



# **Safe Church Policies**

*Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church*

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## **Statement on Inclusion**

All policies laid out in this document are intended to decrease harm in our community. We recognize that the church has historically been a vehicle of harm for vulnerable people through sexual assault, sexual abuse, and exclusion of community members based on gender identity, race and color, sexual orientation, and social status. The following policies are meant to check that imbalance of safety and align with our values of inclusion.

As a community of Christian faith, Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church (SVPC) is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities, and a community in which members, friends, pastors, employees, volunteers, youth, and children can worship, learn, and work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. We believe that no one should be denied rights, status, or access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of any program or activity because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, differing abilities, or socio-economic class. To the extent possible, all spaces and settings for programs, activities, and ministry will be accessible.

SVPC seeks to support all children and youth with vulnerable gender or sexual identities by providing reasonable alternative arrangements to address safety and comfort for those children and youth. Transgender, genderqueer, and/or gender non-binary children and youth who express the need or desire for increased privacy will be provided with reasonable alternative arrangements such as the use of a private area, a separate changing schedule, or a single stall restroom. Any alternative arrangement will be provided in a way that protects the child's or youth's ability to keep their vulnerable gender or sexuality status confidential.

## **Statement of Purpose**

The Safe Church Program is a set of policies and procedures for preventing child abuse in or related to the ministries and programs of SVPC. The policies also apply to protecting vulnerable adults. Policies define the acceptable behavior in an organization. Because perpetrators of abuse often violate policies to gain access to children and youth, when staff and volunteers know and understand policies, they can identify, interrupt, and report actual or potential abuse.

The SVPC leadership and congregation support the principles of the Safe Church Program, which include individual responsibility to fulfill the highest standards of personal conduct toward others and to lead and guide the SVPC community in fulfillment of the standards set by our Christian faith. SVPC strongly opposes and prohibits sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, and any form of exploitation or abuse of others regardless of age, sex or gender identity, sexual orientation or identification, or mental capacity. Our congregation will nurture good conduct as demonstrated by personal behaviors that are consistent with our Christian values of inclusion, safety, and harm reduction. We will work to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to these values and Safe Church policies and, as necessary, discipline those persons who violate this policy. Everyone at SVPC—whether pastor, leader, lay staff, volunteer, or guardian—has a role to monitor the behavior of those who look to them for guidance and redirect them when they do not adhere to Safe Church policies.

We take any kind of abuse of minors or any form of violence very seriously. If you become aware of anything of this nature at SVPC, report it to Child Protective Services (833-722-5437) and to a SVPC supervisor or program director. Any incident, whether recent or not, can also be communicated by writing to [safechurch@sunnyvalepres.com](mailto:safechurch@sunnyvalepres.com).

## A Theology of Transparency: Congregational Awareness

We are dedicated to a policy of open communication and education for the benefit of the children, youth, vulnerable adults, and guardians we serve. Our community is entitled to know what to expect of our programs, staff, and volunteers, and the related policies and procedures created to protect the respective program constituencies, including children and youth, parents and guardians, staff members, church officers, volunteers, and members and friends of the SVPC community.

As part of our theology of transparency, all updates to the SVPC Safe Church policy will be posted on the Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church [website](#) to be publicly accessible to all. To increase awareness and understanding, information about the policies and how to prevent abuse will be shared periodically with the SVPC community through newsletters and other communications.

Parents, guardians, and SVPC community members will be invited to receive the same Safe Church training provided to staff and volunteers and will be encouraged to report violations of policy, boundaries, or suspected abuse to the program director of the respective ministry or program at which an incident has occurred or to [safechurch@sunnyvalepres.com](mailto:safechurch@sunnyvalepres.com).

## General Definitions

- **Child Protective Services (CPS)** is California's system of intervention for child abuse and neglect.
- **Children and/or youth** include anyone under the age of 18. Generally, we refer to infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and children in grades K-5 as "children" and individuals in middle or high school as "youth."
- **Church officers** include active deacons and elders elected by the congregation.
- **Clergy or pastor** includes any person who is admitted to ministry and serves the congregation in any capacity whether called as clergy or serving in a retired, emeritus, administrative, or volunteer capacity.
- **Disordered eating** is an attempt to cope with overwhelming feelings and painful emotions related to food and weight issues.
- **Emotional abuse** is mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment of the victim's growth, development, or psychological functioning.
- **Mandatory reporter or mandated reporter** is a person required by California law or by the Presbyterian Church, USA (PC(USA)) to report suspected abuse to police or child welfare agencies.
- **Minor** is anyone under the age of 18 (also referred to as children and/or youth throughout the policy).
- **Neglect** is the failure to provide for a child's or youth's basic needs or the failure to protect a child or youth from harm.

- **Pastoral Care Team** is a team consisting of pastors and lay leaders who provide care to members of the congregation.
- **Physical abuse** is injury that is intentionally inflicted upon a child's or youth's body.
- **Program leader** is an individual, whether staff or volunteer, who leads an SVPC program for children or youth. This policy sometimes refers to a leader as **advisor**, **staff**, or **volunteer**.
- **Program director** denotes the supervising staff member of a program or ministry area.
- **Safe Church database** is the computer location where all Safe Church information is stored.
- **Safe Church Coordinator** is the person responsible for maintaining the database and coordinating the Safe Church clearance process for staff and volunteers.
- **Safe Church Oversight Team** is the entity responsible for monitoring Safe Church policy implementation.
- **Session** is the governing body of SVPC, consisting of installed elders and the pastors.
- **Sexual abuse** is any nonconsensual sexual activity or any contact of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and an adult (age 18 or older). Sexual abuse is also contact of a sexual nature between minors when it is nonconsensual, when one individual is younger than age 14, or when coercion is present (for example, when difference in age, size, or strength is used to influence the other person).
- **Staff** includes any person who is employed by SVPC, including part-time and temporary employees.
- **Suicidal ideation** is thinking about or planning suicide, including thoughts that range from fleeting consideration to detailed plans.
- **Self-harm or self-injury** is intentionally hurting oneself. One common method is cutting with a sharp object. There is not necessarily a correlation between self-harm and suicidal ideation.
- **Verbal abuse** is the use of derogatory, negative language to harm another person psychologically or emotionally. Verbal abuse harbors hidden aggression and is extremely manipulative, often involving insults disguised as caring comments. Verbal abuse can be overt or covert.
- A **vulnerable adult** is anyone aged 18 or over, who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age, or illness, and who is or may be unable to take care of themselves or to protect themselves from significant harm or exploitation. (Though this policy does not directly name vulnerable adults in many sections, there are many occasions in which these policies would be supportive of vulnerable adults.)

## Safe Church Screening, Clearance, and Training

The process of screening, selecting, and training employees and volunteers is an essential element of transparency and accountability in keeping God's people safe. Criminal background checking by itself is inadequate, because very few predators, or people who would become predators, have been through the penal system.

### Screening and Clearance

Safe Church screening and clearance involves collecting information from prospective staff and volunteers, checking references, conducting criminal background checks, and ensuring individuals have completed initial training. All SVPC staff and officers and all volunteers

working with minors must be Safe Church approved, which means they have passed screening criteria and participated in Safe Church initial training and mandated reporter training required by state law. This applies to:

- All who volunteer to work with youth or children, including youth, ages 14 years or older
- All pastors and staff of SVPC, including part-time and temporary employees
- All current deacons and elders
- All staff of The Music School
- All staff of the Presbyterian Early Learning Center (PELC), which independently clears staff under licensing guidelines

Non-SVPC groups operating programs involving minors on the SVPC campus must also adhere to Safe Church clearance, supervision, and reporting requirements (see [Safe Church Policies for Groups Using SVPC Facilities](#)).

### **Clearance Requirements**

Prospective staff, leaders, and volunteers must complete the following within 30 days of hire, elder or deacon election, or signing up to volunteer:

- 1) Fill out the Safe Church Application, including provision of four references. At least three references must be returned and endorse the applicant.
  - Volunteer Application Link: <https://bit.ly/2JNtQDc>
  - Elder/Deacon Application Link: <https://bit.ly/2HQxlbC>
  - Staff Application Link: <https://bit.ly/2HKUq3e>
- 2) Get fingerprinted through the Department of Justice (DOJ) if over 18 years of age. Fingerprinting that has been done in another state or for another organization cannot be used. **Instructions to applicant:** Print and complete the “applicant information” part of the appropriate DOJ Form found [here](#) and bring it to a Live Scan location for fingerprinting. This costs around \$25. Send a picture of the receipt to [safechurch@sunnyvalepres.com](mailto:safechurch@sunnyvalepres.com) for reimbursement. Results of fingerprinting will be sent to the church office and confirmed for you by the Safe Church Coordinator. If this process is causing challenges around accessibility or affordability, please contact your program director or supervisor for support.
- 3) Attend Safe Church Training (see [Training](#) section below)
- 4) Complete online mandated reporter training (see [Training](#) section below)

### **SVPC Procedures for Clearing Individuals**

The directors of Children’s Ministry, Youth Ministry, and The Music School are responsible for communicating clearance information to prospective staff and volunteers in their programs and making sure they complete the process in a timely manner. The Safe Church Coordinator is responsible for making sure staff, elders, and deacons complete the process. The Safe Church Coordinator will work with the Church Administrator to make sure that non-SVPC groups using facilities for activities with minors have satisfied Safe Church clearance requirements.

### **Clearance Determination**

If the DOJ report or sex offender registry shows that an individual has been convicted of sexual abuse, the individual may not serve on SVPC staff, be church officers, or volunteer in any

Clearance Tasks and Responsibilities		
Task	Who's Responsible	When
Provide clear information on screening process (e.g., steps applicant must take, information on getting fingerprinted)	Program leaders and supervisors, Safe Church Coordinator	Ongoing; information on SVPC website
Complete employment or volunteer application, provide 4 references, get DOJ fingerprinting	Prospective staff member, leader, or volunteer	At the time of initial employment, leadership selection, or volunteer position
Fingerprinting report received	DOJ and Safe Church Coordinator	Usually within 2 weeks of fingerprinting
Check name against sex offender registry	Safe Church Coordinator	Within 2 weeks of the start of screening process
Request information from references provided	Safe Church Coordinator	Within 2 weeks of receiving reference names; follow-up requests within 3 weeks of sending initial request
Receive and review references	Safe Church Coordinator	Within 1 week of receipt
Enter results of screening into Safe Church database	Safe Church Coordinator	As results are received
Participate in Safe Church general training	Prospective staff member, leader, or volunteer	Within 60 days of starting position
Complete California approved mandated reporter training and send certificate to Safe Church Coordinator (see Training section for who is required to take this training)	Prospective staff member, leader, or volunteer	Within 60 days of starting position
Enter training attendance and completion in database	Safe Church Coordinator	Within 1 week of training or receipt of training certificate
Determine clearance and communicate to applicant and applicant's program director or supervisor	Safe Church Coordinator	Within 60 days of starting position



programs involving minors. See section, [Policy on Participation by a Registered Sex Offender](#) on how registered sex offenders may participate in SVPC activities. If any of the screening information reveals warning signs that the individual has abused or could abuse minors, the Safe Church Oversight Team will determine whether the individual will be cleared to work with minors, depending on the nature of the warning signs. The Safe Church Coordinator will notify all program directors and Head of Staff of individuals who have not passed Safe Church clearance requirements or whose clearance has been revoked and are therefore not authorized to work with children or youth. SVPC program staff and the PELC Director will also be notified of any registered sex offender.

Screening information and clearance determination will be kept confidential, with only the Safe Church Coordinator and members of the Safe Church Oversight Team having access to this information. Information in hard copies will be stored in a locked cabinet with controlled access, and electronic information will be protected by a security password.

## **Training**

Safe Church training involves the following components:

- General Safe Church training for all staff members, elders, and deacons, and volunteers who will be working with children or youth
- Mandated reporter training for those listed above
- Program-specific training for staff and volunteers working with children or youth
- Extended training for program directors
- Training for and communication with parents
- Instructions for children and youth

### **General Safe Church Training**

All staff, pastors, elders, deacons, and volunteers working with children or youth are required to attend a general Safe Church training. Training includes a review of policies and procedures, including expected conduct and boundaries, procedures for reporting violations of standards of conduct and suspected child abuse, managing high-risk situations (e.g., bathroom use, transition times), how to prevent and respond to incidents of sexual activity between children or youth, and physical security procedures. Training also focuses on abuse prevention education, including the effects of sexual abuse, characteristics of abusers and how they operate, protecting oneself from false allegations, examples of child-on-child sexual abuse, and characteristics of children more likely to act out sexually and those of children more likely to be abused.

Safe Church Refresher training must be completed at least every five years for individuals to continue working with children or youth or serving on staff or as a church leader. Completing the California Mandated Reporter Training (see below) counts as refresher training. The Safe Church Coordinator is responsible for informing program directors of individuals who need to complete a refresher course and entering attendance or completion in the Safe Church database.

### **Mandated Reporter Training**

In January 2022, California enacted AB 506, which requires youth organizations to set policies to prevent child abuse and assault. As a result of this new law, churches are now designated

as “youth organizations.” This law states that all staff of youth organizations are considered mandated reporters and must complete mandated reporter training. Volunteers are not mandated reporters, but those over the age of 18 who will have regular contact with minors must complete training on the law. Deacons and elders over the age of 18 are designated as mandated reporters by the PC(USA) Book of Order (but not by California law) and must complete mandated reporter training.

The State of California provides free online training ([mandatedreporter.ca.com](http://mandatedreporter.ca.com)) with different courses depending on an individual’s role within the organization.

- All pastors, staff members, elders, and deacons are required to take the “General Training” course.
- Pastors are required to also take the “Clergy” training.
- Volunteers are required to take the “Volunteer” training.
- Individuals who have completed a California state-approved course on mandated reporting for another organization do not need to do the training again. They should send a copy of the training certificate to [safechurch@sunnyvalepres.com](mailto:safechurch@sunnyvalepres.com).

### **Program-Specific Training**

For staff and volunteers in children and youth programs, program-specific training provides more detailed, age-level training to supplement the general Safe Church training. Program leaders will assure that each employee or volunteer has mastered the requirements and provide additional guidance as needed to assure required conduct.

### **Extended Training for Program Directors**

The directors of Children’s Ministry, Youth Ministry, and The Music School play a pivotal role in the implementation of the Safe Church policies. When staff enter these roles, they will receive training beyond that required of all staff. The Safe Church Coordinator, with the assistance of the Safe Church Oversight Team, will make sure that these trainings occur. Training will entail watching the second video in the Safeguarding God’s Children course and reviewing program directors’ responsibilities for implementing policies, details on policies concerning interactions with children and youth and supervision, and procedures for reporting incidents, including how to make a report to Child Protective Services.

### **Training for Guardians**

At the beginning of each program year or in the welcoming process for new participants throughout the year, SVPC leaders in children and youth programs will make accessible to guardians:

- The expectations for staff and volunteers or adult advisors in working with children and youth ministry, which includes behavioral expectations for adults toward children and information regarding adults’ obligation to report suspected abuse as it exists under the laws of the State of California
- A link to current SVPC Safe Church Policies
- Information on how to report violations of policy or suspicions of abuse.

Program leaders will also periodically provide information to guardians via newsletters and other communications on preventing and reporting abuse of children and youth.

## **Instruction for Children and Youth**

Children and youth will be periodically reminded of the following subjects in their age-specific programs:

- Age-appropriate information about boundaries
- How to protect themselves from abuse
- How to report boundary violations or incidents of abuse
- Basics of Safe Church policies (e.g., two-adult rule, bathroom policies, and the prohibition of private meetings between an adult and a child or youth)

## **Interactions with Children and Youth**

SVPC aims to provide an environment for children and youth that is safe, nurturing, and empowering and that promotes growth and success. Individuals working with minors will be asked to abide by policies on physical, verbal, and written interactions.

### **Physical Interactions with Children and Youth**

There are many ways to express affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children and youth which do not create discomfort or confusion. Respect, bodily autonomy, safety, and appropriate boundaries are the guiding principles for physical contact between program leaders and children or youth. The guidelines in the table below are intended to avoid contact that is or may appear threatening or inappropriate. Any inappropriate physical contact by staff or volunteers toward children or youth will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of volunteer role or employment.

Many of the **inappropriate** behaviors listed in the table on the next page are used by offenders to groom children and their guardians for later molestation and can be construed as sexual abuse. Inappropriate physical or verbal interactions observed by others should be immediately interrupted and called out in-the-moment and should be reported as a warning sign of abuse. Appropriate physical contact should only be initiated after verbal consent is given by the child/youth, for example:

Adult: "May I give you a hug?"  
Child/Youth: "Yes!"

Group activities that involve youth-to-youth physical contact (such as group games) should be thoughtfully planned so as not to exclude students who don't feel comfortable with physical contact.

### **Communication with Children and Youth**

The purpose of all communication with children and youth is to love and affirm who they are, help them fully and safely participate in SVPC programs and activities, and support their emotional, social, physical, and spiritual wellbeing. Communication with children and youth should always be focused on furthering these child/youth-centered goals and not the needs of the adults. Those working with children and youth should refrain from discussing their own personal matters. In addition, as representatives of SVPC and its programs, adult leaders should avoid discussing sensitive SVPC personnel, organizational, and policy issues with minors and their families.

Guidelines for Physical Interactions	
Appropriate Physical Interactions	Inappropriate Physical Interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Side hugs</li> <li>• Shoulder-to-shoulder or “temple” hugs, when in a group context</li> <li>• Pats on the shoulder or back</li> <li>• Handshakes</li> <li>• High-fives, hand slapping, and fist bumps</li> <li>• Arms around shoulders, when in a group context</li> <li>• Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations)</li> <li>• If initiated by a preschool or younger aged child, sitting in an adult’s lap</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full-frontal hugs</li> <li>• Kisses</li> <li>• Showing any physical affection in isolated area</li> <li>• Lap sitting (except when initiated by a preschool or younger aged child)</li> <li>• Wrestling</li> <li>• Piggyback rides</li> <li>• Tickling</li> <li>• Allowing a child or youth to cling to an employee’s or volunteer’s leg</li> <li>• Any type of massage given by or to a youth</li> <li>• Touching the bottom, chest, or genital areas of any child or youth, regardless of gender</li> <li>• Snapping bras, giving wedgies, or similar touching of underwear, whether or not it is covered by other clothing and regardless of gender</li> <li>• Any form of affection that is unwanted by the child or youth or the staff or volunteer</li> </ul>

Guidelines for Verbal Interactions	
Appropriate Verbal Interactions	Inappropriate Verbal Interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive reinforcement</li> <li>• Appropriate jokes</li> <li>• Encouragement</li> <li>• Praise (excluding praise about physical appearance or body development)</li> <li>• Conversations about the child’s or youth’s life (e.g., school, hobbies, interests)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name-calling</li> <li>• Discussing sexual encounters</li> <li>• Involving children or youth in the personal problems or issues of staff or volunteers</li> <li>• Secrets</li> <li>• Cursing</li> <li>• Off-color or sexual jokes</li> <li>• Shaming or belittling</li> <li>• Derogatory remarks</li> <li>• Harsh language that may frighten, threaten, or humiliate</li> <li>• Derogatory remarks about the child or youth or their family</li> <li>• Comments or compliments that relate to physique or body development for any gender</li> </ul>

Staff and volunteers may not communicate with minors in a way that is or could be construed by any observer as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Staff and volunteers must not engage in sexually oriented conversations with children or youth unless directly related to a youth curriculum (such as a retreat on sex and sexuality). See the table on the previous page for further guidelines.

### **Communication Outside of Program Activities**

Adult leaders may occasionally communicate with children or youth outside of SVPC activities if permission has been obtained by the program director and the guardian. See the guidelines below for different age groups and programs and the next section on keeping records.

#### ***Children's Ministry–Ages 0 through Grade 5***

One-on-one communication with children should be kept to a minimum. Generally, leaders will communicate with the guardians. Leaders should not contact children through social networking sites, text messaging, or other forms of electronic communication. All communication with children should be approved by the Director of Children's Ministry. Communications can be by phone (with advance permission by the guardian) or email (with a copy to the guardian).

#### ***Youth Ministry–Grades 6-12***

With permission from the Director of Youth Ministry, youth ministry leaders can contact youth outside of program activities if the guardian has consented to youth ministry leaders contacting their child (e.g., through a consent form completed at the beginning of the year) using texts, emails, phone calls, and public posts on social networking sites. Adults should seek the advice of the Director of Youth Ministry when they have questions or concerns about written or digital communication boundaries with youth.

#### ***The Music School–All grades***

Generally, staff should communicate with guardians, not directly with the children and youth. With permission from The Music School Director and the guardian, staff may communicate directly with youth, grades 6-12, about scheduling and program details through texts, emails, or phone calls.

### **Keeping Records of Communications**

The guiding principle for contact with minors is transparency. Communication should be visible to others or recorded and kept. The program director will periodically ask for review of adults' records of communication. Staff and volunteers are responsible for presenting records of communication to the program director when asked. The table on the next page provides examples of how different types of communications can be made visible.

### **Gift Giving to Children and Youth**

Molesters routinely groom children by giving gifts, thereby endearing themselves to the child. They might instruct the child to keep the gifts a secret, which then starts teaching the child or youth to keep secrets from guardians. Staff and volunteers are not permitted to give gifts to individual children or youth outside of a group or community context. Because gifts are a purposeful means of caring for young people, it is allowed as part of SVPC activities if they are given to all participants (e.g., all youth participating in a retreat). In rare circumstances, it may be appropriate to give an individual child a gift (e.g., during an illness or hospital stay),

however, this should be done in consultation with the program director. Staff and volunteers should always be transparent about gift giving.

<b>MAINTAINING TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION WITH MINORS:</b>	
<b>Mode</b>	<b>How can we make this contact visible and documented?</b>
Phone	Document calls (date, length of call, recipient) (Individuals may email call updates to the program director as their record.)
Written note/letter	Adult leaders should alert the program director when mailing private notes or letters to youth or children and save a copy of the note.
Email	Save a copy. (Adult leaders may forward or CC emails to the program director as their record.)
Social Media (including, but not limited to: Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Discord)	Public messages are considered transparent. If private messaging, keep a record/copy. Adults should never delete any private messages exchanged between adults and youth. (Note: some social media outlets auto-delete messages; it is the adult's responsibility to ensure they change this in settings before messaging.)
Text Message	Save a copy. Adults should never delete any private messages exchanged between adults and youth.
Videoconference (Zoom, Facetime, Skype, GoogleMeet, Discord, etc.)	Video meetings should be recorded and uploaded to a storage location designated by the program director.

### **Intimate Partner and Romantic Relationships with Children and Youth**

An adult leader may not date or have an intimate or romantic relationship with a child or youth participant in SVPC programs under any circumstances, even if the participant is 18 or older. If an adult leader is interested in dating a participant who is age 18 or older, that adult will be asked to step down from the leadership role until such time that the participant has exited high school and is no longer a youth participant in SVPC programs.

The only exception for romantic relationships is when both parties are high school students: if a leader is a high school student volunteer, this leader may date another high school student. If the student leader becomes a non-high school student (through graduation or otherwise) and continues to date another student who is still in high school, the leader must step down from the leadership role until such time that both members of the relationship are no longer high school students. A student leader in high school may not date a middle school student.

### **Guidance on Managing Children and Youth Behavior**

Behaviors are a means of communicating. Our priority is to provide a safe, nurturing environment and try to understand what the behavior is expressing. SVPC believes that *each of us is a child of God* and should be treated with kindness, respect, and compassion.

Clear rules and expectations and consistent messages about behavior are the key to promoting positive behavior. Occasionally, children and youth have trouble following expectations for communal gatherings or display disruptive behavior. In these cases, the following steps will be taken.

1. The leader will talk with the child or youth and state clearly what the problem behavior is, what is requested, and try to determine what might be interfering. For a younger child, the leader will attempt to redirect the child to another activity or calm space. In general, and if possible, this communication should be done off to the side, away from other students.

2. If the child or youth continues to exhibit disruptive behavior, the leader will have the program area leader talk individually to the child or youth.
3. If behavior guidance strategies are not working, the child or youth will be removed from the activity or offered a short break. Unless otherwise discussed with a guardian, the child or youth will be welcomed back at the next ministry activity.

### Language Advice for De-escalating Situations with Children and Youth ([adapted from Dwayne Reed](#))

1. **“You are not in trouble.”** Oftentimes, children or youth think there is no possible positive outcome for them. They can feel caught, trapped, or as if they’ve already lost. Say, “You are not in trouble,” to neutralizes the situation and give them the space to be honest and the hope for a positive resolution.
2. **“Can you tell me what happened?”** People hate when their side of the story isn’t being listened to. Even if it’s not 100% true, it’s how they see things, and they just want someone to respect them enough to hear them out. Give the child the opportunity to tell you what they think happened, then address it from there.
3. **“I am not mad at you.”** Assuring the child or youth that you’re not mad at them may help de-escalate the situation and hopefully quell their fears of disappointing or upsetting someone they look up to. If you are actually angry with what took place, you can communicate this as the conversation goes on (noting that you’re angry with *this* not with *them*).
4. **“I am here to help if you need me.”** Many times, the yelling, screaming, cursing, and crying is a cry for help. Children or youth might not have the language or the tools (yet) to express their needs. Letting them know they can trust adults to help them *if they want help* will de-escalate troublesome situations and allow for them to trust adults as allies.

For the safety of our community, the following actions will be taken for children whose behavior causes extreme disruptions or harm to themselves or others.

- Behavior that is extremely disruptive will result in immediate and thoughtful removal of the child or youth from the activity to help the child or youth regulate the behavior in a safe and quiet environment. If needed, the program director will contact the family to determine the needs of the child or youth.
- If the child or youth is engaging in an illegal or dangerous activity, see section, [Responding to Dangerous, Harmful, or Illegal Behavior](#)
- The child or youth may be suspended from activities for the time needed to help resolve the conflict. This will be determined by the program director.
- The child or youth and family will be treated with respect and compassion, and the child or youth will be welcomed back to program activities after the conflict has been resolved, provided they are able to respect the community guidelines of the program.

## Supervision

Careful supervision of all programs involving minors is critical for preventing would-be abusers from having access to minors and for keeping children and youth safe from other harms. Strong supervision also supports and protects staff and volunteers working with children and youth. All activities should have at least two unrelated adults present (see two-adult rule below) and an adequate ratio of adults to minors. In many cases, an adequate ratio is one adult for every nine minors; however, there should be a higher ratio of adults to children when infants and toddlers are involved, in programs that serve children with special needs, and in high-risk situations such as overnight and off-campus events. Because most youth-to-youth abuse involves youth from different age groups, additional supervision is needed for activities that include youth from different age groups.

### The Two-Adult Rule

The two-adult rule is designed for the safety of adults as well as minors and is required across all SVPC programs with few exceptions (see [Exceptions to the Two-Adult Rule](#) section). Compliance to the two-adult rule includes the following:

- There must always be two SVPC Safe-Church-approved, unrelated adults present when supervising children and youth. “Related” is defined as any family member, including live-in partner, spouse, grandparent, sibling, parent, and other family relations.
- If two related adults are leading an activity or teaching together, a third unrelated approved adult must be in attendance.
- The adults should be in sight of each other at all times.
- When possible, staff and volunteers should wear name and pronoun tags or identifying clothing so that children and youth can easily recognize them as staff.

### Two-Adult Rule in Online Programs

Activities conducted online should generally follow the policies of this document, although not all will apply.

- Online meetings and classes with children or youth should not start until two Safe Church-approved adults are present.
  - The host should use the “Waiting Room” feature or equivalent until two adults are in the meeting.
  - If the second adult unexpectedly leaves, the remaining adult should put all attendees back into the Waiting Room until the second adult returns or close the meeting and end early.
  - A single adult can be with children and youth in breakout sessions for a few minutes, but the host should check in by entering the breakout rooms during the session. If this check-in is not feasible, breakout rooms should not be used.
- Online meetings with children and youth should be recorded, and the recording should be moved to the designated meeting recordings repository.
- All participants in meetings with children or youth should wear appropriate attire.
- Private messaging should be disabled.



## **Youth Serving as Staff or Volunteers**

Middle and high school students are encouraged to serve as leaders for younger children. A Safe Church-approved youth, aged 14 or older, may count as an adult under the Two-Adult Rule if a non-related adult who is at least 18 and out of high school is also present. Except for childcare staff, two youth serving without an adult present does not satisfy the two-adult rule. For childcare, two youth can satisfy the two-adult rule if an adult supervisor is nearby or easily accessible. Youth staff and volunteers (aged 14 or older) must be approved by the Safe Church program before serving as childcare workers or in an ongoing volunteer role with children.

Youth may work with younger children on a short-term basis through roles such as a Vacation Bible School volunteer or through teen leadership programs without being Safe Church approved. These youth are not counted as adults for the two-adult rule and must be provided with guidelines regarding appropriate behavior and then supervised accordingly. Staff and volunteers must understand that these teens are still youth and not their peers. The following guidelines are recommended for teen leadership and volunteer programs.

- Create a screening process for teen leaders which includes a standard application and references from adults (such as teachers, counselors, family friends, or guardians)
- Train teen leaders in their role in programs and on program policies about appropriate and inappropriate interactions. This training should include appropriate and inappropriate physical and verbal interactions and the importance of maintaining behavioral boundaries between teen leaders and younger children and between teen leaders and pastors, employees, and volunteers.
- Prohibit teen leaders from being alone with a child or another youth.
- Prohibit teen leaders from escorting children to the bathrooms. This does not apply to teen workers who are 14 years old or older and who have been approved through the Safe Church clearance process (e.g., childcare workers).
- Prohibit teen leaders from assisting children or youth with changing their clothes.
- Create a system to monitor the teen leaders by designating a specific employee or volunteer who is in charge of the teen leadership program and its participants.
- For childcare workers: Require teen leaders to wear clothing or lanyards that identify them as leaders-in-training and differentiate them from staff and volunteers and from children and younger youth.

## **Exceptions to the Two-Adult Rule**

The purpose of the two-adult rule is to ensure the actions of any one leader are known to at least one other leader and to support program leaders. Guidelines for exceptions to the two-adult rule follow this intent—that even when only one leader is present, the actions of that leader are known and visible to others. This is accomplished by the adult leader choosing visible and public locations for activities and by communication with program leaders. There should never be a one-on-one meeting with a minor and an adult that program directors do not know about.

## ***Unexpected Situations***

Occasionally, leaders will find themselves without another approved adult present due to unforeseen circumstances. The following procedures should be followed.

- **Inform program director**—The leader should immediately contact a supervisor or program director or their designee (e.g., via text message) to inform them of the situation, including information about where they are and who is present. The supervisor or designee will advise the leader about what to do (e.g., cancel the activity, wait for a second adult, notify guardians). If the program director or their designee cannot be reached, the leader should contact another leader or volunteer.
- **Visible location**—For any time when there is only one adult present, the group must be in a location that is visible to others (e.g., outside or in a room with an unobstructed window, open door, etc.)
- **Multiple students present**—If more than one student is present, this is acceptable as a short-term solution (e.g., at the beginning of a program as youth are arriving and a second adult has not arrived), but this should not be a habitual situation.
- **Move or cancel activity**—If a second approved adult is not available, the activity must be moved to a place where there are other approved adults (e.g., another classroom) or the activity must be canceled.

### ***Breakout Rooms (Online and In-Person)***

Some programs use breakout rooms for small group times with only one leader facilitating the small group. When this occurs, windows should be unobstructed (curtains or blinds open) and the door left open. For in-person activities, the small-group leader should place students in visible sight of the hallway or entrance so that they may be seen from outside the room. The adult leader should position themselves so that students have access to the exit and are not cornered into a room with an adult. Another adult leader should periodically enter the online breakout room or walk by the physical breakout rooms to ensure these policies are in effect.

### ***Bathroom Procedures***

Preschool and Kindergarten children use the restrooms within the classrooms. Adults must not be in a restroom with a child with the door closed. Children younger than 5 may be assisted, if the child requests or needs help. In this case, the restroom door must remain open. If there are no restrooms within the classroom, children must be escorted to the restrooms.

- **Children in grades 1-5** must be escorted by a Safe Church-approved adult or youth leader to the restroom. The escort must take at least two children at a time. The escort should enter the restroom first and check all the stalls to determine if anyone is in the restroom before the children enter. If the restroom is empty, the children may go in, and the escort should remain outside the restroom and listen for the children in the restroom. If someone is in the restroom, the escort should wait until it is empty. If another person arrives, the escort should ask that person to wait until the children have left the restroom. It is understood that having an adult taking children to the bathroom may leave one adult alone in the room with multiple children for a short period of time. In these cases, the “visible location” guidelines under the Two-Adult Rule apply.
- **Middle and High School students** may use the restrooms without an escort if they inform an adult leader where they are going. That leader should watch to ensure that they return. Many incidents of youth-to-youth abuse occur in bathrooms, so leaders should pay special attention to when and where youth are when using the restroom. Adult volunteers should be mindful of respecting youth’s gender identity in terms of bathroom usage.

### ***Phoenix Center (On Campus) Locker Room and Showers***

When in use, adults should intermittently and briefly check inside the locker rooms, so users know the locker room is monitored. If programs are using the campus showers, shower schedules will be created to ensure that: 1) adults are not scheduled to shower simultaneously with youth, 2) there is only one person per shower at any time, and 3) all involved are scheduled according to their gender identity.

### ***Planned One-on-One Meetings or Lessons (Online and In-Person)***

Because most abuse occurs when an adult is alone with a minor, SVPC aims to eliminate or reduce these situations and prohibits private one-on-one interactions unless approved in advance. See section below on guidelines for approved one-on-one interactions.

**Private Music Lessons.** The program director must keep a schedule of all private lessons, online and in-person, which should include times, children and youth involved, and location of sessions, including links to the online sessions. Lessons on campus will take place in rooms with windows or open doors, and a program administrator will periodically walk by to make sure Safe Church procedures are being followed. For online lessons, guardians will be informed that they are expected to be at home during the lesson, and teachers should make sure that a guardian is at home with the child or youth. If the guardian is not home, the teacher should immediately alert a program administrator (e.g., via text). Program administrators will conduct periodic monitoring visits by briefly joining the online meeting.

**Youth Ministry Mentoring Meetings.** One-on-one meetings between youth and Safe-Church-approved youth advisors are an important part of ministries with middle and senior high students. To ensure safety, the following guidelines apply.

- **Obtain Director of Youth Ministry approval in advance.** Provide name of youth, date and time of meeting, and physical location or online platform.
- **Notify another person when meeting with a youth alone.** Send an alert (e.g., via text or What's App) to the program director or another leader at the beginning and end of a time alone with a youth, including when driving youth.
- **Assure Visibility.** In-person meetings should take place in a visible area in a public place (e.g., coffee shop, restaurant, visible park area). Adult leaders should never meet with a youth in a private home unless the youth's guardian or another adult (unrelated to the adult leader) is in the home and can view the adult and youth at any time.
- **Driving Students—**Adult leaders may drive youth to and from meetings if they inform their program director of this arrangement in advance and adhere to the guidelines listed in [Driving Students](#) section.
- **Transparency with Parents—**Parents should be informed regularly (through newsletters and promotional materials) that advisors may occasionally have one-on-one meetings with youth. Safe Church guidelines around one-on-one meetings should be included in these materials.
- **Videoconference—**If meeting virtually one-on-one, the meeting should be recorded and stored in the designated repository within 24 hours of the conclusion of the meeting.
- **Contact Outside of SVPC Programs and Activities—**It can be an important part of community leadership to show up for young people's lives outside of SVPC programs and activities by attending sporting, theater, or school-related musical or dance activities or accepting invitations to functions at a youth's home with a guardian present

(e.g., birthday parties, graduation parties, and homecoming events). It is also true that many cases of abuse occur off-site and outside of regularly scheduled activities. Permission should be obtained from the program director and the youth's guardians before there is any contact with children or youth outside of SVPC programs and activities.

### **Transition Between Parental and SVPC Responsibility**

Parents are responsible for their child or youth until the time the activity is scheduled to begin and after the activity's scheduled ending time. Activity leaders are responsible for publicizing activity start and end times and locations. When children and youth arrive at an SVPC program, they are expected to remain in that program until it ends, and supervision is transferred back to parents. Procedures for different age groups are described below.

- **Childcare (0-Kindergarten).** Parents are responsible for signing in and signing out their children from childcare. A parent or guardian is the only adult who may sign out their child from childcare unless a specific and approved arrangement is made in advance, which can include a verbal notification while dropping off a child. Any long-term arrangements must be approved by the childcare supervisor who will remind the childcare workers of these arrangements during drop-off.
- **Children's programs (PreK, 1st-5th grade).** Programs serving children from Preschool through Grade 3 will have check in and out procedures which require the guardian or other authorized adult to sign in when they bring the child to the program and sign out when they pick up the child at the end of the program. Children in 4th & 5th grade can sign themselves in and out of programs.
- **Middle and High School Programs.** Youth are expected to stay in the program for its entirety unless they inform the program director that they must leave early. SVPC staff and volunteers are not responsible for youth who do not show up at a SVPC activity, even if a guardian believes they are at the activity. Parents are welcome to ask staff about the attendance of their child at SVPC activities, including one-on-one mentoring meetings. Providing attendance information to guardians is not considered a breach of confidentiality.

### **Off-Campus Trips or Activities**

Off-campus activities require extra supervision and vigilance to keep all participants safe.

#### **Meetings at Private Homes**

Meetings or events at private homes should be approved in advance by the program director and are not an exception to the two-adult rule. If children or youth arrive at the private residence before the second adult, they should be directed to wait outside until the second adult arrives.

#### **Local Activities**

Guardian permission and emergency contact information must be obtained for all children and youth participating in off-campus activities. For youth in grades 6-12, these can be completed at the beginning of the current program year or when the youth enters the program. A copy should be made accessible to the adult leaders for each event. For children or youth who do not have emergency forms on file with the program area, permission and emergency contact information may be obtained from the guardian by phone.

## **Driving Students**

Only adults who have been approved for driving will be allowed to transport children and youth. Anyone driving minors, including for one-on-one mentoring meetings, must be at least 21 years old and have had a driver's license for at least 3 years. Vehicles used must be fully insured. The minimum liability required is: \$300,000 Bodily Injury Per Occurrence AND \$100,000 Property Damage Per Occurrence. Drivers must complete the [Driver Information Form](#) to provide license and insurance information and review the [Driver Guidelines](#). For driving more than an hour from church, the driver must have a first aid kit and access to the emergency contact list for each child or youth that they are transporting; drivers are responsible for their kits and forms. It is the program director's responsibility to ensure that all drivers have provided updated driver's license, vehicle, and insurance information before driving minors.

Drivers are prohibited from making unauthorized stops. In case of emergencies or unusual occurrences, drivers must notify the program leader as soon as possible and document the incident. Any child under 12 must be transported in a rear seat, and each must have an individual seat belt. Drivers may not use cell phones to text or make phone calls while driving.

Individuals with a Driving Under the Influence (D.U.I.) arrest or conviction within the previous two years may not drive minors. The Safe Church Coordinator shall alert the program directors if a conviction or arrest is found. A record of decisions shall be kept in the Safe Church Confidential folder. An individual with a D.U.I. arrest or conviction within the previous two years may be cleared for Safe Church participation but will not be allowed to drive minors.

## **Overnight Events**

There are no overnight activities for children in Preschool through Grade 5. In addition to the requirements listed for any off-campus activity, guardians must provide written permission for youth to participate in specific overnight trips. Overnight stays present unique risks to youth and staff. They often involve changing clothes, groups of different genders and sexualities mingling, different ages in a more intimate atmosphere than usual, more unstructured activities, and increased supervision demands for staff.

Program leaders must obtain approval for overnight events from the Safe Church Oversight Team (SCOT) at least three weeks prior to the event by submitting an [Overnight Activity Request](#) that describes how youth will be supervised. Program leaders should work with the SCOT in advance to ensure plans will be sufficient for approval. Event leaders are responsible for responding to SCOT requests and informing the SCOT of any substantive changes to the plan after plan approval (e.g., changes in the adult-to-student ratio). The SCOT may require the event to be canceled if it determines that supervision is not sufficient.

### **General Guidelines for Overnight Activities**

- **Clear Boundaries.** Physical boundaries within the event site must be clearly defined and explained to the youth upon arrival. The event leader should designate certain building areas as authorized areas, which could include a gymnasium, a game area, or a classroom for doing homework and so on. Authorized areas must be easily visible and routinely and systematically checked by staff. Youth should know that they will be supervised by adult leaders at all times, and all adult leaders should know which areas are authorized and which are not.

- **Supervision.** For overnight events, there should be an overall ratio of at least 1 adult to every 5 youth; in no case may there be more than 6 youth per adult. Leaders are encouraged to have extra adults available or on call to ensure sufficient supervision in the event adult supervisors become unavailable. Adult leaders should be assigned a specific group of youth to supervise, because “when everyone is supposed to be watching everyone, no one is watching anyone.” Head counts and roll checks should be conducted routinely throughout the event.
- **Walk-throughs.** Adult leaders should routinely conduct periodic facility “walk-throughs” to high-risk areas (such as bathrooms, entrances and exits, and hallways), as well as in authorized areas (noted above).
- **Two-adult Rule.** In general, the two-adult rule should be followed during all off-campus activities. One exception is when youth are being transported in vehicles (see procedures under [Driving Students](#)). Another exception is when the larger group is divided into small groups (e.g., family groups). If the small group has a single adult (who must be a SVPC Safe Church-cleared adult), there should be at least two students present, and the SVPC event leaders should know the locations of all the small groups. If the location of a small group changes, the group leader should notify the event leaders.
- **Unplanned Situations.** For unplanned situations where only one adult is present with students, the procedures outlined in this document under [Exceptions to the Two-Adult Rule](#) should be followed. If only one adult can break off the main group, they should take several students, not one.
- **Approval for Private Homes.** Overnight stays at private homes require special approval by the program director. All Safe Church policies apply, including those pertaining to the two-adult rule and sleeping arrangements.
- **When There is No Direct Supervision.** The nature of some off-campus activities requires students to be without direct adult supervision for some of the time (e.g., ski trips). In these cases, youth should always be in at least pairs (never alone). Leaders should consider groups of 3-4 youth, if feasible. Youth should be told how to reach an event leader and given clear instructions about geographic and time boundaries. A designated meeting time and place should be agreed upon prior to dispersing.
- **SCOT Member on Call.** A SCOT member will be assigned to be on call during overnight events to troubleshoot any Safe Church issues that arise. It is the event leader’s responsibility to contact the SCOT team in advance to confirm the on-call team member and to contact that person if an issue arises.

### ***Sleeping Arrangements***

Careful planning and clear communication with adults and youth is essential for preventing sexual activity or abuse, including consensual youth-to-youth activity, during sleep time. Although each overnight activity presents different supervision needs based on room configurations and gender identities of participants and adults, plans should address the following.

- **Location of Adults.** It is preferred that adults (at least 2) sleep in the same room as youth; however, this is not always possible, especially when the sleeping rooms accommodate small numbers of people. If it is not feasible for adults to sleep in the same room as youth, the event leader should determine how youth will be supervised during sleep time. This may include:

- Doors to sleeping rooms remaining open at all times (e.g., if in a house or cabin)
- Periodic room checks to make sure that only individuals assigned to the room are present and that there is sufficient space between sleepers.
- Adults sleeping close to the rooms (e.g., on the floor outside the room).
- **Protection of Gender Identity.** It is the event leader's responsibility to make sleeping (as well as bathroom and shower) arrangements that affirm and protect each student's gender identity and that prevent adult-to-youth or youth-to-youth sexual activity or abuse. Generally, youth who identify as male and those who identify as female will sleep in separate rooms or separate areas within one room. For individuals who do not identify as male or female, the event leader will determine the most appropriate location.
- **Space Between Sleepers.** There should be appropriate space between each sleeper (adult or youth) to prevent physical contact in the night. Sharing of beds should be avoided; however, sometimes situations will require youth sharing a large bed (e.g., hotel rooms). In these cases, program leaders will carefully make room assignments based on gender identities, ages, and preferences of youth.
- **Sleep Attire.** All students and adults, regardless of gender, must wear a shirt and pants or shorts while in shared spaces on overnight events.
- **Monitoring During Sleep time.** Adult leaders should be aware of all exits and have a plan for making sure youth remain in the designated areas. In all situations, leaders should walk through the sleeping areas or conduct room checks at least once during the night to make sure youth are where they should be and are following policies.
- **Unplanned Situations.** When it is necessary to change sleeping arrangements, changes should never involve one adult sleeping with youth. For example, if it is determined that supervision in a youth sleeping room is needed (e.g., to address emotional or behavioral issues) but there are not two adults available, the youth should be moved to another location where it is possible to have two unrelated adults present.
- **Clear Expectations.** Nighttime expectations should be clearly communicated to youth, including bathroom procedures. If bathrooms are not close by, youth should inform a leader before leaving the sleeping area and go with an adult if safety is a concern. In all cases, participants should be informed that sexual activity of any kind is not allowed, they may not have physical contact with others during the night, and they must stay in the designated sleeping area. They should also know where to find or how to reach an adult leader if they need assistance during the night.

### ***Public Transportation and Airline Guidelines***

During certain off-campus activities, participants may use public transportation or airlines to travel. During these activities, all adult leaders should have the trip participants' emergency contact information with them during transit. Adults should take roll when boarding and leaving public transit, as well as periodically throughout the trip. Staff and adult volunteers will review destination points with youth before beginning the trip. While in transit, adults will position themselves in the way that will permit maximum supervision. Adults will direct youth to be courteous to their fellow passengers as fellow community members.

## **Monitoring of Safe Church Policies**

The purpose of monitoring adults and program activities is to ensure policies are being followed and to identify ways to strengthen the Safe Church program. The goal is to make sure

the policies and procedures are being implemented in a way that prevents abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults in SVPC programs.

Program leaders are responsible for supervising staff and volunteers and observing programs to determine whether policies are being followed, identify individuals who need further guidance or training or need to be removed from working with minors, ensure that individuals without Safe Church clearance do not have private access to minors, and identify problems and gaps in the Safe Church policies that need to be addressed. Effective monitoring requires that a variety of methods be used frequently, at both scheduled and random times.

### **Facility Monitoring**

Building architecture can increase or mitigate the risk of an incident or accident. Because most incidents of sexual behavior occur in private, risk is managed by managing privacy. Doors must remain open or unlocked and door windows must remain uncovered or unobstructed when meeting with youth and children; if a room does not have a window, the door must remain open. All doors with locks should have multi-person key-access.

Program leaders should examine program settings to identify unsafe areas and develop a plan to mitigate risk. Off-campus events and unstructured activities where youth can move between locations (e.g., between different classrooms, indoors and outdoors) require extra attention. To ensure that all the locations are properly and consistently monitored, the Safe Church Oversight Team will designate someone who will periodically complete a site inspection.

### **Routine Program Monitoring**

Program directors or their designees will conduct routine “walk throughs” of all classrooms and program settings to ensure that policies are being observed. When there is only one adult present such as in breakout rooms and private music lessons, walk throughs should be conducted regularly. For online activities, monitoring involves dropping into the online room or breakout rooms.

### **Supervisory Visits**

Program directors and members of the Safe Church Oversight Team will regularly visit all children’s and youth programs to ensure that policies are observed by all in attendance. Observers will:

- **Keep a record.** Supervision visits will be documented and include information such as the observer’s arrival and departure times, the number of youth and adults present, and a summary of the information collected.
- **Vary observation times.** Observers will not develop a predictable pattern of observation. Drop-ins will occur at different times each day, and observers will occasionally leave and come back immediately.
- **Arrive before staff and volunteers.** Sometimes observers will check punctuality and the routine that staff and volunteers follow to prepare for children and youth to arrive.
- **Survey the physical environment.** Observers will assess whether the location is suitable for the activity (e.g., size of area for number of children or youth, ability to supervise all areas, landscaping that may inhibit supervision).
- **Observe bathroom visits.** Observers will watch to see if staff and volunteers are complying with the established policies and procedures.



## Monitoring of Communication Between Staff/Advisors and Youth

The Director of Youth Ministry and the Safe Church Oversight Team will occasionally review records of communication between youth advisors/staff and youth.

## Reporting and Responding

How an organization responds to suspicious or inappropriate interactions, policy violations, and incidents or allegations of abuse can dramatically affect the harm to the individuals involved and the damage to the organization. Once an individual has expressed a concern or made an allegation about the treatment of a child or youth, swift and determined action must be taken to reduce any subsequent risk to the child or youth, to the accused staff member or volunteer, and to the organization. Reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with children or youth will be taken seriously. Procedures will be carefully followed to ensure that the privacy and rights of all those involved are protected.

### Reporting

Initial reporting is how an individual who witnesses or first learns of a warning sign, problematic behavior, or actual abuse acts to protect children and youth. All staff, leaders, and volunteers are expected to report any suspicious, careless, or problematic behavior of adults **to their supervisor or program director and/or to [safechurch@sunnyvalepres.com](mailto:safechurch@sunnyvalepres.com)**. This includes warning signs of potential abuse, inappropriate behavior, Safe Church policy violations, and actual or suspected abuse. In addition, adult leaders should report incidences in a staff member or volunteer's personal life that could affect the safety of students. Reports should be shared only with those directly involved in the reporting process (e.g., church staff members, Safe Church Oversight Team members, Child Protective Services) and not with anyone else.

In discussions with children or youth leaders, leaders should not promise complete confidentiality, because they may need to report information disclosed in the discussion about harm committed against children, youth, or others. If an individual shares information about actual

#### Advice for listening to an incident that needs reporting

- Take seriously what the person is saying. No assault of a sexual nature, no physical violence, no violation of the integrity of a person, no inappropriate gestures, is insignificant.
- Listen carefully to what the person concerned is sharing.
- Reassure the person who spoke that they were right to have spoken and not to have remained silent.
- Encourage the person concerned to join you in following the procedure outlined in this policy for reporting.

or potential abuse, the recipient of the information will listen carefully, respectfully, and lovingly and treat this information seriously and confidentially (see box for additional guidance).

**Regardless of whether the child or youth has given permission to share this information, it should be reported immediately.**

The reporting and response process differs depending on whether the individual who witnesses or learns of the actual or suspected abuse is a mandated reporter and whether the report is of actual or suspected abuse or of concerning behavior that is not necessarily evidence of actual abuse.

Who should I report to?	
I am a:	I should report to:
Elder or deacon	Pastor leading elders or deacons
Volunteer or staff member in Children's Ministry	Director of Children's Ministry
Volunteer or staff member in Youth Ministry	Director of Youth Ministry
Volunteer or staff member in The Music School	Music School Director
SVPC staff member not involved in Children's or Youth Ministry or The Music School	SVPC Supervisor
Anyone	<a href="mailto:Safechurch@sunnyvalepres.com">Safechurch@sunnyvalepres.com</a> (this email goes to the Director of Children's Ministry, the Safe Church Coordinator, and the Safe Church Oversight Team Chair). You can also contact individual members of the Safe Church Oversight Team. Get contact information from the SVPC main office.

### **Mandated Reporters**

A mandated reporter is an individual, age 18 or older, who is required by law or organizational policy to report actual or suspected child abuse or neglect to the authorities. Under California law, all church staff and pastors are mandated reporters (CA Assembly Bill 506). Elders and deacons are considered mandated reporters according to the PCUSA Book of Order (G-4.0302) (they are not considered mandated reporters under California law). Mandated reporters must report cases of actual or suspected abuse, whether on or off church property and whether perpetrated by employees, volunteers, or others to Child Protective Services or the police.

### **Reporting Actual or Suspected Abuse**

If abuse or neglect is witnessed or suspected, or there is reason to believe that abuse is likely to occur, it is imperative to report the information immediately to a SVPC leader—either a supervisor/program director or to [safechurch@sunnyvalepres.com](mailto:safechurch@sunnyvalepres.com), and if the reporter is a mandated reporter, to Child Protective Services (CPS) or the police. Non-mandated reporters are also encouraged to contact Child Protective Services or the police. Anyone can make a report. Reporters will be asked to complete an [incident report](#) with CPS. Individuals should trust their instinct if something doesn't look quite right. Any incident or behavior that could possibly be a sign of abuse should be reported. Overreacting is better than underreacting. A person who mistakenly reports suspected abuse is immune from civil or criminal liability if the report was made in good faith and without malice.

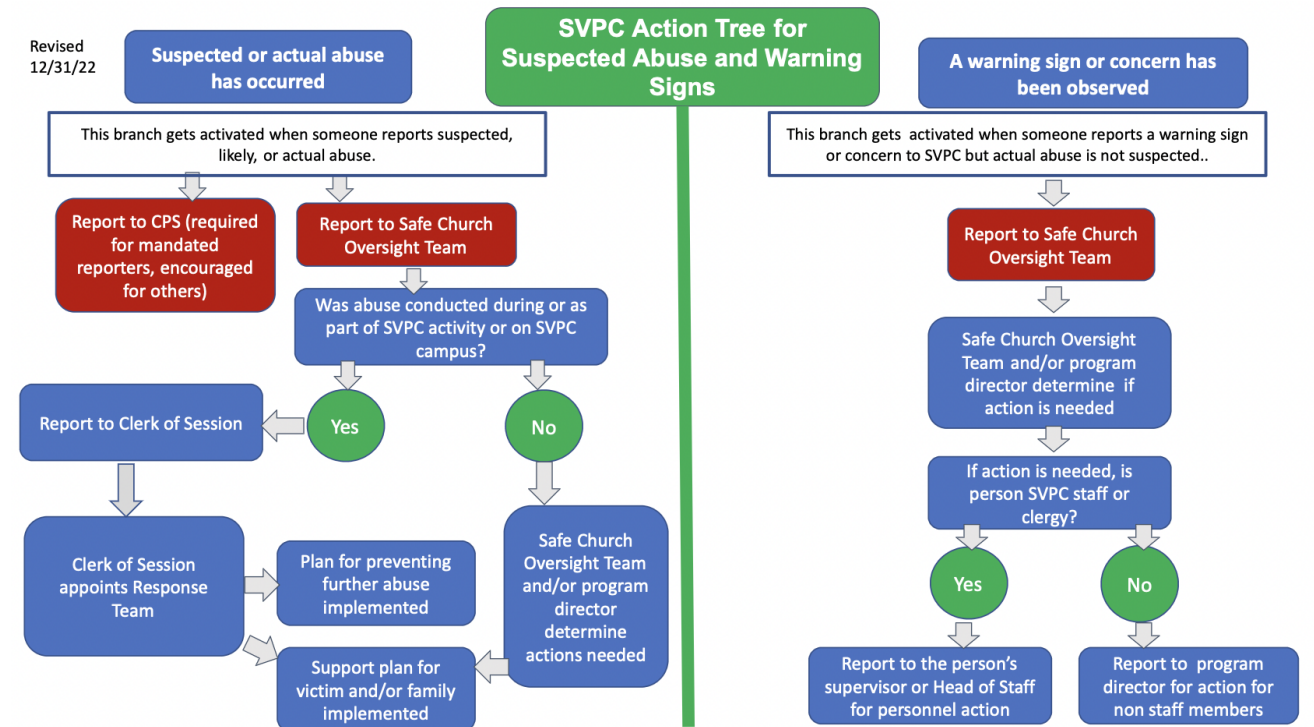
**If you have information about actual or suspected abuse, contact Child Protective Services (833-722-5437) or the police.  
This step is required if you are a mandated reporter.**

## Reporting Warning Signs or Problematic Behavior

When abuse is not suspected but an individual observes careless or problematic behavior, including violations of Safe Church policy, or behavior that could be a warning sign of potential abuse, the individual should report the information to a SVPC supervisor or program director and/or to [safechurch@sunnyvalepres.org](mailto:safechurch@sunnyvalepres.org). Reporting concerning behavior provides the opportunity for additional coaching, training, and monitoring to make sure policies are being followed and programs are as safe as possible for children and youth. By simply interrupting a policy violation, one can also prevent a false allegation of abuse or put an offender on notice that the rules apply to everyone, and violations will be detected. Reporting warning signs is also important, because the supervisor or Safe Church Oversight Team may have more data about a person and be able to notice a pattern of behavior of which the reporter is not aware.

## Responding

Once an initial report is made, the SVPC supervisor, program director, or Safe Church Oversight Team will activate a response plan according to the action tree depicted below and described in the sections that follow. The plan will depend on whether actual or suspected abuse has occurred (left side of the action tree) or if the incident is not considered to be evidence of actual abuse but a warning sign or problematic behavior (right side of the action tree). It will also depend on whether suspected abuse was conducted as part of an SVPC program or activity or on the SVPC campus.



### **Responding to Reports of Actual or Suspected Abuse**

SVPC staff members and leaders are required to act immediately when abuse of any kind is observed or disclosed to them by contacting Child Protective Services or police and the Safe Church Oversight Team (SCOT). If a volunteer brings a suspicion to a mandated reporter, the mandated reporter is required to report. In all cases, SVPC staff members and leaders involved in the response should document all contacts with victims, their families, and individuals suspected of abuse and forward the information to the Safe Church Oversight Team. All such information, including the names of individuals involved, should be kept confidential and disclosed only to the authorities and SVPC representatives involved in responding.

### ***Suspected Abuse that Occurred as Part of SVPC Activity or on SVPC Campus***

If the suspected abuse occurred during a SVPC function, through a SVPC relationship (i.e., any connection made or reinforced through SVPC whether or not directly related to SVPC programs), or on church property, the action steps are as follows.

- Report the information to Child Protective Services. A copy will be kept in the Safe Church Confidential folder.
- Report the information to the SCOT.
- The SCOT will notify the Clerk of Session and the relevant program director if they are not aware of the situation.
- The Clerk of Session will inform Session and appoint a response team to develop and implement a response plan. This team will include at least one elder and at least one member of the SCOT.
- The response team will work with the SCOT to determine immediate and longer-term actions to be taken to prevent further abuse and provide support to the victim and family. The response team is not investigative; the investigation of an abuse claim is the responsibility of the authorities.
- If the person suspected of abuse is involved in SVPC activities with children or youth, they will be removed immediately from those activities. Other possible actions include placing staff or leaders on leave until the authorities have completed their investigation, disciplinary action up to and including termination and prosecution, and increased monitoring of programs.
- A care plan for the victim and family will be developed and implemented.
- If the suspected abuse occurred on the campus but not as part of SVPC programs or activities, the response team will work with the individuals and organizations involved (e.g., outside groups that use campus facilities) to determine actions, which could include requiring changes in the organization's procedures or barring it from using SVPC facilities.

### ***Suspected Abuse That did not Occur as Part of SVPC Activities or on SVPC Campus***

If abuse of any kind, known or suspected, is disclosed to a staff or lay leader that **did not occur during** a church function, through a church relationship, or on church property, action steps are as follows.

- Report the information to Child Protective Services. A copy or summary of the report will be kept in the Safe Church Confidential folder.
- Report the information to the SCOT.
- The SCOT will notify the relevant program director.
- The SCOT will determine if action is needed to prevent abuse in SVPC programs. For

example, if the person suspected of abuse is on SVPC staff or leadership or involved in SVPC programs with children or youth, disciplinary action may be taken.

- A care plan, led by the relevant program director, may be implemented.

### **Responding to Reports of Warning Signs or Concerns**

SVPC staff members and leaders who witness or learn of behavior that is problematic but not evidence of actual abuse will determine whether the SCOT should be notified. For minor concerns, the supervisor may be able to address the issue through a conversation with the person exhibiting the behavior. For most concerns, however, the staff member or leader should report warning signs and problematic behavior to the SCOT, which will determine whether action will be taken. Actions may include talking to the person with the problematic behavior, providing further training, increasing supervision or monitoring, or removing the person from working with children and youth. Reporting warning signs or problematic behavior will not always result in direct action. The supervisor or SCOT will act based on the severity and known frequency of reported warning signs.

### **Responding to Victims**

If abuse has occurred, SVPC will respond to the needs of victims within the constraints or obligations imposed under insurance contracts. In general, we will attend to the immediate needs of victims by providing support and pastoral care. The response team will develop a written support plan for the victim and family and appoint a staff member (e.g., a program director or member of the Pastoral Care Team) to lead the plan. The SCOT will keep a copy of the plan and communicate with the lead staff member to ensure that the plan is being implemented.

### **Responding to Media**

Media publicity following an incident of abuse or exploitation may be detrimental to the reputations of individuals and SVPC. Without intending ever to evade the media, contacts with the media must be managed and conducted only by a person specifically designated by the Session to represent the church. No other person may speak on behalf of the church. Unless the Session designates someone else for a particular circumstance, the church's exclusive media representatives are the Clerk and Moderator of Session (the Moderator is the Pastor and Head of Staff).

### **Responding to Sexualized Behaviors or Abuse Conducted by Minors**

Sexual curiosity is normal for children and youth; however, when they act out sexually, this could lead to abuse. Research shows that most serious incidents of youth-to-youth abuse are preceded by more subtle incidents such as name-calling, taunting, roughhousing, or sexualized behaviors. Interrupting these interactions early and establishing and communicating standards of conduct can keep the program environment safe.

Sexual activity of any kind, including consensual activity, is not allowed in SVPC programs. Standards around behavior, including displays of affection, should be clear among staff, volunteers, and children and youth. When staff or volunteers see or learn of violations of these standards, they should stop the behavior immediately and inform the supervisor or program director. Often program leaders can interrupt problematic behaviors by reminding participants of standards of conduct or asking them to move so they are next to a leader or different participants.

When children or youth exhibit repeated or serious sexualized behaviors or abuse is suspected, further action is required. A minor may be party to an incident either as an initiator or as the victim. Whether a child or youth is an initiator or victim may not be clear in all circumstances, such as a youth-on-youth incident. The first step is to gather more information from the individuals involved and those who may have seen what happened. Consider:

- Whether the youth were around the same age with similar size and strength
- Whether any type of force or coercion was used
- How advanced the sexual activity was
- The reactions of the youth involved
- Whether actions were consensual

Although all sexual activity in SVPC programs is prohibited, these factors will help leaders determine whether abuse has occurred. If abuse is suspected, the supervisor or program director will:

- Report to Child Protective Services or the police
- Report to the Safe Church Oversight Team
- Notify the guardians of children or youth involved (see below)
- Determine an action plan for the individuals involved, including actions such as removing youth from the program, providing support to the family, or involving pastors or others to support the youth and family.

When notifying guardians, care will be given to assessing:

- The specific facts
- Whether a disciplinary or termination process is required
- Whether a child or youth should be dismissed from a program
- Whether the incident requires reporting by a mandated reporter
- Who will communicate with the guardian and in what manner
- Whether a pastor should be involved in the communication
- Tentative remedial steps to prevent another incident

### **Responding to Suicidal Ideation, Self-Harm, and Disordered Eating**

Adult leaders may receive information that a child, youth, or other person has thoughts or desires of harming themselves (see glossary for definitions of suicidal ideation, self-harm, and disordered eating). This information should be taken seriously and should be reported immediately to the supervisor or program director. If the child or youth seems to have the imminent intent to do self-harm, a leader will:

- Stay with the youth
- Listen to the youth without judgment
- Ask the tough question, “Are you considering suicide?”
- Try to assess whether the person has access to weapons, medications, or other potentially harmful objects and remove them if possible.
- Contact one of the resources below for assistance, staying in contact with the person in crisis until professional help is available and reporting any knowledge of the person’s access to potentially harmful objects.

- **Pacific Clinics (formerly Uplift Family Services) youth crisis line:** 408-379-9085. This service, for children and youth ages 4-20, will assess the situation and send out a counseling team. [Mobile Response and Stabilization Services, Santa Clara County](#)
- **Crisis Text Line:** text HOME to 741741 to connect with a Crisis Counselor. <https://www.crisistextline.org/>
- **YWCA of Golden Gate Silicon Valley:** 1.800.572.2782. 24/7 Support Line - [yourywca.org](http://yourywca.org)
- **The 988 Lifeline:** Dial 988 or 800-273-8255 (or 800-799-4889 for people who are deaf or hard of hearing). This is the national suicide prevention and crisis support hotline. [988 Lifeline](#)
- **Emergency services:** 911

### **Responding to Dangerous, Harmful, or Illegal Behavior**

The safety of community members will be prioritized in the case of severe or illegal behavior such as assault, weapons possession, theft, destruction of property, or other harmful behavior to others. In the case of violent behavior by children, youth, or adults, the steps will be taken:

1. Immediate removal of the person from the activity with appropriate contact of the guardian of any minor involved.
2. If the offense is an illegal activity, calling the police.
3. Suspending the person from SVPC activities for an amount of time determined by the program director or Safe Church Oversight Team.
4. Treating the person and their family with respect and love and welcoming the person back to SVPC activities after the suspension period or when it is determined that the person is ready to respect the rules of the program.

Staff and volunteers should call 911 or a local emergency number immediately in cases of suspected criminal or dangerous activities on the church campus or near ministry activities.

## **Natural Disasters and Medical Emergencies**

If one adult is required to leave the group to assist with an emergency or injury, refer to the section [Exceptions to the Two-Adult Rule](#). If a serious medical emergency occurs on a Sunday, contact a Children's Ministry Staff member who will then activate the emergency medical response team.

### **Medical Emergencies and Injuries**

Staff and volunteers should be prepared to protect minors in the case of emergencies. Resources for obtaining support for emergencies are listed below.

- **Sunnyvale Emergency:** 911 (or 408-736-6244 if calling from outside Sunnyvale). If calling from a cell phone, immediately tell the operator: **"I have a medical emergency in Sunnyvale, CA (or other location)."**
- **Church Office:** 408-739-1892 (business hours are 9am-5pm, Monday-Thursday)
- **Poison Control:** 1-800-222-1222
- **Sunnyvale Police** (nonemergency): 408-730-7100.



### **Medical Supplies**

For minor medical emergencies, an adult can use basic first aid. First aid backpacks are in PELC classrooms, the Children's Ministry office, the church main office, and in the sanctuary during services. Backpacks are equipped with first aid supplies including allergy medication wound supplies. An AED is in the church office and moved to the narthex during Sunday worship services. First aid kits are also stored in most classrooms.

### **Emergency Contact Forms**

Guardians are required to fill out an emergency contact form when they register for programs. This information should be accessible by at least one program leader at all events and by all program leaders at each away event. Drivers should have a driving folder with emergency contacts for each passenger. These forms should be kept confidential and returned to the director after the event.

### **Earthquake or Other Disaster**

See **Earthquake Procedures** posted in classrooms. More information on what to do in an earthquake can be found [here](#).

## **Policy on Participation by a Registered Sex Offender**

As a community of faith, serving by the example of Jesus Christ, SVPC seeks to attend to the needs of all who seek healing, redemption, and fellowship among us. SVPC accepts those who have violated the most sacred mores of our society, to provide them refuge, peace, example, and support in their recovery and penitence. SVPC commits to doing so with utmost care for the welfare of our congregation and the community we serve.

SVPC recognizes that there are risks inherent in ministering to a registered sex offender (RSO). SVPC agrees to honor the needs of the congregation and community to have reasonable assurance that a RSO in SVPC's care will not have an opportunity to re-offend.

SVPC shall consider the following factors in the involvement of an RSO in SVPC.

- The statutory limitations in the State of California on the movement and activities of a sex offender, taking into account the programs of the church or the operations of organizations that use SVPC facilities.
- The character of the crimes for which the RSO was required to register, the passage of time without repeated conduct or behavior, and the risk and opportunity for re-offending presented by the particular program.
- The limitations and prohibitions placed upon the offender by courts and probation authorities. In all cases where probation is in force, SVPC shall obtain the explicit approval and conditions of participation specified by the probation officer. A recommendation by law enforcement or mental health professionals to deny participation to an offender will be honored in all cases.

Individuals who have been previously convicted of acts of child abuse or sexual misconduct may not serve as SVPC staff or leaders or participate in programs for minors. Knowledge by church leaders and managers of staff members or leaders who have prior convictions of child abuse or sexual misconduct may result in cancellation of SVPC insurance policies.



The conditions of participation by an RSO will be defined by a “limited access agreement” executed by the RSO and the church. If required by the terms of the RSO’s probation, the agreement will be submitted to probation authorities for approval. The agreement will be reviewed annually to validate ongoing eligibility. Violation of the agreement by the offender will be considered grounds for immediate cancellation of the agreement.

The following additional considerations apply.

- A Limited Access Agreement with a Petitioner (known RSO) must be approved by Session and signed by the Clerk of Session.
- The agreement must require that the RSO have an escort while on SVPC premises or at SVPC events elsewhere. A person serving as an escort may not be a spouse, partner, or other relative of the offender.
- If the victim of a RSO is a member of the congregation, an employee, or participant in SVPC programs, the RSO will not be permitted to attend SVPC programs.

The Head of Staff or their designee will communicate with the RSO about the conditions of participation and do so with love and respect for the RSO as a child of God. Because criminal convictions and the sex offender registry are matters of public record, the RSO has no expectation of privacy with respect to disclosure of the sex offender registration and the underlying criminal conviction. The participation of an RSO in SVPC activities, as well as the conditions and limitations that apply to participation, will be communicated to appropriate staff and leaders.

## **Oversight of Safe Church Policies**

Oversight involves routinely examining the whole Safe Church program to assess how well it is being implemented and identifying and addressing areas for improvement. The Director of Children’s Ministry has primary responsibility for overseeing the Safe Church program, including clearly specifying roles and responsibilities, communicating with staff and program leaders about their roles, working with the Safe Church Coordinator, and serving on the Safe Church Oversight Team (described below). The Safe Church Coordinator supports screening and clearance, training, and reporting functions. Program leaders, including staff and volunteers, are responsible for providing program-specific training, supervising staff and volunteers, and reporting and responding. The Clerk of Session and Head of Staff have responsibilities related to reporting and responding. Members of the Safe Church Oversight Team are responsible for monitoring policy implementation and supporting the Director of Children’s Ministry. In addition, all SVPC leaders, staff, and volunteers are expected to understand and follow Safe Church policies and immediately report actual or suspected abuse and warning signs of abuse.

The Safe Church Oversight Team consists of three to five members, including the Director of Children’s Ministry, the Safe Church Coordinator, and one to three additional persons appointed by the lead elder for Children’s Ministry (or an alternate elder designated by the lead elder for Children’s Ministry). Care will be taken to have team members who represent Children’s Ministry, Youth Ministry, and The Music School (e.g., staff, volunteers, or guardians). At least one member must be someone who is not a SVPC staff member. A member other than the Director of Children’s Ministry will serve as the chair of the team. The team will meet regularly (monthly recommended) to develop monitoring plans, determine responses to

warning signs of abuse, and identify program improvements and ways to support the program's implementation.

Details on roles and responsibilities can be found in the role descriptions in the Appendix.

## **APPENDIX**

## Resources

The following resources and communities were helpful in creating, updating, and centering the SVPC Safe Church Policy:

- [PCUSA Insurance Board](#)
- The Community of [Los Gatos Presbyterian Church](#).
- [Taize Procedures](#)
- [Episcopal Church Statement on Inclusiveness](#)
- [UU Special Point Regarding Police and Law Enforcement](#)
- Sharon W Stark. Psychology and Behavioral Health, 4th Edition Volume 5, April 2015, (pp.1975-1977).
- [Highlights of an Intentional Healing Journey](#)
- Presbyterian Church, USA Abuse Prevention Hotline, in conjunction with the Insurance Board and Praesidium. The number, (866) 607-SAFE (7233), is intended to help victims and church leaders get immediate assistance in reporting abuse cases.

## Reporting to CPS

If you need to report to CPS:

- Inform your SVPC program director or supervisor. If preferred, ask one of the pastors or a program director to join you for your call
- Do it as soon as possible--the goal is to do it within 36 hours
- Prepare your phone call by filling out the [SS 8572](#) with as much detail as you can, this ensures that you have answers to most questions the CPS officer will ask you
- Call (833) 722-5437
  - Go through the menu and you'll end up with a person.
  - They will go through most of the form with you and might ask any additional questions.
  - At the end of the conversation, they will ask you to send the SS 8572 form to them. On the SS8572 form the following information is required:
    - Agency name: CPS Santa Clara
    - Agency Address: 353 W Julian St, San Jose, 95110
    - You will need the name and number of the person you spoke with
    - Send to email: [ssa\\_canc\\_efax@ssa.sccgov.org](mailto:ssa_canc_efax@ssa.sccgov.org)
    - And/or fax to: 408-957-5851
- After the phone call add any other details to the form and send it in. Deliver the form to the Safe Church Coordinator or email it to [safechurch@sunnyvalepres.com](mailto:safechurch@sunnyvalepres.com). Let any people that you have informed about this incident know that you've reported to CPS.

## **Code of Conduct for Interacting with Children and Youth**

The following Code of Conduct for Interacting with Children and Youth (Code of Conduct) is intended to assist staff and volunteers in making decisions about interactions with children and youth. When in doubt or to inquire about behaviors not addressed here, contact the director of the program with which you are involved.

The Code of Conduct outlines specific expectations of staff and volunteers as we strive to accomplish our mission together.

1. Children and youth will be treated with respect at all times.
2. Children and youth interacting with SVPC programs will be treated fairly regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, or gender identity, and regardless of family church membership, family pledging history, denominational background, or any other arbitrary religious competence.
3. Staff and volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of displaying affection as outlined in the Safe Church [Interactions with Children and Youth](#) policies.
4. Staff and volunteers will engage in only approved, limited physical contact with children and youth such as side hugs or pats on the back.
5. Staff and volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions as outlined by this SVPC Safe Church policy.
6. Staff and volunteers will refrain from comments, including compliments, about the bodies of children and youth.
7. Staff and adult volunteers will not date, become romantically involved with, or accept flirtation from children and youth in SVPC programs.
8. Staff and volunteers will not use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs during programs that include the presence of children and youth.
9. Staff and volunteers will not have printed or online pornography or similar sexually oriented materials on SVPC property or at SVPC events and activities. (This does not include youth curriculum on the topic of sex, sexuality, or gender.)
10. Staff and volunteers will not have secrets with children and youth.
11. Staff and volunteers will only give gifts to children and youth when appropriate for the program (seek guidance from SVPC program leader or program director if in doubt.)
12. Staff and volunteers agree to comply with SVPC policies regarding interactions with children and youth within and outside of SVPC-run programs.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Safe Church Oversight Team**

- Review screening process to make sure all steps are complete for individuals working with minors
- Semi-annually, review list of applicants whose Safe Church clearance was rejected or revoked to ensure they are not working with minors in SVPC programs
- When needed, help the Safe Church Coordinator make clearance determinations
- Determine whether action is needed for individuals exhibiting warning signs of abuse
- Conduct scheduled and unannounced monitoring observations of all children's and youth programs and The Music School. This is in addition to regular monitoring of staff and volunteers by program leaders. Visits by the Safe Church Oversight Team will be conducted by members who are not leading the visited program (e.g., the Director of Children's Ministry will not conduct oversight visits for the children's programs).
- Document findings from monitoring visits
- Interview Directors of Children's and Youth Ministries and The Music School at least annually to identify areas for strengthening the Safe Church program and refine or review policies and procedures for special events (e.g., lock-ins, retreats)
- Periodically collect information from a sample of staff, volunteers, guardians, and youth across programs (The Music School, Children's, and Youth) to identify successes and areas for improvement for Safe Church program
- Review results of monitoring visits and interviews to develop action plans for addressing immediate problems and identify ways to improve the policies and their implementation
- Communicate action plans for addressing immediate problems to program leaders and follow up to ensure actions are being taken
- Communicate with incident response teams to assess progress and learn how Safe Church policy could be improved
- Develop recommendations for improvements to the Safe Church policy
- Annually, submit a report to Session on how the Safe Church program is going, including strengths, areas for improvement, and recommended changes
- Communicate with the wider church community about policies in newsletters and other communication methods

### **Safe Church Oversight Team Chair**

In addition to the responsibilities as member of the Safe Church Oversight Team, the chair will:

- Serve as the contact person for concerns or information about the Safe Church program
- Convene the monthly meetings
- Represent the Safe Church Oversight Team in approving supervision plans for overnight events
- Serve or designate another Safe Church Oversight Team member to serve on incident response teams that are formed by the Clerk of Session.

### **Director of Children's Ministry**

- Serve on the Safe Church Oversight Team
- Support and supervise the Safe Church Coordinator
- Oversee Safe Church Training activities
  - Collaborate with Safe Church Coordinator to determine dates for general trainings
  - Recruit and train Safe Church Training instructors
  - Submit information on training dates in SVPC communications
- Communicate with Directors of The Music School and Youth Ministry, and Administrative Assistant to Head of Staff to answer questions about volunteer and staff who are required to be Safe Church trained and cleared
- Inform new staff and volunteers in Children's Ministry about Safe Church clearance process
- Communicate names of new staff and volunteers to Safe Church Coordinator and ensure they get cleared before working with children
- Provide program-specific training to staff and volunteers in children's program or support other children's program leaders to ensure they provide program-specific training to all staff and volunteers at least annually
- Regularly monitor implementation of children's programs by visiting classrooms and activities to assess whether Safe Church policies are being implemented and ensure individuals who have not been Safe Church cleared do not have individual access to minors
- When policies are not being implemented as intended, communicate with staff and volunteers about areas for improvement
- Be available to respond when Safe Church policies are compromised (e.g., when a second adult fails to show up to satisfy 2-adult rule) or urgent situations that arise by responding as needed or designating someone else to respond
- Provide information to parents/guardians about Safe Church policies
- Develop and implement a plan for providing age- appropriate education to children on Safe Church procedures (e.g., 2 adult rule, bathroom procedures), preventing abuse, and reporting
- Follow reporting procedures for cases of actual or suspected abuse and provide information to staff and volunteers who witness or learn of suspected abuse about reporting requirements
- Report warning signs to the Safe Church Oversight Team, which will determine if any action is needed, including whether Safe Church clearance should be revoked. Work with the Safe Church Oversight Team to implement action.
- Work with incident response teams to respond to victims of abuse who are involved in SVPC children's programs and their families

## **Safe Church Coordinator**

- Serve on Safe Church Oversight Team
- Manage general Safe Church trainings
  - Schedule trainings in collaboration with Director of Children's Ministry
  - Fill out facility request and/or arrange for video conference for online participants
  - Ensure training dates are on calendars (EMS, online SVPC Google calendar) and on website
  - Schedule trainers and set-up/snack person for trainings
  - Ensure training documents are available
  - Take attendance
- Provide information about mandated reporter training
- Manage screening and clearance process
  - Review applications by volunteers and staff
  - Send out reference requests by email to applicants' references
  - Review completed references
  - Check Department of Justice (DOJ) website for results of fingerprinting
  - Check applicant's name on sex offender registry
  - Follow -up with applicants for missing information
  - Determine whether individual meets Safe Church screening criteria
  - Communicate with applicants to inform them of clearance
  - Send periodic emails to remind the following individuals send names of any new volunteers or staff
    - Director of Children's Ministry
    - Director of Youth Ministry
    - Administrative Assistant to Head of Staff (Elders and Deacons)
    - Director of Music School
  - Inform all of the above individuals of anyone whose clearance has been denied or revoked to ensure that non cleared staff and volunteers who are not cleared are not working with minors
- Manage Safe Church database
  - Enter DOJ results
  - Enter reference results
  - Enter whether individual completed general Safe Church training (from sign-in sheet), mandated reporter training, and program-specific Safe Church Training (from Directors of Children's Ministry, Youth Ministry, and Music School)
  - Enter clearance status (cleared, pending, or clearance denied or revoked)
  - Keep all data in secure location, accessible only by individuals with password
  - Keep hard copies in locked file cabinet in front office



**Director of Youth Ministry**

- Inform new staff and volunteers under program area about Safe Church clearance process
- Communicate names of new staff and volunteers to Safe Church Coordinator and ensure they get cleared before working with minors
- Provide program-specific training to staff and volunteers at least annually and as needed for new staff
- Regularly monitor programs by visiting classrooms/program rooms and program activities to assess whether Safe Church policies are being implemented; ensure individuals who have not been Safe Church cleared do not have individual access to minors
- Implement transparency system for monitoring communication between advisors and youth
- Develop or refine a supervision plan for overnight events; obtain approval of the plan from Safe Church Oversight Team at least three weeks prior to the event
- Be available to respond when Safe Church policies are compromised (e.g., when a second adult fails to show up to satisfy 2-adult rule) or urgent situations arise by responding as needed or designating someone else to respond
- Monitor one-on-one sessions (e.g., advisor meetings) by periodically walking by session, dropping in on virtual lesson or meeting, or communicating with youth to confirm session location, duration, and persons present
- When policies are not being implemented as intended, communicate with staff and volunteers about areas for improvement
- Provide information to guardians about Safe Church policies
- Develop and implement a plan for providing periodic, age-appropriate education to program participants on Safe Church procedures, preventing abuse, and reporting
- Follow reporting procedures for cases of actual or suspected abuse and provide information to staff and volunteers who witness or learn of suspected abuse about reporting requirements
- Report warning signs to the Safe Church Oversight Team, which will determine if any action is needed, including whether Safe Church clearance should be revoked. Work with the Safe Church Oversight Team to implement action
- As appropriate, work with incident response teams to respond to victims of abuse who are involved in SVPC programs and their families

**Director of The Music School**

- Inform new staff and volunteers about Safe Church clearance process
- Communicate names of new staff and volunteers to Safe Church Coordinator and ensure they get cleared before working with minors
- Provide program-specific training to staff and volunteers at least annually and as needed for new staff
- Regularly monitor programs by visiting classrooms/program rooms and program activities to assess whether Safe Church policies are being implemented; ensure individuals who have not been Safe Church cleared do not have individual access to minors
- Be available to respond when Safe Church policies are compromised (e.g., when a second adult fails to show up to satisfy 2-adult rule) or urgent situations arise by responding as needed or designating someone else to respond
- Monitor private music lessons by periodically walking by session or dropping in on virtual lessons
- When policies are not being implemented as intended, communicate with staff and volunteers about areas for improvement
- Provide information to guardians about Safe Church policies
- Develop and implement a plan for providing periodic, age-appropriate education to program participants on basic Safe Church procedures
- Follow reporting procedures for cases of actual or suspected abuse and provide information to staff and volunteers who witness or learn of suspected abuse about reporting requirements
- Report warning signs to the Safe Church Oversight Team, which will determine if any action is needed, including whether Safe Church clearance should be revoked. Work with Safe Church Oversight Team to implement action
- As appropriate, work with incident response teams to respond to victims of abuse who are involved in SVPC programs and their families

## **Other Roles**

### ***Clerk of Session***

If child abuse or neglect by a SVPC staff or volunteer has been observed or is suspected, the Clerk will:

- Form an Incident Response Team (in coordination with the Safe Church Oversight Team)
- Ensure that Head of Staff and Safe Church Coordinator are informed of the report or incident; if suspected individual is on staff, Chair of Personnel Committee must be informed
- Obtain regular updates on the status of the response team
- Report Incident Response Team conclusions and actions to Session

Upon approval by Session:

- Sign Limited Access Agreement with a Petitioner (a known registered sex offender)

### ***Chair of Personnel Committee***

If a violation of Safe Church policies has occurred or is suspected by SVPC staff:

- In collaboration with Personnel Committee, determine actions that need to be taken for staff accused of abuse
- Ensure actions identified have been taken

### ***Head of Staff***

- Communicate the importance of adherence of Safe Church policies to all staff and SVPC congregation
- Support program directors in addressing challenges and concerns related to Safe Church policy implementation
- Follow reporting procedures for cases of actual or suspected abuse
- Report warning signs to the Safe Church Oversight Team, which will then determine if any action is needed, including whether Safe Church clearance should be revoked. If the individual exhibiting warning signs is a staff member, work with the Safe Church Oversight Team to implement action.
- As appropriate, provide support to victims and others affected by incidents
- Develop a Limited Access Agreement for how registered sex offenders can be involved in SVPC activities, including identifying someone who agrees to serve as an escort, and take agreement to Session for approval
- Supervise implementation of Limited Access Agreement
- Communicate to congregation and media about abuse incidents, as appropriate
- Obtain counsel from experts on how to respond to incidents, as necessary