

Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy
Davidson College Presbyterian Church, Davidson, NC
Approved by Session on 6/22/2023, effective on 9/1/2023
(this policy shall be reviewed every 3 years)

Mission and Purpose page 3

Policy Rationale..... pages 3/4

GLOSSARY/DEFINITIONS..... pages 4/5

WHO IS COVERED BY THE POLICY? pages 5/6

OVERVIEW OF FOUR SAFETY STEPS page 6

Step 1: Screening..... page 6

Step 2: Training page 6

- Training for Youth Volunteers page 6
- Training for Bonner Scholars page 7

Step 3: Background Check page 7

- Confidentiality of Records page 7

Step 4: Policy Review page 7

- Renewals page 8

Building Safety page 8

Paid Staff/Volunteer Supervision of Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults..... page 8

- Open Door Policy page 8
- Adult to Children Ratio..... pages 8/9
- Restroom Supervision pages 9/10
- Diapering and Potty Training page 10
- Volunteer Emergency Situations..... page 10
- Exceptions to Darkness 2 Light Training..... page 10
- One-on-One Interaction..... page 10
- Pastoral Counseling..... page 11
- Individual Meetings page 10
- Sexually Oriented Conversations..... page 11
- Verbal Interactions..... page 11
- Physical Contact page 11
- Intoxicants page 12
- Nudity page 12
- Sexually Oriented Material page 12
- Tobacco Use page 12
- Online Programming..... page 12

- Discipline page 12
- Crosswalk Protocol page 13

Social Media..... pages 13/14

Overnight Events/Trips..... page 14

- Transportation page 14
- Overnight Trips pages 14/15
- Sleeping Arrangements pages 15/16
- Gender Identity and Fluidity..... pages 16/17

Outside Groups who use DCPC Facilities..... page 17

Enforcement of Policy..... page 17

- Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse page 17
- Zero Tolerance for Abuse page 18
- Reporting Violations of Policies page 19
- Consequences of Violations page 18/19
- Consequences of Failure to Report..... page 19
- Response to Report of Abuse..... page 19
- Best Practices during an Investigation page 19
- Special Circumstances page 20

FORMS

Volunteer Ministry Application and Acknowledgment form A

Youth Permission, Medical Release, and Covenant..... form B

Youth Medical Form..... form C

Code of Conduct..... form D

Code of Conduct Affirmation form E

Reporting Violations of Policies..... form F

MISSION AND PURPOSE

Mission - Davidson College Presbyterian Church believes the Church should be a safe place for children, youth, or vulnerable adults who participate in programs designed to help them learn, serve, and grow in their faith.

Purpose - The purpose of the Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy is to establish guidance and procedures to help ensure the physical safety of our children and vulnerable adults. This policy also is designed to educate our adult volunteers and staff and to protect them as well as the Church as a whole from unfounded allegations of misconduct.

- **Commitment to Members** - DCPC is committed to its members of every age. During the baptism of each person into our community of faith, DCPC pledges to uphold, teach, and strengthen that person in Jesus Christ and to support that person's relationship with the Body of Christ.
- **Commitment to Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults** - DCPC is especially committed to the safety, welfare, and protection of all children, youth, or vulnerable adults participating in DCPC's activities, including those who are developmentally, mentally, or physically disabled, regardless of age.
- **Commitment to Staff and Volunteers** - DCPC is committed to the safety, welfare, and protection of all persons involved in the care and nurture of children, youth and vulnerable adults. DCPC recognizes that certain people have gifts for teaching, growing, and developing young people and wants to encourage them to use these gifts. At the same time, however, the church places certain standards on those adults who choose to serve in this capacity.

POLICY RATIONALE

The implementation and documentation of a Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy strives to reduce the risk of abuse and neglect for the following reasons:

- 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 called to be a place that reflects the open arms of Jesus. In Matthew 19:14, Jesus says, "Let the little children come to me." The Church is to be, at all levels of council and in all entities, a place of safety and nurture reflective of the arms of Christ.
- 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.
- The larger Church suffers with the victim/survivor and their family when abuse and neglect occurs. The Church is unable to do the full work of Christ, due to the hurt, pain, and distrust that accompanies abuse. Not only does the Church lose its credibility at all levels, it can also suffer considerable financial loss.

- The Book of Order states, "The congregation as a whole, on behalf of the Church universal, assumes responsibility for nurturing the baptized person in the Christian life," (Book of Order W--3.0403) and Presbyterians believe this baptismal commitment to be a serious one, understanding it to apply to all in the church's care, including children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
- Children, youth, and vulnerable adults are not only persons of care and service in the church, but they are also co-recipients of the grace and love of God. Jesus exemplified this in the Gospel of Mark 10:15-16 when he urged his followers to receive the kingdom of God as a little child. And he specifically takes up the children into his arms and blesses them. So also, the Church, as the body of Christ, is to be the presence of Christ's love, in the same way taking up all children, youth, and vulnerable adults into its arms and blessing them, providing for them a safe, thriving, and nurturing environment in which to grow in every way.

Glossary/Definitions

Child Abuse - A nonaccidental injury or pattern of injuries to a child. Child abuse may include:

- **Neglect** - Occurs when the adults responsible for the well-being of a child fail to provide for the child. Neglect may include not giving food, clothing, shelter; failure to keep children clean; lack of supervision; and withholding medical care.
- **Emotional Abuse** - Chronic and persistent acts by an adult that endanger the mental health or emotional development of a child including rejection, ignoring, terrorizing, corrupting, constant criticism, mean remarks, insults, and giving little or no love, guidance, and support.
- **Physical Abuse** - An injury or pattern of injuries that happen to a child that are not accidental. These injuries may include beatings, burns, bruises, bites, welts, strangulation, broken bones, or death.
- **Sexual Abuse** - Sexual abuse is the sexual assault or exploitation of children. Sexual abuse may consist of numerous acts over a long period of time or a single incident. Children can be victimized from infancy through adolescence. Typically, the perpetrator keeps the child from disclosing the abuse through intimidation, threats, and rewards.

Child or Youth - Anyone under 18 years old (and therefore a minor under the law).

Church-Sponsored Activity - Includes any and all gatherings that arise from DCPC-generated worship, educational, fellowship, administrative, pastoral, mission, or recreational events. These events include onsite and offsite gatherings.

DCPC - Davidson College Presbyterian Church

Employee - Any person who works for salary or wages at DCPC.

Ministry Area Leader – Any person with supervision over a particular program or ministry. (e.g., Staff Associate for Youth Ministry, Staff Associate for Children’s Ministry, Preschool Director, PEP Director, Director of Music.)

Policy – The most recently approved version of the DCPC Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy. All appendices and addendums (including the Code of Conduct attached hereto) are considered part of the Policy.

President of the Corporation – Normally the current Chair of the Finance Committee.

Sexual Offender – Any person convicted of a crime involving sexual misconduct including rape, sexual battery, sexual offense, indecent liberties, promoting or participating in prostitution of a minor, sexual exploitation of a minor, disseminating pornography to children, kidnapping, or abduction. Anyone listed on a Sex Offender Registry.

Training or Training Session – As referenced in this Policy, training shall be conducted in person or online using a prepared presentation and accompanying documentation.

Volunteer – Any person who gives of their time in support of or to assist in a DCPC sponsored activity involving Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult.

Vulnerable Adult – Any person 18 years old or older without the developmental or cognitive capacity to consent.

Vulnerable Adult Abuse – Any act or failure to act that results in physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse, psychological, emotional mistreatment, or financial exploitation of a vulnerable adult.

This Policy is for the protection of minor children, ages 0-18 and vulnerable adults. The terms “students,” “children,” youth,” and “young people” may be used interchangeably and apply to all minors involved in any programs and ministries of Davidson College Presbyterian Church.

WHO IS COVERED BY THE POLICY?

All DCPC employees and volunteers must comply with this Policy when they participate in any children and youth programs of DCPC, including but not limited to:

- Nursery, childcare, the DCPC Preschool and the Preschool Enrichment Program (PEP)
- Sunday school classes
- Children and youth programs
- Children and youth choirs
- DCPC-sponsored retreats, mission trips, etc.
- Vacation Bible School/Intergenerational Bible School
- Youth leaders/small group leaders/confirmation guides

This policy supersedes all prior DCPC Child Protection Policy Statements or Policies. Perceived conflicts or ambiguities in interpretation and application of this policy shall be resolved by the Administration & Personnel Committee and Pastor/Head of Staff.

OVERVIEW OF FOUR SAFETY STEPS

All staff members and volunteers working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults must complete FOUR SAFETY STEPS before ministry work or volunteer placement begins.

Step One: Screening

Staff members and volunteers working or serving with children are required to complete DCPC's Screening Process, which includes:

- All volunteers will be required to fill out and sign the Application to Work with Children and Youth.
- Face-to-face interview (employees and volunteers)
- References checked
- Before being eligible to serve in positions interacting with children or youth, volunteers must (1) be a member at DCPC for one year, (2) have demonstrated attendance in worship and programs, or (3) have prior relationship with more than one staff member and approval of the Associate Pastor for Faith Formation.

Step Two: Training

To equip DCPC staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, DCPC requires all staff members and volunteers to complete Darkness 2 Light (D2L) child protection training. This training will be renewed every three years. Additional in-person training may be offered during each church calendar year. Online Darkness 2 Light training will be used for mid-year new volunteers.

Abusive behavior of any kind, by staff members or volunteers, is forbidden. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a supervisor or a member of DCPC's pastoral staff. Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in "grooming" a child for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or "gatekeeper"), manipulate the child into sexual activity, and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

Training for Youth/Children

Occasionally, DCPC youth will volunteer in either the youth or children's ministry programs. Those youth will be expected to read over and sign the Code of Conduct document and attend a Protection Policy training event that includes highlights of the D2L training material, but not view the actual D2L videos. This training event shall be designed and taught by the Associate Pastor for Faith Formation and shall be held yearly.

Training for Davidson College Bonner Scholars

Davidson College Bonner Scholars who have completed “Working with Minors” training through Davidson College and are knowledgeable with the “Working with Minors” policy will be considered to have met requirements equivalent to those outlined for D2L training and will not be required to receive additional D2L training required for Davidson College Presbyterian Church volunteers and staff.

Step Three: Background Check

DCPC requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in children’s or youth activities or programming undergo a criminal background check every three years. Background check expenses will be borne by DCPC. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of background check may be required. The following staff positions shall have yearly background checks: Associate Pastor of Faith Formation, Associate Pastor for Campus Ministry, Preschool Director, Assistant Preschool Director, PEP Director, Staff Associate for Children’s Ministry, Staff Associate for Youth Ministry.

Confidentiality of Records

DCPC must maintain confidentiality for sensitive and confidential records that pertain to the Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy. These include but are not limited to completed screening forms, background checks, and reports of abuse and/or violations of this policy. This information should be available only to those with a need to know. Electronic records that include this information should be controlled and available by using passwords, firewalls, and encryption, if available. Passwords should be secure and changed regularly. Hardcopies of confidential information should be held in a lockable storage cabinet that is accessible only by the Associate Pastor for Faith Formation, Church Administrator, and the Church Bookkeeper. When appropriate, confidential and sensitive information should be shredded using confidential shredders and bins designed for disposal of confidential information.

Delivery of confidential information should be secure. Physical delivery should be handled by a trusted employee. Delivery of confidential information by email or file sharing should be used only through a trusted service provider. Staff should receive appropriate training for how to handle confidential information, i.e., using secure passwords, destroying documents, etc.

Step Four: Policy Reviews

Staff members and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this policy and sign the Affirmation at the end of the Code of Conduct, indicating that they have read and understood the material and agree to comply with policy requirements, and to return the signed Affirmation to the Associate Pastor of Faith Formation. Volunteers who have not been active in a full church program year may be asked to review the Policy and sign the Affirmation again.

Renewals

The following will be required of all current employees and volunteers:

- Every 3 years, background checks will be required, except for those for whom annual background checks are required under Step Three: Background Check.
- Every 3 years, Darkness 2 Light training will be required.
- Every year employees and volunteers are expected to review the Policy or Code of Conduct form.
- Yearly review and sign the Employee and Volunteer Recommitment Form.

BUILDING SAFETY

Staff Monitoring Plan

Monitoring of staff and volunteers will include regular (announced and unannounced) visits in each program to provide supervisors the opportunity to observe staff member and volunteer interactions with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Yearly, all staff members with oversight of children, youth and vulnerable adults shall perform an environmental scan of the physical space they use with the Associate Pastor of Faith Formation and the Church Administrator.

PAID STAFF/VOLUNTEER SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Open Door Policy

Employees and volunteers are expected to avoid, to the greatest extent possible, any situation in which they could be alone or out of sight of others, with a single child, youth, or vulnerable adult.

When it is necessary for an adult to be alone with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, the individual should notify another adult or guardian before and after the period during which he/she is alone with the child/vulnerable adult. The door may be shut as long as there is unobstructed glass in the door.

Adult to Children Ratio

DCPC is committed to providing adequate supervision in all children's and youth activities and programs. Accordingly, the following ratios will be observed for all activities and programs:

Youth

- For unregistered events (youth group, Sunday School) a minimum ratio will be 20 youth to 2 adults.
- Youth small groups each will include 3 to 4 unrelated adults for each group. Should less than 2 leaders be present for a small group, that group will be combined with another small group that week.

Birth - 5th Grade

- In the nursery/infant room through kindergarten, the minimum ratio should be:

Age	Adults	Children
Birth - 6 Months	1	3
6 Months - Walker	1	4
Walker - 2 years	1	4
3 years - 4 years	1	5
Kindergarten - 5 th Grade	1	8

The DCPC Preschool follows the following ratios in their classes:

Age	Adults	Children
Toddlers	2	8
2's	2	13
3's	2	13
4's	2	16
Transitional Kindergarten	2	14

The Preschool Enrichment Program follows the following ratios in their programming:
8 children to one adult.

If a group is out of ratio, it is the leader's responsibility to immediately notify supervisory staff responsible for the program or event. The responsible supervisory staff member will make diligent effort to immediately bring staff member/volunteer to student ratios into compliance with this policy.

Restroom Supervision

Staff or volunteers should be sure the restroom is unoccupied before admitting children.

With preschool children the main/exterior door of the restroom shall remain open. Children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities. Children should be verbally assisted first if help is needed/requested while the stall door (if there is one) remains closed. If physical assistance is necessary, another staff member or volunteer should be present. Any assistance with toilet activities or the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer.

Elementary-aged children should be accompanied to the restroom. The supervising person should wait outside in the hall. If a child requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open and verbally assist the child in completing their activities while the child remains alone behind the closed door of the bathroom stall.

If additional hands-on bathroom assistance is required, the child should alert the supervising person in the hall to assist them in the briefest way possible. Staff/volunteer should only enter the bathroom stall in the event of an emergency.

Diapering & Potty Training

Diapering should be done in the same room as childcare and always while a second staff member or volunteer is present. Babies and toddlers should be lifted onto the diaper changing table (never allowed to climb to the top). DCPC staff members are requested to handle diapering on a regular basis; however, volunteers may occasionally need to step in. Diapering should be done in an efficient manner with the only touching being brief surface wiping with a baby wipe.

Volunteer Emergency Situations

Pulling in extra parent help when needed in children's Faith Formation classrooms is allowed when two trained adults are present.

Exceptions for Darkness 2 Light Training Requirement:

Occasionally, last minute substitute volunteers are required to fulfill necessary Adult to Children ratios. These instances should be rare. In every case, at least one fully trained and screened adult shall be present in the classroom, DCPC bus, or space. If the person volunteering at that time is willing to help again, he or she shall begin the **Four Safety Steps** process before they are allowed to volunteer again.

It is important for every family who participates at DCPC to be allowed time observing and/or assisting in their child's classroom when desired or necessary. If two screened and trained adults are present, a parent who is not screened or trained may observe. If two screened and trained adults are present, a parent may assist regularly (as an extra adult) if they have completed the Four Safety Steps prior to volunteering.

One-on-One Interaction

DCPC recognizes that meeting the emotional needs of children, youth, and vulnerable adults may occasionally require a staff member or volunteer to minister to them on an individual basis. Staff members and volunteers shall observe the following guidelines when interacting with children, youth, and vulnerable adults:

Individual Meetings

Staff members and volunteers should conduct one-to-one meetings with an individual children, youth, or vulnerable adults at a time when others are present and where interactions can be observed. Private one-on-one conversations should not occur behind closed doors, but rather in public space - for example, in the corner of a large space with other staff members or volunteers present in the larger space.

Pastoral Counseling

It is not a violation of this Policy for any Pastor/Staff Associate to talk with a child, youth, and vulnerable adults privately when the children, youth, or vulnerable adults has requested a private meeting and the Pastor/Staff Associate informs another staff member about the meeting before, and if not possible, as soon as possible thereafter, about the meeting.

Sexually Oriented Conversations

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with students and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating, or sexual activities with any student in the program. However, it is expected that from time-to-time youth & children's ministry discussions and lessons may address issues related to promiscuity, sexual integrity, dating, sex, and human sexuality. These lessons will occur in group settings or individual interactions under the guidelines set forth above and will convey the church's views on these topics.

Verbal Interactions

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children, youth, or vulnerable adults should be encouraging and constructive. To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to children, youth, or vulnerable adults in a way that is or could be construed by a reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.

Physical Contact

DCPC is committed to protecting children, youth, and vulnerable adults in its care. To this end, DCPC has implemented a 'physical contact policy' that promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our children's and youth ministries and programs. These guidelines also apply to those working with vulnerable adults. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in these ministries or programs:

- Hugging, pats on the back, and other forms of physical affection that are appropriate, supportive, and not unwelcome between staff members or volunteers and students are important for the child, youth, and vulnerable adult's development and are generally suitable in the church setting.
- Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden.
- Physical contact should be for the benefit of the children, youth, and vulnerable adults, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
- Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted as such when physical contact is open to observation.
- Do not force any physical contact, touch, or affection upon a reluctant child/vulnerable adult. A child, youth, and vulnerable adult's preference not to be touched must be respected.

Intoxicants

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in any church facility, while traveling with, while working with, or supervising children/vulnerable adults. Care should also be exercised while taking any prescription or other medications. Should a staff member or volunteer feel intoxicated, impaired, or ill, she or he is to immediately notify the other staff and volunteers.

Nudity

Staff and volunteers shall never be nude in the presence of children/vulnerable adults in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes during a pool party, weekend, or overnight retreat, etc,) appropriate individual changing areas shall be provided.

Sexually Oriented Material

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from giving or electronically transmitting sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, pictures, films etc.) to children and vulnerable adults. Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from viewing and/or discussing sexually oriented material in the presence of children or vulnerable adults. Materials related to sexual education classes and workshops approved by the Davidson College Presbyterian Church are permitted.

Tobacco Use

DCPC requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products or “vaping” in DCPC facilities, while in the presence of children/vulnerable adults or their parents/guardians, and during DCPC activities or programs, including travel. DCPC’s buildings are tobacco-free.

Online Programming

All online programming and interactions with children/vulnerable adults will abide by the two-adult rule. Online video chat rooms should be treated like a room in the church. There should be two adults present when a child/vulnerable adult is present. Pastoral counseling with a child/vulnerable adult online should be done with an adult nearby or with two adults present. If it is not possible for two adults to be present in the counseling session, DCPC staff must discuss safety protocols with parents/guardians and make arrangements for another adult to be nearby. DCPC staff must keep at least one other staff member up to date on any counseling relationship with a child/vulnerable adult.

Discipline

DCPC staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all DCPC policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Pastor/Head of Staff and the Administrative and Personnel Committee of the Session.

Crosswalk Protocol

When children 5th grade and under need to move between the church building and the Congregation House, the following shall be observed:

- Crossing Davidson/Concord Road shall only happen at designated crosswalks.
- A staff member or volunteer shall cross Davidson/Concord Road with children 5th grade and under.

Social Media

Communicating with Children and Youth

- Privacy Settings- Set stringent privacy settings on any social networking profile if you are an adult ministering to children and youth.
- Youth Leaders- Grant the Staff Associate for Youth Ministry or the Ministry Area Leader full access to your profile and correspondence if you accept friend requests from minors or youth associated with our community of faith.
- Two-Person Rule- Note that any and all private communication between a child/youth and adult must include two adults, preferably one being their Ministry Area Leader.
- Group Messaging- Keep in mind that the best way to communicate is through a group set up by the church.
- Limit Commentary on Pictures - remember, if you are an adult, limit comments to just one or two photographs on a child/ youth's page. Otherwise, it can be perceived as intrusive and may make the child/youth feel uncomfortable.
- Any communication between adults and youth should be archived, not deleted.
- Adults should avoid direct or private messages with youth.
- Adults should not request access or initiate access to youth social media accounts, but may respond to invitations to do so.

Groups on Social Networking Sites – Youth

- It Takes Two- Be sure each group has at least two unrelated adult administrators as well as at least two youth participants.
- Inviting Youth- Let youth take the lead when it comes to group invitations. Youth administrators should invite their peers, unless a youth specifically asks you to invite him/her.
- Appropriate Content- Create behavioral covenants to govern appropriate content for an online youth group.
- Consequences- Report any material on any site (whether affiliated with the church or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited to the clergy and/or the Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services (DSS). If the material is on a church-affiliated site, that material should be documented for church records and then removed from the site after consultation with DSS and/or police.
- Inappropriate Behavior- Address any content that depicts inappropriate behavior during a church-sponsored event or activity with fellow youth leaders and parents.

- Open to parents- Open social networking groups for youth to current members' parents.

OVERNIGHT EVENTS/TRIPS

Transportation

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children, youth, or vulnerable adults. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children, youth, or vulnerable adults:

- Once children, youth, or vulnerable adults have arrived at DCPC-sponsored events, they may only ride with adult drivers.
- Children, youth, or vulnerable adults should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Staff members and Volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one children, youth, or vulnerable adults in transport. If circumstances require that only one children, youth, or vulnerable adults is in a vehicle (i.e., the last children, youth, or vulnerable adults to be dropped at home), then the staff member or volunteer driving should call another staff member or volunteer (hands-free) and stay on the phone until the children, youth, or vulnerable adults is dropped off.
- Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults while in vehicles.
- No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving DCPC vehicles owned or rented by DCPC, except as set forth above or in the case of an emergency.
- No drivers under age 25 may drive DCPC-owned or rented vehicles. All drivers shall provide a copy of their current drivers license to the church before they can become a DCPC driver.

Overnight Trips

- The Faith Formation Committee shall approve of the events or trips at least one month prior to dates.
- The male/female chaperone ratio should mirror that of the children or youth participating in the event. If male and female children, youth, or vulnerable adults are participating in overnight trips, then there shall be at least one adult male and one adult female adult chaperones.
- Adults of the same gender in the room with two or more children, youth, or vulnerable adults of the same gender.
- Only adults or staff, who have been approved through DCPC Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy procedures and standards may stay in housing with DCPC children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
- Depending on room configurations, adults should be placed to maximize the safety of children, youth and vulnerable adults and to prevent access by outsiders.
- The age span for children and youth rooming together must be less than four years.

- While on trips, there must be designated adult chaperones and in-person check-in times during the day. In cases where children and youth go off in small groups, it is recommended that no more than three hours should elapse between check in times. Adult chaperones must know where the children, youth, and vulnerable adults are between check-in times.
- It is strongly recommended that children and youth maintain a “buddy system” so that no child or youth goes off by themselves for extended periods of time. Best practices would suggest a minimum of three children or youth in a “buddy group.”
- For trips longer than one overnight, it is recommended that primary supervision be rotated so that all adults share in the responsibility and have opportunity for respite.
- Children/youth must sign a covenant agreement with clear expectations, responsibilities and consequences.
- All participating children and youth must have a current medical release form and copy of insurance card on file at DCPC. Copies must also be with the adult leadership on the trip. It is recommended that one adult should be responsible for distributing medication and having adequate knowledge of health needs of those on the trip.
- DCPC accommodates gender identity and fluidity in our practices. Any questions regarding the gender identity and/or fluidity of a minor shall be addressed by the Associate Pastor for Faith Formation, the Ministry Area Leader, and parents of the person. All reasonable requests shall be granted.

Sleeping Arrangements – Youth Ministry

It is anticipated that certain Youth Ministry activities may occasionally require that overnight sleeping arrangements be made for students and staff members and volunteers (i.e. lock-ins, mission trips, ski trips, etc.). In the event an activity requires sleeping arrangements, staff members and volunteers will strictly observe the following rules:

- A single youth shall not be alone in a sleeping arrangement with a staff member or volunteer.
- All adult leaders shall have previously completed DCPC’s screening and training process.
- Overnight sleeping arrangements shall be discussed by the Ministry Area Leader and Associate Pastor for Faith Formation.
- Leaders should check with parents and use good judgment regarding PG or PG-13 movies. No R-rated movies are permitted, with the exception of use in an educational setting.
- In communal sleeping situations, appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn; both top and bottoms.
- In the event of a sleepover on campus that involves youth, youth must sleep in separate rooms, properly supervised by leaders of the same gender with appropriate accommodations made in cases of varied gender identity.
- Staff members and volunteers will monitor sleeping students by periodically conducting visual bed checks to ensure that sleeping students remain in designated sleeping places. During bed checks, staff members and volunteers should never physically touch a student.

- Whenever possible, staff members or volunteers will sleep in the same room (but not same bed) as students, or in an adjoining room with the door between the rooms kept open.
- In the event that overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each staff member, volunteer, and student will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances, a “one-person-to-one bag or blanket” rule will be observed.
- If it is deemed necessary for adults to share sleeping accommodations with minors, a minimum of two adults, preferably the same gender as the minors being chaperoned, shall sleep in each area.

Gender Identity and Fluidity

We believe God’s grace is unlimited, the Holy Spirit is at work within all people, and all persons are God’s beloved children. Our leaders, our staff, and our congregation hope to demonstrate what it looks like to be a fully inclusive body of Christ.

The following are best practices and procedures to allow accommodations to create safe spaces and assure that each person is included in our community.

- Make no assumptions about a person’s sexual orientation or identity. Identity can be fluid, especially with children and youth, so approach each conversation openly and unassuming.
- Do not enforce or reinforce gender stereotypes.
- Acknowledge and celebrate an individual’s preferred name.
- Respect an individual’s privacy. If an individual shares their sexual orientation or gender identity with you in confidence, honor that confidence. Share this information, with their permission, with those who need to know to care or minister to them. Do not share with other leaders, students, or parents.
- DCPC strives to create a safe environment and culture by awareness and including leader training around homophobic language and bullying. There will be no tolerance for exclusivity or language that is homophobic, bullying, judgmental or dismissive by a child, youth, or volunteer.

When assigning LGBTQ+ persons to groups for programming, activities and overnights:

- The two adult and open doors rules already provide the first barrier of protection for both children, youth and vulnerable adults and for volunteers for groups, activities, and overnights.
- When relevant to programs, DCPC will strive to provide at least one co-ed group for each age group. Individuals then have the option of a female group, male group, or coed group.
- Persons who identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual are to use the restroom of their biological gender. Any youth or adult who identifies as gender-fluid or transgender may use the restroom of their preferred gender.

- In the event that a person who identifies as gay, lesbian, or bisexual attends an overnight activity, they will stay with their biological gender. In the event that a person identifies as gender-fluid or transgender attends an overnight activity, they will stay with their preferred gender.
- Always err on the side of compassion when making decisions regarding LGBTQ+ persons.

NON-DCPC GROUPS WHO USE DCPC FACILITIES

Non-DCPC groups using DCPC facilities which have direct supervision of children and youth (such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts) will be expected to acknowledge in writing that they have adopted and follow their own policies, governance, and insurance. Given the nature of the non-DCPC groups that use DCPC facilities, DCPC will not perform background checks, seek personal or professional references, or review employment records. Leaders of non-DCPC groups will be expected to conduct their own due diligence and will be invited to attend DCPC's scheduled D2L training classes. The Church Administrator shall keep a written record of non-DCPC groups yearly compliance.

Enforcement of Policy

DCPC has a zero tolerance for abuse in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at DCPC to act in the best interest of children, youth, and vulnerable adults in every program.

In the event that any staff member or volunteer observes any inappropriate behavior (i.e., policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.,) they should report that to one of the following: the Pastor/Head of Staff, the Associate Pastor for Faith Formation, or the President of the Corporation.

Reporting Inappropriate Behaviors and Suspected Abuse

It is the responsibility of a staff member or a volunteer to immediately report suspected abuse to the Department of Social Services and to one of the following: Pastor/Head of Staff, the Associate Pastor for Faith Formation, or the President of the Corporation any observations, suspicions, questions, or concerns about children, youth, or vulnerable adults that may involve abuse or neglect (physical, emotional, or sexual.)

The following chart lists unacceptable and acceptable behaviors and actions with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. It is intended to give clarity to unacceptable interaction between staff (employee or volunteer) and minors and the consequences for those actions. The lists are illustrative and not all-inclusive; other behaviors may be identified.

<u>Zero Tolerance</u>	<u>Not Allowed</u>	<u>Appropriate</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These behaviors, when substantiated, represent gross misconduct and may include termination of employment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These behaviors <i>could</i> result in corrective action up to and including termination of employment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These behaviors are generally ok. However, even appropriate touch can be inappropriate when excessive, done for staff’s personal pleasure, or when the intention is to give preferential treatment.

Reporting violations of policies

DCPC is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children, youth, and vulnerable adults and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services, or another appropriate agency.

Because sexual abusers “groom” children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to “groom” a children, youth, or vulnerable adult for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers must report ‘grooming’ behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to one of the following: an immediate supervisor, the Associate Pastor for Faith Formation, the Pastor/Head of Staff, or the President of the Corporation. In the case of a report of a supervisor or the Associate Pastor for Faith Formation (or any other pastor or staff at DCPC), then the Pastor/Head of Staff, or Church Administrator and the President of the Corporation shall also be notified.

Consequences of Violations

Any person accused of committing any act prohibited by church policy or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child, youth, or vulnerable adults will be immediately suspended from participation in any activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults at DCPC, pending investigation. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or other government agency.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act may be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves

children, youth, or vulnerable adults at DCPC. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from DCPC.

Consequences of Failure to Report

Failure to report a policy violation is grounds for termination of an employee. Volunteers who fail to report a policy violation may be restricted from participation in any activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults at DCPC and may constitute a misdemeanor under N.C.G.S. § 7B-301 (B).

Response to Report of Abuse

DCPC pastoral staff will take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs. Any report must be promptly reported to the Pastor/Head of Staff, Church Administrator, or Associate Pastor for Faith Formation. When a policy violation has been reported, the Pastor/Head of Staff, Church Administrator, or the Associate Pastor for Faith Formation will make all communications on behalf of DCPC. Church communications will include, when necessary, reporting the incident to appropriate legal authorities in accordance with North Carolina law. The Pastor/Head of Staff will notify, when appropriate, the Church Administrator, who will in turn notify DCPC's insurance carrier and counsel.

Pursuant to N.C.G.S. Sections 7B-301 and 108A-102 and the PC(USA) Book of Order Section G-4.0302, ordained pastors and Certified Christian Educators shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge 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 a confidential communication, (2) he or she is not bound by an obligation of privileged communication under law, or (3) even if revealed in the context of confidential communications.

Best Practices during an Investigation

Media Contact - The Pastor/Head of Staff or designees shall be the sole spokesperson for the church regarding media and other public or church inquiries.

Confidentiality - All persons involved in reporting alleged inappropriate treatment shall maintain confidentiality regarding all aspects of the incident including the identity of individuals involved.

Respect for and Treatment of Person Accused - Any person accused of inappropriate treatment must be treated with dignity and support. All reports will be taken seriously but will not be judged prematurely. The Pastor/Head of Staff, Associate Pastor of Faith Formation, or President of the Corporation shall relieve the person accused of the inappropriate treatment of further responsibilities until the appropriate public investigating authorities complete the investigation and determine whether or not the information obtained through the investigation substantiates the allegations.

Special Circumstances

- Allegations Regarding a Pastor - Allegations against an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament involving inappropriate treatment must be reported to the Presbytery for investigation in accordance with Sections D-10.0101 and .0102 of the Book of Order.
- Allegations Regarding non-DCPC Organizations - Organizations that use the church facilities shall notify the Pastor/Head of Staff or designee as soon as possible (and at least within 24 hours) about any incident of inappropriate treatment involving any person affiliated with that arm of the organization using the church facilities. In addition, the organization using the church facilities shall follow that organization's reporting practices or, if it has no established reporting procedures, that organization shall follow procedures substantially like those set forth in this section. In either case there shall be no contact by the church representative with the person accused of inappropriate treatment. The Church Administrator shall notify non-DCPC groups of this policy yearly in writing.
- Sexual Offenders - At no time is a Known Sexual Offender to be assigned to ministries with children, youth, or vulnerable adults. At no time is a Known Sexual Offender to congregate with children, youth, or vulnerable adults. At no time is a Known Sexual Offender allowed in areas of the church or grounds dedicated to youth or in use primarily by children and youth.