

Safe Child Policy



Flora Presbyterian Church

*This policy was first created
and approved by the Session
of the FPC in 1999 and is
reviewed annually.*

Flora Presbyterian Church

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For overnight activities separate sleeping quarters for male and female participants will be provided and will be enforced. Each sleeping area will be supervised by at least one Safe Child Certified worker if not a parent of the children.

When transporting youth to an activity, all drivers must be over the age of twenty-one (21) years and have a copy of a valid operator's license and current automobile insurance on file with the Chairman of Christian Education. Drivers age 18 and over may only transport others age 18 and over. They also must have a copy of a valid operator's license and current automobile insurance on file with the Chairman of Christian Education. The number of persons per car will not exceed the number of seat belts.

Contact Information

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Involving Guests/New Members

To welcome visitors and yet maintain our Safe Child policies, children who are guests will be designated as under the care and supervision of their host family. When they attend a program or Sunday School for the first time and their name is entered for attendance, a registration form is not required, the host family is listed beside the child's name. A registration form will be provided if the child will be attending again.

Adults who want to participate as volunteers and have not completed Safe Child training, are welcome to work with children and youth under the supervision of a Safe Child Certified adult. Adults will not be invited to teach or lead groups of children until they have been regular "attenders" for at least 6 months and will be expected to complete Safe Child training and certification prior to being in a supervisory role.

Special Events and Field Trips

For special events occurring off-site such as field trips and overnights, more stringent procedures are followed to assure safety. All of these activities must be pre-approved and a proposed itinerary must be submitted to the Chairman of Christian Education a minimum of one week prior to any event off church property, three weeks prior for overnight trips. Parents are notified at least one week prior to the event and signed consent and medical release forms are collected. On the trip, duplicate forms are carried with originals maintained at the church.

There will always be at least two unrelated adults present on any field trip or special event. If the group is coeducational, there must be at least one male and one female, unrelated, to accompany the group with at least one adult that is Safe Child Certified.

Safe Child Policy Overview – Purpose

This policy has been adopted by the Session of the Flora Presbyterian Church so that we can be in compliance with Presbytery guidelines and so that our church can be insurable. Its purpose is to prevent the potential for abuse or harm to come to young people participating in church programs and in turn protect our church and its members from potential lawsuits. The Christian Education committee formulated the policy following guidelines from Presbytery and our insurance provider.

Teacher Screening & Training

The primary method of assuring a safe environment for children attending programs at our church is the careful screening and training of potential teachers and leaders.

The Safe Child policy keeps children safe because it deters potential offenders from taking advantage of the church as an easy target for abusing children. The Safe Child policy does this with several safeguards that require teachers, leaders, and child care providers to:

- Actively participate in the life of the congregation for at least 6 months before becoming trained as a "Safe Child Certified" teacher or leader in charge of working with children or youth.
- Complete an application prior to training and certification that allows the church to check references and past work with children.
- Have a criminal background check before being Safe Child Certified.
- Complete training in Safe Child procedures.

Volunteers who have not been screened or trained may work with children and youth under the supervision of a Safe Child Certified worker.

Supervision

An important component of the Safe Child Policy is the careful supervision of children and youth while on church premises and involved in church activities. This is something that everyone can assist with.

Parents will be informed that they are not to leave children unsupervised at the church prior to or following church activities. Until an activity is scheduled to begin, and at least two adults are present, including at least one Safe Child Certified adult, the building will remain locked. Children will be supervised throughout the duration of church activities and then released to parents or caregivers at the end of an event or program.

Children who are in 2nd grade or younger will not be left unattended at any time and will be escorted between activities and returned to parents or guardians by an adult or teen worker.

For their protection and the safety of others, children are not allowed in unsupervised areas. When youth or children's programming is taking place, children will be supervised by the adults and teen workers in charge. During church-wide services, fellowship times, dinners, etc., parents or guardians are responsible for making sure children are supervised. Everyone can assist with this by checking with children seen unsupervised and making sure they return to supervised areas.

An important supervision principle is shared supervisory responsibility. This safeguard protects both children and adults. Abuse occurs most commonly when adults are alone with children. The principle of shared supervision greatly reduces this risk, as well as protects adults for unsubstantiated claims of abuse.

Shared supervision is defined as two or more adults in the same area of the church (same level), with open doors, or windows in doors, for visibility. It is preferable, but not mandatory, for the adults to be unrelated. At least one supervisory adult is to be "Safe Child Certified."

Documentation

An important component of our church's Safe Child Policy is documentation. If you are involved in education, health care, social services, government, or just about any profession, you are aware of the increasing demand for careful documentation. This is simply keeping good records.

What do we document?

- We document information about our church's volunteers and certify that they have been screened and trained.
- We register children who attend our programs and document that they have parental permission to participate.
- We keep attendance of the children and leaders involved in all church sponsored programs for children and youth, such as Sunday School, Junior Church, nursery attendance, and Oasis.
- We document any "incidents" such as disciplinary actions resulting in children being sent home, or any accident or injury.

Why do we document?

Documentation is extremely useful in any situation that might involve medical, legal or insurance dealings. Documentation of permission allows for medical care in the absence of a parent. Documentation of attendance and incident reports tell who, what, when, and where something took place. Documentation is much stronger evidence than hearsay and can stand up in a court of law.