

Child and Youth Protection Policy Overview

This policy applies to:

All employees and volunteers working with children and youth ages 18 and under.

This policy is intended:

- To be faithful to our baptismal vows as we seek to welcome children and remove stumbling blocks.
- To provide a safe and secure environment for children and youth at MPPC.
- To protect children and youth from sexual, physical, emotional, and spiritual abuse while participating in MPPC activities.
- To provide a mechanism to deal with reported concerns and subsequent actions.
- To guide MPPC as an institution in the conduct of its employees and volunteers and prevent incidents and allegations of child abuse.
- To protect adult volunteers and employees from unwarranted allegations of child abuse.

Components:

1. Screening
2. Supervising
3. Reporting
4. Responding

Screening employees and volunteers:

1. Civil and criminal background checks are ordinarily performed for MPPC employees and volunteers.
2. MPPC employees and volunteers are required to sign a release form giving permission to the church to perform a civil and criminal background check.
3. No person with a past conviction or pending proceeding addressing an allegation of child abuse or neglect can work with children and youth at MPPC.

Supervising

Two-Adult Policy:

At least two adults must be present with children at all times and remain in sight of one another except in emergency situations.

Open Door Policy:

Doors to rooms in which children are present are to remain open.

Six Month Policy:

Any person in a leadership position with children or youth must have been a member of MPPC for at least six months.

Training:

Any person working with children or youth must complete training every three years and sign a recommitment form every year. This training includes foundational information about why child and youth protection policies are needed, the components of MPPC's policy, how to recognize signs of abuse, how to report, how the church will respond and appropriate skills for supervising and chaperoning children and youth.

Code of Conduct:

Employees and volunteers are expected to follow the Employee and Volunteer Code of Conduct (see attached).

Reporting:

1. Each employee and volunteer is required to report any situation which presents suspicion that child abuse may have occurred or concerns related to child and youth protection and safety.
2. Allegations and concerns shall be made to either the Associate Pastor for Children and their Families or the Director of Student Ministries.

Responding:

1. Every allegation is taken seriously.
2. Adequate care, respect, and confidentiality must be offered to both alleged victims and perpetrators until the allegation is substantiated or cleared.
3. MPPC employees and volunteers will cooperate fully with authorities and will avoid denial, minimization, or blame in dealing with the allegation.

Employee and Volunteer Code of Conduct

(For use in implementation and training)

MPPC employees and volunteers:

1. Will not verbally, emotionally, physically or sexually abuse children.
2. Will not discipline children by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care.
3. May use physical restraint only to protect the child or others from harm.
4. Will provide proper supervision and exercise sound judgment in providing a safe environment at all times.
5. Will avoid situations during MPPC programs where they would be alone with a single child and cannot be observed or monitored by others. As adults supervise children, they should space themselves in a way that other adults can see them.
6. Are expected to observe the Two-Adult Policy and Open Door Policy in their interaction with children and youth at all times except in emergency situations.
7. Will provide restroom supervision by always using proper supervision when children are using public bathrooms to ensure their safety. Call on leaders who may be “floating” from room to room to assist with restroom supervision in order to maintain the two-adult rule. Make sure suspicious or unknown individuals are not occupying the restroom before allowing children to use the facilities. Send children in pairs, and whenever possible, with MPPC employees and volunteers. Stand in the doorway while children are using the restroom in visual sight of another adult. When assisting younger children, doors to the facility must remain open.
8. Will respect the rights of children and youth not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable, and their right to say no.
9. Should be alert to the physical and emotional state of children entering the program. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported to the Associate Pastor for Children and their Families or the Director of Student Ministries who will report to the Head of Staff or the Director of Administration of MPPC.
10. Should release children only to the authorized parent, guardian, or other individual authorized in writing by the parent or guardian.
11. Will not share inappropriate details of their personal life or ask children to share inappropriate details through any form of communication: written, verbal or electronic.
12. May not date program participants under 18 years of age.
13. Are not allowed to give gifts to individual children or youth without knowledge and permission of parents and MPPC minister / department head.
14. Are required to read, sign and adhere to all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse and attend training sessions on the subject.
15. Are required to report to the Head of Staff or Director of Administration any circumstances that under this policy affect their ability to work with children and youth.

Please Note:

- Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, or being impaired by legally prescribed drugs during church working hours or church sponsored programs is prohibited.
- Smoking or use of tobacco during church programs is prohibited.
- Profanity, inappropriate language or jokes, and any kind of harassment in the presence of children is prohibited.