

MAY 2021 UPDATED VERSION

ARTICLE 12. CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND SAFETY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Section 1. Introduction. Redeemer Presbyterian Church takes the safety and protection of our children very seriously. When Jesus' disciples tried to keep children away from him, he was quick to respond, "Let the children come to me." Jesus taught that children were to be included and provided for within the community of faith. Today, the Church (of which Redeemer Presbyterian Church seeks to be a faithful representative) may be the only place where some children find the unconditional love and care they so desperately need to grow and thrive. As Christians, we must take our responsibilities to our children very seriously. We fail in our responsibilities if we neglect to take adequate precautions against abuse in our churches. It is unlikely that we can completely prevent child abuse in every situation, but it is possible for us to greatly reduce the risk by following a thorough practical policy of prevention.

These Policies and Procedures are designed to safeguard, to the greatest extent practicable, the physical safety, emotional well-being and spiritual development of the children and youth of Redeemer Presbyterian Church. This is based on our knowledge of the widespread problem of abuse throughout our country, and the understanding that children are among the most vulnerable members of our community of faith.

Section 2. Definitions. These are our definitions of child abuse and child sexual abuse:

i) What is Child Abuse?

Child Abuse includes a wide range of acts and omissions, including acts causing mental, emotional, and physical injury and threatened physical injury to a minor. Child Abuse can even include failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent such harmful actions by another person.

ii) What is Child Sexual Abuse?

Child Sexual Abuse is any sexual activity with a child by a person known or unknown to the child. California Law defines Child Sexual Abuse as any sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare as well as failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct harmful to a child. A person who compels or encourages a child to engage in sexual conduct commits abuse, and it is against the law to make or possess child pornography or to display such material to a child. The abuser may be an adult, adolescent, or another child. Child Sexual Abuse may be violent or non-violent, involving touching and non-touching aspects. It is an exploitation of a child's vulnerability and powerlessness. The relationship between the abuser and the child, or consent by the child are irrelevant to a determination of whether Child Sexual Abuse has occurred. It is extremely difficult for a child to report Child Sexual Abuse, in part because very young children may not understand that a particular activity is not normal or accepted. Child Sexual Abuse is criminal behavior.

Section 3. Statement of Policy on Child Abuse and Child Sexual Abuse. A primary goal of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church Children's and Youth Ministries is to guard the safety of all children in its care. To this end, it is the policy of Redeemer Presbyterian Church to report any

and all child abuse and child sexual abuse to staff and appropriate governmental authorities in an expedient manner consistent with these policies and procedures and otherwise in accordance with all applicable laws.

Section 4. Application for Volunteers. Prior to any interaction with the minors of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, all volunteers will complete a Children's Ministry and/or Youth Ministry application. The Children's Ministry and Youth Ministry application, which will include these Child Abuse Prevention and Safety Policies and Procedures and a consent form for background checks through appropriate governmental agencies, must be signed by the Children's Ministry and/or Youth Ministry Applicant.

- i) Volunteers must be members of Redeemer Presbyterian Church prior to serving as a lead teacher for Sunday School, Sermon Time, becoming a member of the Children's Ministry Committee, or a Youth Ministry Volunteer.
- ii) Any non-members who have been in regular attendance of Redeemer Presbyterian PCA for at least six months may serve as an assistant teacher, intern, or nursery volunteer. Upon completing an additional screening procedure, including a mandatory interview with Redeemer Presbyterian Church pastor, elder, deacon, or deaconess or staff person, the non-member may be approved to serve with the Children's Ministry in a direct-contact child-care provider position prior to becoming a member (assuming that the non-member is currently taking steps to become a member).
- iii) Personal recommendation by a parent, guardian or pastor is also required for Applicants who are minors regardless of their membership status, since we are not legally allowed to screen minors.

Section 5. Approval of Volunteers. Following submission of a Children's and/or Youth Ministry Application, the Children's Ministry Director will review the application and perform a background check. No volunteer will be approved for Children's and/or Youth Ministry service without approval of the application and background check, which is subject to discretion of Redeemer Presbyterian Church staff, taking into account the following non-exclusive criteria:

- i) No one shall serve the Children's and/or Youth Ministry who, in the belief of a Children's Ministry Director, Pastors, or Staff Member, may represent a potential threat of committing abuse or violating this policy.
- ii) No one shall serve if she/he is known to have been previously convicted of, or pled guilty or no contest to, any crime arising out of any act or conduct involving sexual abuse, or any act or guilty conduct which is of a sexual, molesting, seductive, or criminally deviant nature, whether or not such conduct involved a child. This includes, but is not limited to, crimes involving pedophilic behavior (molestation of a pre-adolescent child), incest, rape, assaults on or the physical abuse of adults with special needs, murder, kidnapping, and child pornography.
- iii) No one shall serve as a care provider who has had a verdict or judgment rendered against him or her in any civil action arising out of any personal act or conducts related to abuse or sexual abuse of a child or an adult with special needs. This qualifying rule shall apply no matter how long ago the civil verdict occurred and judgment was rendered.

Section 6. Initial Training of Volunteers. Following approval of completed application and background check volunteers will be trained by the Children's Ministry Director or the Youth Ministry Coordinator (or another responsible person in charge). This training will include a review of these Policies and Procedures which the applicant signed in the application.

All volunteers 18 years and older must complete an online child abuse prevention and protection training course, provided by Protect My Ministry, and receive a score of at least 70% on a 25-question quiz given at the end of the course.

Section 7. Initial Training of Paid Caregiver. Every paid caregiver or intern (whether on behalf of an agency or hired directly by Redeemer) in our ministry is required to complete an application process, which includes a background check.

- i) When a new paid caregiver is assigned to Redeemer Presbyterian Church from an agency, they must complete and sign a W-9 or 1099 form for our records as well as review and sign acknowledgement of reading and agreeing to adhere to Redeemer Presbyterian Church Child Abuse Prevention and Safety Policies and Procedures before they will be assigned to a room for the day or accepted back in to Redeemer Presbyterian Church on an assignment.
- ii) Before a paid caregiver is hired directly by Redeemer Presbyterian Church and becomes a contract worker of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, they must also complete the same requirements of all volunteers including an application, background check, interview, and signed Affirmation and Release of having read and agreeing to adhere to all Children's Ministries Policies and Procedures including Redeemer Presbyterian Church Child Abuse Prevention and Safety Policies and Procedures before working in direct contact child care provider position.

Section 8. Two-Adult Rule and Open-Door Policy. All volunteers and paid caregivers are required to observe the Two-Adult Rule and the Open-Door Policy.

- i) The Two-Adult Rule requires that volunteers and paid caregivers make every reasonable effort to avoid situations in which they are alone with one or more minors without another adult present. No exception may be made in the Nursery.
- ii) The Open-Door Policy requires that in the event that the Two-Adult Rule cannot be observed under the circumstances for a period of time, the door is to be left open during the entirety of that time. This is only acceptable if there are 3 or more students present and as long as there is another class in session within the immediate proximity whose door is also open.
- iii) All classroom doors are to remain open at all times, unless a clear window allows visibility into the room.
- iv) All minors over the age of 16 and in more of teaching role, or desiring to take on more of a teaching role are requested to go through the online training at their parent's discretion.
- v) The Two-Adult Rule and Open-Door Policy also apply to any babysitters (paid or volunteer) who will be watching children during church Small Groups and all other church programs. There must be at least one adult babysitter present at all times — an adult who has been background checked and completed the online training. A minor over the age of 16 is permitted to occasionally be the second babysitter present, however never

the only babysitter present, and is requested to go through the online training at their parent's discretion.

- vi) The Two-Adult Rule and Open-Door Policy also applies to Texting & Social Media Communication
 - o No private 1-on-1 texts, social media direct messages, or private chats, etc, with minors. Texts and/or social media direct messages with minors must be conducted in a group thread.
 - o The primary reason for an adult to communicate via text and social media with a child/young person should be to share information. Secondary reasons are permitted from time to time with parental consent.

Section 9. Safe Touch Guidelines. Touch should be observable, interruptible, and appropriate.

- i) Examples of Unacceptable Touch
 - a. Sexually or physically abusive touch
 - b. Any touch that is unwanted by a child
 - c. Corporal punishment
 - d. Any touch that is secret
 - e. Touch that sexually gratifies the adult in any way
 - f. Tickling
 - g. Full frontal hugs in which bodies are pressed together
 - h. Tapping a child's bottom
- ii) Examples of Acceptable Touch
 - a. Sitting side by side
 - b. High fives, fist bumps, special handshakes
 - c. Side hugs
 - d. Pats on the shoulder
 - e. Carrying a small child on your hip

Section 10. Sign-In and Sign-Out Policy. On Sunday mornings all children placed in the nursery and/or the Preschool – Kinder class must be signed in and out using *KidCheck* by a parent/guardian, or a person who has the parents'/guardians 'permission. All children in the first through fifth grade classes must be signed in using *KidCheck* by a parent/guardian, or a person who has the parents'/guardians 'permission. Teachers will sign children out at the conclusion of the class.

Section 11. Signs of Abuse. All staff, volunteers, and paid caregivers working with minor children will receive training in regarding the signs of child abuse, including child sexual abuse, and the steps to report any and all suspected child abuse.

- i) Physical signs of molestation may include:
 - o Lacerations and bruises
 - o Torn or bloody underclothing
 - o Irritation, pain or injury to the genital area

- Difficulty with urination
 - Difficulty walking or sitting
 - Venereal disease
- ii) Behavioral signs of molestation may include:
- Nightmares
 - Anxiety when approaching the drop-off building/area (beyond normal separation anxiety)
 - Nervous or hostile behavior toward adults
 - Advanced sexual knowledge/behavior for age (promiscuous behavior)
 - Withdrawal from church activities and friends
 - Verbal signs of molestation may include statements such as:
 - “I don’t like _____.”
 - “_____ does things to me when we’re alone.”
 - “I don’t like to be alone with _____.”
 - “_____ fooled around with or touched me.”

Section 12. Mandatory Reporting of Abuse. California law requires a person to immediately report suspected and reported child abuse to the authorities and, in organizations such as Redeemer Presbyterian Church, to the appropriate individual in charge. If the Children’s Ministry Director, the Youth Ministry Coordinator, the volunteers/paid caregivers may contact or other Staff Members of Redeemer Presbyterian Church. The individual reporting the alleged abuse is required to maintain strict confidentiality of all information about the alleged abuse, and shall not disclose any information to any person other than the persons named above and governmental authorities as required by law. There is no need to interview the child; this will be conducted by a trained professional.

Anyone who fails to report suspected abuse can be prosecuted for a Class B misdemeanor or, in extreme circumstances, may be subject to civil liability for money damages. Therefore, all employees and volunteers at Redeemer Presbyterian Church must adhere to the following procedures:

- i) In the event of suspected, reported, or discovered child abuse or violation of the Child Protection Guidelines of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, the employee or volunteer shall immediately notify the Children’s Ministry Director, who will then
- ii) Report it to a pastor, church elder, or other member of the session
- iii) The Children’s Ministry Committee will also immediately make a report to the local child protection service or law enforcement agency, within 48 hours of the alleged abuse.
- iv) For life threatening/emergency situations, call 911 immediately.
 - 1-800-252-5400 - Abuse Hotline toll-free 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, nationwide.

- www.childhelp.org - Report through secure site and receive a response within 24 hours
- v) Reports shall be documented in writing with the date of the report, the time of the report, the telephone number to which the report was made, the name of the recipient of the report, and a brief synopsis of the report. If at all possible, all oral reporting will be done in the presence of a recorded witness.
- vi) Children's Ministry Director or Youth Coordinator and/or Pastors will also meet with the family involved to inform them of the incident or report. Confidentiality will be maintained. Therefore, only necessary individuals should be informed of alleged incident Internal Response Procedures. The official spokesperson for Redeemer Presbyterian Church shall be designated by the Session. All inquiries or requests for information from the media, attorneys or any other parties shall be referred to the official spokesperson. No person other than the official spokesperson is to release any information regarding any alleged incident of child abuse without the express approval of the official spokesperson. All communication by the official spokesperson to the media, congregation, and public will protect the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.
- vii) We will take any allegation of child abuse seriously and will reach out in Christian love and support to the victim and the victim's family, extending whatever pastoral care resources are needed.
- viii) We will treat the accused with dignity and respect. The accused person shall be temporarily relieved of his or her duties until the investigation is finished and the person cleared by the authorities. If the accused is a paid employee of our church, his or her income will be maintained, until allegations are cleared by authorities or until criminal charges are filed. If the accused is a member of our congregation we will reach out in Christian love and support to the accused and their family, extending whatever pastoral care resources are needed.
- ix) We will fully cooperate with any authorities investigating an allegation of child abuse.

Section 13. Sex Offenders Attending Church. If the Session knows that someone attending or a member of Redeemer Presbyterian Church is a registered sex offender, know that the following have already occurred:

- i) The Session has heard their entire story.
- ii) The Session, or a designated church member, is working with the individual's probation officer and adhering to all state laws.
- iii) The Session has communicated to the individual that they are never allowed to interact with minors unaccompanied and will never be allowed to volunteer in our Children's or Youth Ministries.
- iv) Depending on the specific offense and wisdom of the Session and probation officer, the Session may mandate that this individual never be without a chaperone while at church or any church functions. Know that the Session will always take a more conservative approach on this issue.

- v) Please also know that the Session has communicated Christ's love, compassion, and forgiveness to this individual. He/she is not only accepted by Christ, but also by the/our church.