



Trinity Presbyterian Church of West Sacramento Policies and Procedures for the Protection of Children And the Adults to Whom they are Entrusted

A Vision for Children and the Church

Our congregation affirms...

*...That all children are a gift of God,
created by God and created good.*

*...That all children depend upon adults for safety and security
in a world that does not always value children.*

*...That we take seriously our baptismal vow
to nurture all children committed to our care.*

Excerpts from “A Vision for Children and the Church”
Adopted by the 205th General Assembly of the PC(USA) in June 1993

Purpose

Our congregation believes that children and youth are a gift of God to the whole of the human community. They are an integral part of the community contributing to its worship and ministry. It is in the church that children and youth receive nurture and hear the good news of God’s love and protection. Therefore, the church must strive to provide safety and security for children and youth as well as for the adults to whom they are entrusted.

Policies for the Prevention of Abuse

- **Background Checks**

All paid staff and volunteers who encounter children in their work at Trinity Presbyterian Church will undergo a background check which will be paid for by Trinity Presbyterian Church. Staff and volunteers will be required to share private information necessary for performing these checks. No child will be left alone with uncleared adults or youth volunteers.

- **Two Adult Rule**

Trinity Presbyterian Church will make a concerted effort to provide two non-related adults for all church sponsored activities involving children. The only exception to this two adult policy will be

in a situation in which the contact occurs in a public place and other persons are in and out of the area.

- **Overnight Policy**

For overnight gatherings there will be one adult for every five children with a minimum of two adults present. When both male and female children are participating in an overnight event there will be both male and female leaders present.

- **Visitors:**

- Parents/guardians are welcome to sit in and observe Children's programs without clearance.
- Any other adult, not cleared, not a parent/guardian, must have a background check before sitting in on a class. "If you would like to volunteer, we would be happy to have you contact the office to fill out a volunteer form."
- Teachers will keep doors locked during class to prevent intruders. Elders will use a key for head count. Teachers can open the door for late arrivals.
- If an intruder ever does enter a classroom, the teacher will ask the person to leave: "This area is for children. You are welcome to join gathered worship in the sanctuary. You can't stay here." Teacher will then text Cora (other elders as well) with the message "Stranger in Room (3 or 7). Help." Helpers in Gathered Worship will immediately come to escort the intruder from the children's area.
- In the horrific event of an active shooter, the teacher will flip a table onto it's side, slide the legs against the back wall, and hide everyone between the table and the wall. After getting everyone behind a table, teacher will call 9-1-1 from the hiding place. If there is a second phone available, that person should call or text elders in the sanctuary. If the teacher believes there is opportunity for the class to escape through the back door or the bathroom, the teacher is empowered make the best choice available at the moment.

- **Restroom Policy**

When under the supervision of church staff or volunteers, children will not be sent to the restroom alone. An adult will accompany them to the door, and be sure it is safe inside. Adults with background checks may change diapers. Youth volunteers should get assistance from child's guardian or a cleared adult.

- **Discipline Policy**

Children will be treated with respect. Spanking, slapping, and shaking are not allowed. Further, a child will not be disciplined in any way that deprives them of their basic rights to be safe. Instead, misbehavior will be corrected in this manner:

- Warnings as needed, teacher redirects to posted class rules.
- Time-out in classroom, separate child from the group for five minutes. Clarify rules, invite child to rejoin class.
- If child continues to behave in a way that is unsafe or disrespectful to others, the child's guardian will be summoned. Guardian can then choose to remove child from the class, or remain to assist the child in appropriate behavior.

- **Sick Children**
Thermometers will be stored in all classrooms. Teachers have permission to check a child's temperature. Any child who has a fever above 100.9*, or has vomited or had diarrhea, will not be allowed to stay. Parent/guardian will be contacted immediately to take the child home.

- **Leaving Church Grounds**
No volunteer or staff member may take a child off church property without the permission of a parent or guardian.

- **Transportation**
Church staff and volunteers who drive children and youth on the congregation's behalf must be at least twenty-one (21) years old. When possible, there must be at least three people present in any vehicle, either two adults and one child or youth or one adult and two children or youth. Parents are responsible for arranging transportation to and from an activity for children and youth and for communicating their plans to the activity leaders.

- **Promoting Policy Awareness**
All staff and volunteers who work with children, including persons who transport children, will be trained annually on all of the above policies. Each will receive a copy of this document and be required to sign a copy of it once they have read it and agreed to its conditions. All members of the Session of Trinity Presbyterian Church will also receive copies of this policy.

Procedures for Implementing Policies

- **Screening**
All teachers, youth leaders, and volunteers working with children and youth, and all Church staff must complete a Confidential Information Form and be screened.

- **Approval of Activities**
All activities for children and youth must be approved by the Session or one of its ministries committees and scheduled through supervisory staff.

- **Sign-In for Nursery and Preschool**
All nursery and preschool children must be signed in and out by a parent or guardian each time they arrive.

- **First Aid and CPR**
Staff and volunteers who work with children and youth are encouraged to obtain training in first aid and CPR. A First Aid kit will be taken on all Church sponsored outings and will be available in all class rooms.

- **Parent's Permission**

The following documents must be obtained at least once each year and before a child or youth participates in an overnight activity or in an activity occurring away from the church's campus: a Children and Youth Activities Participation Release, and a Medical Release. These signed documents will be taken on each sponsored outing. A photo release form will be obtained if a child's name, photo, or video, in digital format, will be used for print, electronic documents, or website, and maintained for publicity purposes.

Oversight of Policies

- **Oversight**

On behalf of the Session, the Christian Education Commission shall oversee the implementation of these guidelines. This committee shall maintain lists of those persons who have been approved to serve as leaders/volunteers at any youth activity or to drive children and youth. This committee coordinates the training of volunteers and staff regarding these guidelines. It is the responsibility of each staff person and volunteer to comply with these guidelines.

Identifying Child Abuse and Neglect

The Role of Adults Who Work with Children and Youth

Observer: Adults should be aware of the physical signs of child abuse and neglect, as well as changes in behaviors and relationships with peers. Sometimes it is hard to determine what is different, but remember if it doesn't seem right, it usually isn't.

Listener: Adults should listen to what children say. They may speak directly to you or a friend, but they may also speak through play, school work, or their reaction to books they read.

Role Model: Children need adult role models who provide them with positive, nurturing reinforcement of their own worth. Church volunteers and employees are in a unique position to be such models. Their behaviors and actions are regularly seen by children and may provide a basis for learning.

Possible Signs of Child Abuse and Neglect

Physical Abuse

- Frequent injuries such as bruises, cuts, black eyes, or burns, especially when the child cannot adequately explain the cause.
- Frequent complaints of pain without obvious injury
- Burns or bruises in an unusual pattern that may indicate a human bite, cigarette burns, or the use of an instrument on the face, arms, or palms
- Lack of reaction to pain
- Fear of going home or seeing a parent
- Injuries that appear after the child has not been seen for several days

- Unseasonable clothes that may hide injuries to the arms or legs
- Reluctant about sitting down; unable to hold a pencil
- Evidence of poor self concept
- Complaints of beatings or other harsh treatment
- Chronic runaway

Sexual Abuse

- Physical signs of sexually transmitted disease
- Evidence of injury to the genital area
- Pregnancy in a young girl
- Difficulty in sitting or walking
- Extreme fear of being alone with members of the opposite sex
- Exhibits sexually suggestive or promiscuous behavior
- Knowledgeable about sexual relations
- Reports sexual assault
- Complaints of pain or itching in the genital area
- Unusual odors from genital area
- Drawings or writings with strong, often bizarre sexual theme

Sexual Abuse (continued)

- Suicide attempts
- Regressed, clingy behavior
- Poor peer relationships
- Declining grades
- Abrupt change in behavior

Emotional Abuse

- Speech disorders
- Habit disorders
- Conduct disorders
- Development lags
- Delinquent behavior
- Overly adaptive behavior
- Substance abuse

Neglect

- Obvious malnutrition
- Dirty hair and body/offensive body odor
- Habitually dressed in torn and dirty clothes
- Obvious fatigue and listlessness
- Unattended for long periods of time
- In need of glasses, dental care, or other medical attention
- Begs for or steal food
- Abnormally short or underweight for age

What To Do If You Suspect a Child is Being Abused or Neglected

1. If there is a need for medical attention, law enforcement, or there is a threat of suicide, call 911 immediately.
2. Personally secure the safety of the child or youth.
3. Do not leave the child or youth alone to report the incident.
4. Do not personally confront the alleged or accused violator.
5. Report the incident immediately to the Pastor, Elder, Teacher, or Youth Director
6. Abuse and/or neglect will be reported to:
Yolo County Child Welfare Services, Health and Human Services Agency
Child Welfare Reporting Abuse Hotline
530-669-2345
7. Mandated Reporters must also complete and submit a [Suspected Child Abuse Report](https://www.yolocounty.org/government/general-government-departments/health-human-services/children-youth/child-welfare-services-cws) form before calling the hotline. Please see more instructions at <https://www.yolocounty.org/government/general-government-departments/health-human-services/children-youth/child-welfare-services-cws> .

What if an Elder, Deacon or Pastor Suspects Abuse or Neglect of a Child

Must you report your suspicions?

Our church's Book of Order sections G-6.0204 (pastors), G-6.0304 (elders), and G-6.0402 (deacons), respectively **mandate** that these three ordained groups within the church report any suspicions of abuse or neglect. The exact language is as follows:

A [minister of the Word and Sacrament/elder/deacon] shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge, gained in the course of service to the church, of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of privileged communication; or (2) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.

While church law mandates elders, deacons, and pastors to report suspicions, civil law only mandates pastors. An elder or deacon may, however, be mandated due to their profession.

Who do you contact?

Mandated Reporters must complete and submit a [Suspected Child Abuse Report](https://www.yolocounty.org/government/general-government-departments/health-human-services/children-youth/child-welfare-services-cws) form, and then call the hotline. The Yolo County Child Abuse Reporting Line is (530) 669-2345. Please see more

instructions at <https://www.yolocounty.org/government/general-government-departments/health-human-services/children-youth/child-welfare-services-cws> .

When do you contact?

A call to the Yolo County Child Abuse Reporting Line must be made **immediately**, followed by a written report within 24 hours.

Helpful Definitions

What is a Child?

A child is a person age birth to 18 years old.

What is Abuse?

Abuse is an act of commission and generally involves non-accidental physical injury, sexual activity or advances, or verbal battering which creates substantial emotional harm.

What is Neglect?

Neglect is an act of commission or omission and generally involves lack of such necessities as food, shelter, medical care or supervision appropriate for the child’s age or developmental level. Neglect can include being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or any substance that may impair you while leading or participating in a children’s function.

What is Mandated Reporting?

California State Law requires certain persons, due to their training or work role, to report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect to the County Department of Child Protective Services. (See: What if an Elder, Deacon or Pastor Suspects Abuse or Neglect of a Child)

Who is a Volunteer?

A volunteer is someone who works with the children of Trinity Presbyterian Church but who is not paid for that work. They may or may not be ordained.

Who is a Non-Ordained Staff Member?

A non-ordained staff member is someone who is paid by Trinity Presbyterian Church but is not an ordained Minister of the Word and Sacrament. This includes office staff, program staff, custodial, maintenance and music staff.

Who is an Ordained Staff Member?

An ordained staff member is a pastor or associate pastor who is paid by Trinity Presbyterian Church.