



Johns Creek Presbyterian Church
Child Protection Policy
Online Training 2013-2014

Purpose

- When people brought little children to Jesus, he took them in his arms and blessed them (Mark 10:16).
- Because Johns Creek Presbyterian Church, USA (JCPC) recognizes that we are a reflection of God's love to those in our care, we take seriously our responsibility to them.

Purpose (continued)

- This training is designed to familiarize you with the JCPC Child Protection Policy (CPP) and encourage you to read the full document.
- Be advised that the document that follows, represents the minimum requirements and additional guidelines may be provided.

Volunteering at JCPC

- Online Application
- Background Check to be renewed every 2 years.
- Annual Training

Two Adult Policy

- The goal is to have at least two adults supervising all church sponsored programs and activities involving children. Adults should remain in sight of one another at all times.
- Adults in leadership roles are expected to avoid situations where they are alone with children by having leadership teams of at least two adults for all activities.
- This two-adult policy extends to all overnight and off campus related events. Under no circumstances can one adult alone take or accompany children on an off-campus outing.

Open Door Policy

- At no time should anyone working with children or youth have a one-on-one meeting behind closed doors unless a window allows unrestricted viewing into the room. For your protection, keep the door at least partially open.

Event Permission Form

- This form should be completed for church groups anytime they are hosting an off site activity. (Form is available on the JCPC website.)

Drop Off and Pick Up Policy

- Children will be welcome to enter classrooms when adequate supervision is available. Generally, teachers will be in classrooms 10 minutes prior to class.

Drop Off and Pick Up (Continued)

- Parents of 2 year olds through 2nd grade children are asked to sign in their child on the classroom sign-in sheet and indicate their location during Sunday School. They also will be asked to list their preferred pick up method.
- Parents of 3rd grade through 5th grade are asked to sign a form at the beginning of the year stating their preference for child release/pick up. The form will offer parents the opportunity to indicate whether they will let the child leave on his/her own or have a parent or older sibling pick up the elementary aged child.

Bathroom Policy

- For a younger child needing assistance in the classroom bathroom:
 - an approved volunteer may enter the bathroom to assist and
 - must keep the door partially open

Bathroom Policy (Continued)

- For older children using the hallway bathrooms:
 - Approved volunteers may escort a group of children to the bathroom and should leave the bathroom door to the hallway open
 - At the approved volunteer's discretion, older children can utilize hallway bathrooms one at a time with the teacher's permission.
 - Children should not be taken to the bathroom alone. Another child can come along as a "buddy" if needed.

Do I need to respond to suspicion of child abuse or neglect?

- As of 2012, GA law states that volunteers and staff members in ministries with children and youth are required to report, if there is a ‘reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused.’
- The law also requires that the report be made ‘no later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused.’
- Additional information can be found in the Official Code of Georgia Annotated Title 19-7-5.

How should I respond to allegations or suspicion of child abuse or neglect?

- All volunteers shall immediately report to two members of the Executive Team any allegations or suspicions of abuse or neglect of minor children (0-17 years old) which they become aware of during their duties at Johns Creek Presbyterian.
- Members of the Executive Team and contact information can be found on the JCPC website.

How do I know when a report is needed?

- Below are some examples of when a report would be required:
 - Complains about or mentions in passing, specific acts of neglect or abuse (physical, sexual or verbal)
 - Verbally complains about, or mentions in passing, vague references to having to do bad things or having bad things/secret things done to him or her
 - Alludes to abuse or neglect in writing, in prayer requests, or in drawings
 - Has injury (e.g. a burn, or a bruise) that can't be adequately explained or which the child attempts to hide or deny
 - Has an inordinate number of explained or unexplained injuries
 - Reports or evidences an atypical fear or discomfort of being with particular people

How do I know when a report is needed? (continued)

- In addition to these examples, please refer to the “Suspicion of Child Abuse or Neglect Form” which outlines a number of examples and possible indications of abuse.
- A link to the “Suspicion of Child Abuse or Neglect Form” is on the JCPC website.

How do I handle a situation when a child mentions being abused?

- Take his/her word seriously.
- Don't deny or minimize the problem.
- Stay calm and listen.
- Offer emotional reassurance that it was right to tell you and that it is OK to talk about what may be bothering them.
- Do not promise you will not tell anyone. If the child asks, tell with whom you will discuss the problem.

How do I get “all the facts” to prove the allegations?

- It is NOT your responsibility to interrogate the child or to attempt to substantiate any allegation or suspicion of abuse or neglect.
- Your responsibility is to:
 - listen
 - ask a few general open-ended questions, so you have some understanding of what the child has said to you (What happened? What else happened?)
- Offer reassurance that it is OK to talk about what’s bothering the child.

Are there other responsibilities?

- It is also your responsibility to immediately report your concern to two members of the Executive Team.
- The Executive Team includes:
 - Pastoral staff
 - Program staff
 - Clerk of Session.

How do I report my concerns to 2 members of the Executive Team?

- The first step consists of verbally reporting to two members.
- It is immediately followed by completing the “Suspicion of Child Abuse or Neglect” (A link to the form is on the JCPC website.)
- Give the forms to the two selected individuals on the Executive Team.

After the two reports, am I done?

- Suspicion of child abuse is a very serious matter. Please adhere to the following guidelines after a report is made:
 - All allegations or suspicions of abuse or neglect shall be kept confidential.
 - Do not discuss the situation with outside agencies, the alleged abuser, the victim, the victim's family, the JCPC community, the press.
 - Refer inquires regarding the situation to a member of the Executive Team.

After the two reports, am I done? (continued)

- Avoid denial, minimizations or blame during the period of investigation of the allegation.
- JCPC volunteers are expected to cooperate fully with the investigation authorities, such as the Child Protective Services Unit of the Department of Social Services, with guidance from the JCPC attorney.

Summary of volunteer responsibilities:

- Respond to the child.
- Report to two members of the Executive Team.
- Complete “Suspicion of Child Abuse or Neglect” Form and give to two members of the Executive Team.
- Keep the identity of the child, the conversations, and the report **CONFIDENTIAL**.

How will JCPC handle the situation?

- All reports are taken seriously. After a report has been made and the “Suspicion of Child Abuse or Neglect” Forms have been completed, a member of the Executive Team shall, within twenty-four hours of the report:
 - Notify Georgia Department of Human Services, Division of Family and Children Services.
 - Notify JCPC’s insurance company.
 - Assemble a Review Committee.
- Due to the sensitivity of the matter, all information shall be kept confidential.

JCPC also will ensure:

- Any employee or volunteer who may be involved in the alleged abuse or neglect will be immediately relieved of any ministry responsibilities that involve children or youth.
- Any employee or volunteer not found innocent of the alleged abuse or neglect will be removed from their ministry with children or youth.

Who is the Review Committee?

- The Review Committee shall consist of:
 - Two members of the Executive team
 - Attorney
 - Physician on a pro tem basis, and
 - Program Staff member to which the allegation or suspicion was reported.

Then what?

- The Review Committee will
 - Make an initial assessment within 24 hours.
 - Make a recommendation of what steps should be taken to the Executive Team.
 - Keep the identity of the child, the conversations, the reports, the assessment and the recommendations **CONFIDENTIAL**.

Final Steps

- The Pastoral staff members of the Executive Team will:
 - Make final decision of what steps should be taken.
 - Authorize as appropriate, persons to speak to:
 - any outside consultants or agencies (e.g. the Department of Child and Family Services)
 - the alleged abuser and victim and their families
 - the Johns Creek Presbyterian Church community
 - the press or the community at large

Addressing Known Offenders

- At JCPC, we seek to live in covenant with God and with one another and to be a redemptive community to all who are members. We also acknowledge that redemptive action and responsible action can, at times, be in tension or even in seeming opposition.
- Specific guidelines for these scenarios are found in the full version of the JCPC Child & Youth Protection Policy.
- A full version of the policy is available on the JCPC website.