

# NPC SAFE PRACTICE STANDARDS

ADOPTED BY SESSION 160612

REVISED OCT 2022

## CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Preface: The Session of the National Presbyterian Church affirms the dignity and worth of all persons and is committed to the safety, welfare and protection of all children and youth participating in the activities and programs of the Church. It adopts these **standards** for the purpose of keeping children and youth safe from exploitation and sexual abuse. The practices adopted here seek to balance the security and welfare of the children and the legitimate expectations of privacy of staff and volunteers. Instances of non-compliance will be addressed in the periodic compliance reports from the appropriate directors (see below).

### 1. Standards for Volunteer Application

- a. **Clean Records Practice:** All volunteer leaders are required to submit to an annual criminal background check. Confidential reports are to be kept by the Business Office.
- b. **Six Month Practice:** All volunteer leaders will be members, or actively participating non-members, of NPC for at least six months. Exceptions to this standard will require the approval of Grow Council, once additional references have been received from the prospective volunteer's pastor or another spiritual leader or leaders able to speak to the spiritual maturity and character of the person.
- c. **Annual Training Practice:** All volunteer leaders will review safety practices at an annual training.

### 2. Standards for Sunday Mornings and Events for Children

- a. **Two Adult Practice:** Two cleared adult volunteers shall be present in each room at all times. This practice assumes three leaders and/or an adult 'rover' for preschoolers and under, when restroom assistance is needed.
- b. **Open-Door Practice:** When volunteering with children, adults must keep the door to the room in which they are meeting open or use a door with a window
- c. **Required Reporting Practice:** Immediately report to staff supervisor any sign of injury or possible abuse. *Confidential records of such conversations will be kept by pastors and reported as law requires.*

### 3. Sunday Morning Check In/Out for Children

- a. **Enrollment:** All new children in the nursery or Sunday School must have a completed enrollment form on file.
- b. **Check In/Out:** All children, nursery through 5<sup>th</sup> grade, must be checked in at a check-in desk and picked up in their classroom, by a parent or guardian. At check-in, each child is provided a name tag and their attendance is recorded.

### 4. Standards for Interaction with Youth

- a. **Two Adult Practice:** All volunteer leaders are to be accompanied by another adult (non-spouse) when meeting or interacting with students. If another adult is not available, the volunteer must meet with the student in a public place in close proximity to other adults (e.g., restaurant). Staff may meet with individuals alone; however, these meetings must adhere to the Open-Door Practice. *Exceptions may be made (e.g., rides home) only with the prior written consent of parents.*
- b. **Open-Door Practice:** When meeting with students, adults must keep the door to the room in which they are meeting open **or use a door with a window**
- c. **Transportation:** Staff, volunteers, and teachers may provide transportation to students **but only with parental approval**. However, when a vehicle is parked, all passengers must exit immediately.
- d. **Required Reporting Practice:** Immediately report to staff supervisor any sign of injury or possible abuse. *Confidential records of such conversations will be kept by pastors and reported as law requires.*

### 5. Accountability

The Associate Pastor for Grow is responsible to the Senior Pastor, to implement these **standards** through the Ministry Directors, and other areas' leaders, including Worship who each shall provide compliance reports at least quarterly.

*Note: "Volunteer leaders" are those in a teaching for shepherding role, rather than a support role. A list of all volunteer leaders is submitted to Grow Council annually, and updated as needed. This includes substitutes. Those serving in a support role and parents (or close relatives) observing their student(s), may be present at Sunday School or events, in addition to our volunteer leaders or staff (a minimum of two, per 2a and 4a above).*

### Procedures for Handling Misconduct Allegations

Any issue of sexual and/or emotional abuse or neglect involving a minor, whether perceived or actual, will be dealt with immediately, effectively, and with discretion. Any allegation of abuse or neglect will be addressed to a Pastor, Ministry Director, or the Clerk of Session. If appropriate, the church will notify governmental agencies such as the police and Child Protective Services. Proper written documentation of the allegations and proceedings will be maintained.

In the specific case of the complaint being made against any ordained minister, the Clerk of Session should notify the General Presbyter and Stated Clerk of National Capital Presbytery and request guidance on the procedure to be followed in processing the allegation and obtaining a Moderator for the Session. The Clerk shall also notify the General Presbyter and Stated Clerk if allegations have been raised against a member or non-ordained staff person.

### Staff and Congregant Member Awareness

These standards shall be reviewed annually in January by the Grow Council which shall ensure that they are communicated annually in the worship bulletin, made available to the congregation on the church web site, and that the Facilities Director will conduct an annual review of doors and rooms to ensure windows are present wherever possible.