation of an incident within the church or at a church event off-premise is made or an employee or volunteer otherwise has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse, it is crucial that it be dealt with immediately and in a clearly outlined manner.

1. If a staff person or volunteer has reasonable cause to suspect, based upon his/her training and experience that a child is a victim of child abuse the staff person or volunteer should immediately call the Susquehanna Regional Police at: (717) 426-1164 and report the suspected criminal or dangerous activity.
2. This includes situations where:
  - a. A staff person or volunteer comes into contact with a child that has been abused;
  - b. An individual makes a specific disclosure to a staff person or volunteer that an identifiable child is the victim of child abuse; or
  - c. An individual 14 years of age or older makes a specific disclosure to you that he / she has committed child abuse.
3. A volunteer may ask an appropriate staff member to be present while the call is placed, however, the volunteer is legally responsible for contacting law enforcement by telephone. Staff members may not influence the decision as to whether or not the incident should be reported, but may help in providing the name, address, and family information of the alleged victim.
4. After a report is made, the volunteer shall notify the staff person in charge of the activity if he or she has not already done so.
5. The staff person in charge of the activity will immediately notify the Pastor if he or she has not already done so.

Any incidences involving Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, or an outside group using the church facility must, in addition to the statutorily-required reporting, be reported to the Pastor.

Individuals under investigation will be required to refrain from all child care/ supervisory activities until the incident report is resolved. If the removal of any person from an activity is



required, care should be taken to handle this in a discreet manner, recognizing that an investigation is still being conducted.

The following procedure shall then be followed under the direction of the pastor if the accused is an employee or volunteer of Donegal Presbyterian Church:

1. The Presbytery of Donegal will be notified, along with the insurance company and an incident report will be filed.
2. The church and the presbytery will comply with the legal requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law dictates and cooperate with any investigation by the Commonwealth or local authorities. In the event there is not investigation by the Commonwealth or local authorities, a team will be formed to investigate the circumstances of the incident, acting only in accordance with the Presbytery of Donegal, the PC(USA) Book of Order and the insurance company reporting requirement.
3. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from his/her position with children/youth
4. The pastor or designee will be the spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect unless they are involved. All other staff / volunteers should refrain from speaking to the media. The pastor should be aware of Pastor-Penitent privilege in all situations, especially when speaking to the media.

## **Other Policies**

### **Key Holder's Rule**

Members are expected to sign that they have received, read, and agree to abide by this Child/Youth Protection Policy.

### **Other Groups Using Donegal Presbyterian Church Facilities**

All those who as part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, accept responsibility for a child or have regular direct contact with children while assisting with Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, as well as independent programs or groups' activities held at Donegal Presbyterian Church will be required to complete and provide to the local church leaders certification of the following:

- Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check (Act 34)
- Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance through the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (Act 151)
- ' FBI Criminal History Report— this step requires finger prints (Act 114)

\*If a volunteer has lived in the state of Pennsylvania consecutively for the last 10 years, a notarized affidavit is acceptable.

- Signed Participation Covenant Agreement (Appendix A)

These groups shall be required to complete and provide Donegal Presbyterian Church with a signed Safe Church Covenant Agreement for Outside Groups (Appendix B) They shall also

develop and abide by policies consistent with the requirements of this policy. All information will be kept confidential. Paper copies will be kept in a locked file on the church premises.

### Responsibilities / Administration of Policy

Oversight of the policy: The pastor and the Administrative Committee have oversight of this policy and are responsible, along with the Christian Formation committee for ensuring that the policy is followed, including adequate training for staff and volunteers on this policy.

Record keeping: The administrative chair and Session shall coordinate efforts to keep accurate, current, and confidential information concerning certification and training records of individuals who may work with children. Clearances and records will be kept on file under lock or passkey for at least 1 year after clearances expire.

Insurance Coverage: The Session of Donegal Presbyterian Church will confirm yearly that its liability insurance provides coverage for the church should an allegation of abuse be filed. If the policy does not provide coverage, additional coverage to protect the church will be purchased or leadership will acknowledge the church's responsibility to incur the cost of such allegations.

Appendix A: Participation Covenant Agreement

Participation Covenant Agreement

Donegal Presbyterian Church's purpose for establishing this Agreement is to help the church and all our volunteers and employees demonstrate our commitment to the physical and emotional safety, and spiritual growth of our children, youth and all adult workers and volunteers. By signing this agreement our church pledges its endorsement and support of you in our common endeavor to keep our children safe.

As a volunteer or church employee, I promise or affirm:

- 1) that I am over 18 years of age.
- 2) that I am willing to submit to and/or provide Criminal and Abuse Background checks.
- 3) that I will never leave children unsupervised in the room where I am leading or helping with a church- sponsored activity or event.
- 4) that I have been a member of, or regular attender of, Donegal Presbyterian Church for at least six (6) months.
- 5) that I will immediately report any suspected cases of child abuse in accordance with the requirements of law and Donegal Presbyterian Church's Child/Youth Protection Policy.
- 6) that I will attend church-sponsored training and educational events provided to keep church volunteers informed of church policies and state laws regarding work with children.
- 7) that the information I have provided on this form is true and correct. I authorize Donegal Presbyterian Church and the Presbytery of Donegal (where appropriate) to verify the information I have provided on this form by conducting criminal records check or by other means, including contacting others.
- 8) that I will abide by and be bound by the policies of Donegal Presbyterian Church and to refrain from inappropriate conduct in the performance of my duties on behalf of the church.
- 9) that I will not supervise, transport or assist with children and youth activities on behalf of Donegal Presbyterian Church while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- 10) that I have read this agreement and the Donegal Presbyterian Church Child/Youth Protection policy, and I am fully aware of its contents. I sign this consent freely and under no duress or coercion.

Name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

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

Witness\_ \_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix B: Child/ Youth Protection Covenant Agreement for Outside Groups

Child/ Youth Protection Covenant Agreement for Outside Groups

Donegal Presbyterian Church’s purpose for establishing this Agreement with you is to help the church, all church-sponsored and church-affiliated organizations and other organizations using the Donegal Presbyterian Church building or grounds demonstrate our commitment to the physical and emotional safety, and spiritual growth of our children, youth and all adult workers and volunteers. By signing this agreement, you pledge your support of our common endeavor to keep our children and youth safe.

On behalf of the organization named below, I promise and affirm:

1. that we shall require all organization employees and volunteers, who accept responsibility for a child, or have direct contact with children, in the church building to complete and provide to us every 3 years:
  - a. Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance through the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare; and
  - b. Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check; and
  - c. FBI Criminal History Report — this step requires finger prints.

If a volunteer has lived in the state of Pennsylvania consecutively for the last 10 years a notarized affidavit is acceptable. See Appendix VII.

2. That we will maintain a file of all clearances provided under No. 1 above.
3. That we will require employees and volunteers to immediately report any suspected cases of child abuse in accordance with the requirements of law.
4. That we will report any behavior seen as abusive or inappropriate to the Pastor of Donegal Presbyterian Church
5. That we will never leave children unsupervised in the room where we are leading or helping with an activity or event.
6. That we will provide Donegal Presbyterian Church with a copy of our written policy that incorporates the assurances provided above.

Organization Name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Individual (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Title/ Role with Organization (print) \_\_\_\_\_

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

Witness \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix C: Child / Youth Ministry Permission Slip

Donegal Presbyterian Church

Youth Ministries Registration / Permission Slip:

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact / relationship to student: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

This consent form gives permission to seek whatever medical attention is deemed necessary and releases Donegal Presbyterian Church and its staff of any liability against personal losses of named child. I / we the undersigned have legal custody of the student named above, a minor, and have given our consent for him/her to attend events being organized by the children and youth ministries of Donegal Presbyterian Church. I / we understand that there are inherent risks involved in any ministry or related event, and I / we hereby release Donegal Presbyterian Church, its pastor, employees, agents, and volunteer workers from any and all liability for any injury, loss or damage to person or property that may occur during the course of my / our child's involvement. In the event that he / she is injured and requires the attention of a doctor, I / we consent to any reasonable medical treatment as deemed necessary by a licensed physician. In the event treatment is required from a physician and / or hospital personnel designated by Donegal Presbyterian Church, I / we agree to hold such person(s) free and harmless of any claims, demands or suits for damages arising from the giving of such consent. I / we also acknowledge that we will be ultimately responsible for the cost of any medical care should the cost of that medical care not be reimbursed by my / our health insurance provider. Further, I / we affirm that the health insurance information provided on the following page is accurate at this date and will to the best of my / our knowledge still be in force for the student named above. I / we also agree to bring my / our child home at my / our own expense should they become ill or if deemed necessary by a youth ministries staff member or volunteer. I also understand that the transportation to and from events might be by a private car driven by a Donegal Presbyterian staff member or volunteer cleared by DPC's Child / Youth Protection procedures. I agree that Donegal Presbyterian Church will not be held responsible in case of an accident. I also agree that the driver will not be held responsible in the event of an accident.

Parent / guardian 1 signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent / guardian 2 signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Health Information:

Allergies: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other Health Conditions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Any participation restrictions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Insurance Company Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Policy / Group #:

\_\_\_\_\_