

The Presbytery of Utah
Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

Overview

It is the policy of the Presbytery of Utah that all members, employees, and volunteers of congregations, councils, and entities of the Presbytery are to maintain the strongest sense of integrity, safety, nurturing, and care involving all interactions with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. This policy shall apply to all persons employed by or volunteering for the Presbytery of Utah, as well as for all activities, functions, events, trips, or other events sponsored by or affiliated with the Presbytery of Utah (henceforth, "care providers").

Children, youth, and vulnerable adults are a gift from God and the Church has a divine mandate to provide for their safety and nurturing. The Church is to be a place of safety and nurture reflective of the arms of Christ. In Matthew 19:14, Jesus says, "Let the little children come to me." Furthermore, it is often the case that many who have been marginalized by our wider society based on age, race, ethnicity, gender expression, gender identity, sexuality, and disability are also at greater risk for becoming targets of predators. As the Church, who is called to be a neighbor to all, and specifically to those who are marginalized, the Church easily can become a potentially victim-rich environment. Thus, those who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults should hold an extra amount of awareness to those who are a part of marginalized communities in regards to potential abuse. Any type of abuse involving children, youth or vulnerable adults has lasting and devastating effects on the life of the victim/survivor. It is the call of the Church to be a life-giving entity of Christ's healing and hope for community and individuals, not an entity that brings harm and hurt.

Each church in the Presbytery of Utah must have a Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy in place and it is recommended that it include the following:

Definitions

Child: A child is between the ages of 0-11.

Youth: A youth is between the ages of 12-17.

Vulnerable adult: Any person 18 years or older without the developmental or cognitive capacity to consent.

Care Provider: Any person, volunteer, or paid staff who participates at any level in a Presbytery sponsored event or activity involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

Vulnerable Adult Abuse: Any act or failure to act that results in the physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional mistreatment, neglect, or exploitation of a vulnerable adult.

Child/Youth Abuse: Any act or failure to act that results in the physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional mistreatment, neglect, or exploitation of a child or youth.

Misuse of Technology: The use of technology that results in the harassing or abusing of a child, youth or vulnerable adult; this includes using technology to send suggestive message and images.

For more information about what constitutes abuse or neglect in Utah, please see the following:

<https://dcfs.utah.gov/services/child-protective-services/>
<https://daas.utah.gov/adult-protective-services/>

Guidelines

All care providers at Presbytery meetings and Presbytery sponsored events must:

- 1) Be a member of one of its churches for six months and if not a member, a regular visitor for at least one year;
- 2) Have a current national criminal background check and sex offender check on file with the church or Presbytery; and
- 3) Undergo training that includes, but is not limited to the following:

Care Provider Training

Each congregation must provide a copy of this policy to care provider. In addition, they must provide training for their care providers relating to Utah's child abuse and child abandonment laws ([Utah Code, Title 76, Chapter 5, Part 1, Section 109](#)).

The Presbytery of Utah recommends that all care providers undergo child abuse prevention training as per your congregation's policy or through [Prevent Child Abuse Utah](#) annually ([create a free account and take the free course here](#)). Each care provider's current certificate of completion ought to be held by the congregation the care provider is serving. It is also recommended that all care provider hold current certification in Pediatric First Aid and CPR.

Congregations may request further materials for training from the Presbytery of Utah office. Congregations who wish to host Youth of the Utah Presbytery events, but do not have a youth group and therefore do not typically provide training for volunteers, can reach out to the Presbytery Youth Director for more information about abiding by Presbytery guidelines.

Supervision

When a child, youth, or vulnerable adult is present, there must always be at least two responsible adults there; a care provider must never be alone with a single child, youth, or vulnerable adult with the exception of transportation outlined below.

Transportation

Any transportation of children, youth or vulnerable adults requires a waiver from the legal guardian including the acknowledgement that there may be only one adult driver per vehicle. When transporting children, youth or vulnerable adults there must be at least three persons present in the vehicle. The driver of the vehicle must have a valid driver's license and insurance, and must be at least 21 years of age. According to Utah State law, all children under 8 years old must be properly secured in an approved child safety seat unless they are at least 57 inches tall. Seat belts must be available for each passenger unless the vehicle is a bus. It is the responsibility of the adult driver of the vehicle to ensure that all occupants are utilizing seat belts properly while the vehicle is moving.

Boundaries

Appropriate boundaries must be maintained between care providers and children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Further description of this ought to be included in the training process. It must at least include provisions against the misuse of technology and gift giving of any kind, as this is a grooming technique. Indeed, adults should not have any one-on-one technological contact with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult unless permission is granted from the guardian/parent of the child,

youth, or vulnerable adult. Group communications with children, youth, and vulnerable adults, such as group text message threads or group messaging through social media, are only permitted when at least three people are involved in the communication thread. Use of media that “disappears” after a period of time, such as Snapchat, is strictly prohibited.

Reporting and Responding

Per Utah State Law 62A-4a-403, any individual who suspects or has witnessed a case of, child neglect or abuse (from hence forth referred to as “abuse”), whether physical, emotional, or sexual, is required to “immediately report the alleged abuse or neglect to the nearest peace officer, law enforcement agency, or office of the division.” Child and Family Services (DCFS) has a 24/7 hotline at 1-855-323-3237. However, one who suspects or witnesses abuse may choose to discuss it with a supervisor and ask for an advocate if they do not feel comfortable reporting the incident alone.

Utah law 62A-3-305 mandates any person who has reason to believe that a vulnerable adult is being abused, neglected, or exploited to notify Adult Protective Services (800-371-7897) or the nearest law enforcement office.

After a report has been filed with the appropriate legal authorities, the witness of abuse is next immediately required to contact the Executive Presbyter or Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Utah.

According to Utah State Law and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (1998) mandates that members of clergy are not bound to maintain the confidentiality of an individual making a confession or if someone is a danger to self or others.

Presbytery of Utah Policy Manual
October 9, 2021