

Forest Hills Presbyterian Church  
Martinsville, Virginia

**Child Protection Policy**

Approved by Session [8/31/15]

**General Policy Statement:**

Forest Hills Presbyterian Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the practices described below, our goal is to protect the children from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

For the purpose of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen years. The term “worker” includes both paid and volunteer persons who work with children.

**Policy Details:**

**Selection of Workers**

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a. **Six Month Rule**

No volunteer will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until he/she has been involved with Forest Hills Presbyterian Church for a minimum of six months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

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## b. **Written Application**

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. This application form will be maintained in confidence on file at Forest Hills Presbyterian Church.

## c. **Personal Interview**

Upon completion of the application, a face to face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

## d. **Reference Checks**

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at Forest Hills Presbyterian Church.

## e. **Criminal Background Check**

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and for the following categories of volunteers:

- Those who will be involved in overnight activities with children
- Those involved in one-on-one contact with children.
- Those counseling children.

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Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, he/she will be unable to work with children.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Administration Committee on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at Forest Hills Presbyterian Church.

### **Two Adult Rule**

It is our goal that a minimum of two adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during a class session; under these circumstances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three children with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation.

### **Responding to Allegation of Child Abuse**

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action or lack of action that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional

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health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental; such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting

Emotional abuse – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured with love and security; such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing

Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography

Neglect – depriving a child of his or her essential needs; such as adequate food, water, shelter and medical care

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at Forest Hills Presbyterian Church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedures shall be followed:

1. The parent(s) or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending and investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation.
3. Civil authorities will be notified, and the church will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. The church will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.

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5. The pastor, chairperson of the Administration Committee, or the Clerk of Session will be our spokespersons to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. We will seek the advice of legal counsel before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the congregation. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking to the media.
6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position of working with children or youth.

### **Observed Abuse or Neglect**

In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at Forest Hills Presbyterian Church becomes aware of abuse or neglect of any child under our care, this will be reported immediately to the pastor, Administration Committee chairperson or the Clerk of Session for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

Notes:

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**Child/Youth Worker Application and Authorization for  
Background Check**

It is the goal of Forest Hills Presbyterian Church to create a safe and secure environment for all children and workers who are involved in church activities. To facilitate this emphasis, it is necessary to gather pertinent information from those who desire employment or offer volunteer services to our children and youth program. This information will be used for the sole purpose of helping the church provide the above mentioned conditions for both children and workers.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security No: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever used name(s) other than the one above? If yes, please list:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current street address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Years at address: \_\_\_\_\_

Previous address: \_\_\_\_\_

Current phone number (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (work) \_\_\_\_\_

**Please respond to all questions below that apply to the position for which you are applying/volunteering.**

Position applying/volunteering for: \_\_\_\_\_

When are you available to work? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a valid driver's license? \_\_\_\_\_ Commercial license? \_\_\_\_\_

License number: \_\_\_\_\_ State issued: \_\_\_\_\_

Current employer: \_\_\_\_\_ Length of employment \_\_\_\_\_

Name of supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Previous employers (within last five years)**

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates employed: \_\_\_\_\_

Is there any reason you should NOT work with or around children or youth?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been the subject of a child abuse investigation?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please provide details:

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Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a criminal offense?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please provide details:

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**Please list your educational background:**

	Name	Graduate?	Year	Degree or course of study
High School:	_____	_____	_____	_____
College:	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other:	_____	_____	_____	_____

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**Please provide the following church information:**

What, if any, church affiliation do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you attended that church? \_\_\_\_ Are you a member? \_\_\_\_

List other churches with which you have been affiliated:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever worked with youth or children? \_\_\_\_ List where:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please list two references (must be of a business or organizational nature):

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Years known each other: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Years known each other: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby give permission to make a thorough investigation of my past employment, education, and background, and release from liability all persons, companies, or corporations supplying such information. I also release Forest Hills Presbyterian Church from any liability that might result from making such an investigation. I understand that any false statements or implications made by me on this application or other required documentation shall be considered sufficient cause for denial of employment or discharge.

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

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**Documentation of Reference Check - Youth/Children Worker or Volunteer**

Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Method of Contact and Contact Information:

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference Check Type (check one):

Former Employer

Personal

Former Volunteer

Other Organization (please specify):

\_\_\_\_\_

How long have you known the applicant? Under which circumstances?

What is your knowledge of this person's work with children/youth?

How would you describe this person's manner of interacting with children?

Based on your observation, is this person reliable and dependable?

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Would you feel comfortable with this person being alone with a small group of children/youth for a period of time? Why or why not?

Do you have any concerns we should know about regarding this person's ability to work with children/youth?

Were you ever made aware of circumstances in which this person's care of children/youth was called into question or criticized? If yes, please describe the circumstances.

Were you ever made aware of any criminal or civil investigations or actions taken against this person? If yes, please describe the circumstances.

Do you recommend this person to work with children/youth? Why or why not?

Is this person eligible to work with your organization's children again in the future? If no, why?

Additional notes or comments:

Signed (person checking reference): \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_