

Easley Presbyterian Church

Safe Place Policy

Approved by Session on October 21, 2007

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Safe Place Policy

I. Purpose, Applicability, Scope and Policy Terms

Purpose

This policy is intended:

- To be faithful to our baptismal vows as we seek to welcome children.
- To provide a safe and secure environment for children and youth at EPC.
- To protect children and youth from sexual, physical, and emotional abuse while participating in EPC activities.
- To provide a mechanism to deal with reported concerns and subsequent actions.
- To guide EPC as an institution in the conduct of its employees and volunteers and prevent incidents and allegations of child abuse.
- To protect adult volunteers and employees from unwarranted allegations of child abuse.

This policy addresses five components of child and youth protection:

1. Screening applicants for employment and volunteer service for a history of behavior potentially detrimental to children and youth.
2. Training both employees and volunteers and children and youth in the child and youth protection policy and in appropriate supervision and chaperoning.
3. Reporting allegations and/or concerns regarding child and youth protection issues.
4. Responding to allegations and/or concerns regarding child and youth protection issues.
5. Addressing known offenders as members of EPC.

Applicability

This policy applies to persons including EPC employees and volunteers participating in all children and youth programs of EPC, including, but not limited to:

- Sunday school classes
- Children's church
- Children and youth fellowship programs
- Weekday school
- Children and youth choirs
- Church sponsored retreats, mission trips, etc.
- Vacation Bible school
- Church sponsored athletic teams
- Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts
- Nurseries and child care

48 **Scope**

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50 **What Does the Policy Require?**

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- 52 1. All employees and volunteers shall abide by the Code of Conduct.
- 53 2. Each person must assume responsibility for his/her own actions in working with children
- 54 and youth and for attending training offered on child and youth protection.
- 55 3. An individual may be terminated from employment and/or volunteer service for failure to
- 56 observe and abide by this policy. This action may be taken regardless of the outcome of
- 57 any investigation if the Head of Staff, Personnel Committee, or Christian Education
- 58 Committee determines that the Child and Youth Protection Policy and procedures have
- 59 not been followed.

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61 **Outside Groups Using EPC Facilities**

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63 All leaders of non-EPC sponsored groups and events using EPC facilities, which have

64 direct supervision of children and youth, are expected to adhere to these policies. Upon

65 receipt of the policy from EPC, the leaders must review the Child and Youth Protection

66 Policy and sign the Outside Group Leaders Release Form to acknowledge their review of

67 it and to confirm their agreement to follow the policy.

68

69 Given the nature of the outside groups that use EPC facilities, EPC will not perform

70 background checks, seek personal and professional references, review employment

71 records, or obtain civil and criminal records for such groups.

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73 **Policy Terms (glossary):**

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75 **Employee** – Any person who works for salary or wages at Easley Presbyterian Church

76 (EPC) (e.g. staff, EPC Weekday School employees, custodians.)

77

78 **Volunteer** – Any person, ordinarily an adult member of EPC, who gives of their time and

79 participates in an Easley Presbyterian Church sponsored activity.

80

81 **Church Sponsored Activity** – Includes any and all gatherings that arise from EPC-

82 generated worship, educational, fellowship, administrative, pastoral, mission or

83 recreational events. These events include on-campus and off-campus gatherings.

84

85 **Child or Youth** – Persons under 18 years old and considered a minor under the law.

86 This term shall also include legally incompetent persons.

87

88 **Head of Staff** – The Pastor of Easley Presbyterian Church

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90 **Safe Place Committee (The Steering Committee)** – A three-person team appointed by

91 the Christian Education Committee to oversee the policy’s implementation, to

92 monitor compliance, to recommend policy changes and clarifications, to provide

93 frontline evaluation of concerns making recommendations to the appropriate

94 decision-making persons/entities, and to provide routine interpretation and training.

95

96 **Child Abuse** – A non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries to a child. Child abuse may

97 include:
98 **Neglect** – Occurs when the adults responsible for the well-being of a child fail to
99 provide for the child. Neglect may include not giving food, clothing, shelter;
100 failure to keep children clean; lack of supervision and withholding medical
101 care.
102 **Physical Abuse** – An injury or pattern of injuries that happen to a child that are
103 not accidental. These injuries may include beatings, burns, bruises, bites,
104 welts, strangulation, broken bones or death.
105 **Sexual Abuse** – Sexual abuse is the sexual assault or exploitation of children.
106 **Emotional Abuse** – Chronic and persistent acts by an adult that endanger the
107 mental health or emotional development of a child.
108

109 **II. Screening of Employees and Volunteers**

- 111 1. Personal interviews, application forms, personal and professional references,
112 employment records, background checks (both criminal and civil) are required for all
113 employees. Background checks will be done on EPC volunteers. Information gained
114 by these means will be used to determine eligibility to work with children and youth.
- 115 2. Interviews, reference checks, employment records, and criminal and civil background
116 checks, are to be documented in writing, and become confidential church property.
117 These records will not be released to any party except with the written approval of the
118 Head of Staff and the Personnel Committee Chair. These records will be made
119 available to the employee or volunteer, but not a candidate for employment, if a
120 written request is made to the Head of Staff and the Personnel Committee Chair.
- 121 3. In addition, all current and potential employees and volunteers will be required to
122 agree to follow the policies and procedures of Easley Presbyterian Church pertaining
123 to child and youth protection. This statement is a supplement to the personal
124 application, and is maintained in the employee's personnel file or in departmental
125 notebooks of volunteer forms. Each fall, all employees of EPC and all volunteers
126 with youth and children will be required to review the current Child and Youth
127 Protection Policy and sign a Recommitment Acknowledgement Form.
- 128 4. For Employees: Any candidate for employment who has a past conviction of or
129 pending proceeding addressing an allegation of child abuse or neglect cannot be
130 employed by Easley Presbyterian Church without the express written approval of the
131 Personnel Committee, including the Head of Staff. The Personnel Committee,
132 including the Head of Staff, will consider the available information related to the
133 circumstances of the situation in order to make a determination about the employment
134 of the individual in question. Active substance abuse or a conviction for any of the
135 following will automatically disqualify an individual from employment with children
136 or youth: pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults, indecent exposure, pornography,
137 sodomy or abuse of a minor.
- 138 5. For Volunteers: Any candidate for volunteer service who has a past conviction of or
139 pending proceeding addressing an allegation of child abuse or neglect cannot work
140 with children and youth at Easley Presbyterian Church. Active substance abuse or a
141 conviction for any of the following will automatically disqualify an individual from
142 volunteer service with children and youth: pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults,
143 indecent exposure, pornography, sodomy, or abuse of a minor. The Christian
144 Education Committee will inform any volunteer applicant denied the opportunity to

145 serve with children and youth the reason(s) for disqualification and how to access
146 information relevant to the decision.
147

148 **III. Supervision**

149 **Two-Adult Policy**

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152 Adults are to avoid being in a one-child, one-adult situation. If it is necessary for a
153 child to get home after an event, an effort should be made to contact the family and
154 inform them of the situation before transporting the child. This rule can be eased if
155 other adults are close by and can visually observe activities at all times. For example,
156 it is permissible for one adult driver to transport several children and youth in a single
157 vehicle in a convoy of vehicles traveling to or from an event.
158

159 When one-on-one interactions between children and youth and employee/volunteers
160 are necessary (e.g. in emergency situations or occasions of pastoral care), care must
161 be taken to conduct the meeting in an environment that provides visibility by other
162 adults. Another adult must have knowledge of the employee/volunteer's whereabouts
163 and with whom they are meeting.
164

165 **Open Door Policy**

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167 Doors to rooms in which children and youth are present are to remain open. If noise
168 increases to a level that disturbs other classes, or a safety concern, the door may be
169 shut as long as there is clear glass in the door, nothing impedes vision through the
170 glass, or at least two adults are present. Employees and volunteers are expected to
171 avoid any situation in which they could be alone with children and youth or out of
172 sight of others except in emergency situations. This is to protect:

- 173 a) children against situations in which abuse might occur, and
- 174 b) adults against false accusations of child abuse

175 **Six Month Policy**

176
177 Any person in a leadership position with children or youth must have been a member
178 of EPC for at least six months. Any exceptions must be approved by the Christian
179 Education Committee for each specific volunteer opportunity. No exceptions will be
180 granted for overnight situations.
181

182 **Training for Adults**

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184 All employees, all church officers, and any volunteers who work with children and
185 youth are required to attend a training session and sign the relevant documents
186 regarding child and youth protection. The church will offer regular training
187 opportunities.
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189 **Code of Conduct**

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192 1. EPC employees and volunteers will not verbally, emotionally, physically or
193 sexually abuse children.

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2. EPC employees and volunteers will not discipline children by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care.
 3. EPC employees and volunteers may use physical restraint only in situations necessary to protect the child or others from harm.
 4. EPC employees and volunteers will provide proper supervision and exercise sound judgment in providing a safe environment at all times.
 5. EPC employees and volunteers will avoid situations during EPC programs where they would be alone with a single child and cannot be observed or monitored by others. As adults supervise children, they should space themselves in a way that other adults can see them.
 6. EPC employees and volunteers are expected to observe the Two-Adult Policy and Open Door Policy in their interaction with children and youth at all times except in emergency situations.
 7. Restroom supervision:
 - a. EPC employees and volunteers will always use proper supervision when children are using public bathrooms to ensure their safety.
 - b. EPC employees and volunteers will call on leaders who may be “floating” from room to room to assist with restroom supervision in order to maintain the two-adult rule.
 - c. EPC employees and volunteers will make sure suspicious or unknown individuals are not occupying the restroom before allowing children to use the facilities.
 - d. Children will be sent in pairs, and whenever possible, with EPC employees and volunteers. EPC employees and volunteers will stand in the doorway while children are using the restroom in visual sight of another adult. This policy allows privacy for the children and protection for the EPC employees and volunteers (i.e. not being alone with a child).
 - e. If EPC employees and volunteers are assisting younger children, doors to the facility must remain open.
 8. EPC employees and volunteers will respect the rights of children and youth not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable, and their right to say no. Adults will discourage children from touching others in an inappropriate manner.
 9. EPC employees and volunteers should be alert to the physical and emotional state of children entering the program. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported to the Director of Christian Education or the Associate Pastor for Youth who will report to the Head of Staff.
 10. EPC employees and volunteers should release children only to the authorized parent, guardian, or other individual authorized by the parent or guardian.
 11. Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, or being impaired by legally prescribed drugs during church working hours or church sponsored programs is prohibited.

238 **IV. Reporting**

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240 The law and this EPC policy make the responsibility for reporting Child Abuse and
241 Suspicions of Child Abuse very clear. See Section IV and V of this policy for guidance
242 and direction regarding reporting of and responding to Child Abuse and Suspicions of

243 Child Abuse.

244

245 **A. Allegations**

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- 247 1. Every employee and volunteer of Easley Presbyterian Church is required to
248 report any situation which presents a suspicion that child abuse may have
249 occurred. Such report shall be made to the Director of Christian Education or
250 the Associate Pastor for Youth, who will report to the Head of Staff as soon as
251 possible.
- 252 2. Any report of child abuse made by a child about their care by a parent,
253 guardian, youth, adult, or EPC staff employee or volunteer, despite how
254 unlikely such report may seem, must be relayed to the Director of Christian
255 Education or the Associate Pastor for Youth who will report to the Head of
256 Staff as soon as possible.
- 257 3. The person with first-hand knowledge of the incident, along with the
258 appropriate staff member, shall, as required by law, report the situation to the
259 Pickens County Department of Social Services or other local authorities for
260 investigation.
- 261 4. All concerns and reporting shall be kept confidential.

262

263 **B. Concerns**

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265 From time to time issues arise regarding the conduct of our children, youth and adults
266 at EPC, the Children and Youth Ministry Programs and the adults involved in
267 Children and Youth Ministry that are not clearly abuse related issues but impinge
268 upon child and youth protection and safety, but that may require attention and review.
269 Sometimes patterns and trends of a questionable nature may be noticed. This section
270 provides a means to report such issues other than Child Abuse in a manner that will
271 assure the issues, patterns, or trends are recorded for subsequent review, addressed,
272 and resolved.

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- 274 1. All adults, youth and children are encouraged to report any issues as soon as
275 possible to the responsible adult leadership at the time the issue is observed.
276 It is important to bring issues of safety to the attention of responsible adults as
277 soon as possible. Such notification may be oral or an incident report form
278 may be filled out.
- 279 2. When it is appropriate or more comfortable, anyone who wishes to have a
280 concern addressed is encouraged to bring the issue to the attention of the
281 Director of Christian Education or the Associate Pastor for Youth or the chairs
282 of the appropriate age group Ministry Committees either verbally or in
283 writing. All disciples are encouraged to be responsible in identifying issues,
284 and it is desirable that such concerns bear the name of the originator.

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287 **V. Responding**

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289 **A. Allegations**

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291 In the event of an allegation of child abuse, the following procedures shall be

292 followed at Easley Presbyterian Church:
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- 294 1. Every allegation shall be taken seriously. Adequate care, respect, and
295 confidentiality shall be offered to alleged victims and alleged perpetrators
296 until the allegation is substantiated or cleared.
- 297 2. The Head of Staff will immediately contact the EPC attorney and liability
298 insurance carrier.
- 299 3. In consultation with the EPC attorney the following may be appropriate:
300 a. The Head of Staff/Personnel Committee may notify the parent(s) or
301 legal guardian of the alleged victim.
302 b. The Head of Staff may notify the accused individual.
- 303 4. Written documentation, relating to the matter, shall be kept in a confidential
304 file.
305 a. The Head of Staff or the Personnel Committee may complete an
306 internal investigation in addition to that which will be carried out by
307 the authorities, following the required notifications.
308 b. An individual accused of child abuse may be placed on leave from
309 his/her responsibilities at the discretion of the Head of Staff or
310 Personnel Committee. For employees, this may be with or without
311 pay.
312 c. To protect the child or youth from further possible abuse or
313 harassment, EPC will prohibit the accused individual access to the
314 alleged victim and other children and youth in ministries sponsored by
315 EPC.
316 d. In the event of an unsubstantiated allegation, the Head of Staff will
317 make a determination as to whether the individual will be allowed to
318 return to work as an employee or volunteer at the Church. They will
319 consider the individual's likely effectiveness in working with
320 children/youth following an allegation and investigation of child
321 abuse. An employee has the right to appeal the decision to the
322 Personnel Committee. A volunteer has the right to appeal the decision
323 to the Clerk of Session who will address the situation with the Session
324 in the appropriate time and manner.
- 325 5. EPC employees and volunteers are expected to cooperate fully with the
326 investigation authorities, such as the Child Protective Services Unit of the
327 Department of Social Services, with guidance from the EPC attorney.
- 328 6. All EPC employees and volunteers will refer any inquiries regarding the
329 situation to the Head of Staff. The Head of Staff, or Clerk of Session, shall be
330 the only person authorized to release any information regarding an allegation
331 except where the law requires others to release information, such as to a
332 protective services investigator or a police officer.
- 333 7. All EPC employees and volunteers are expected to avoid denial,
334 minimization, or blame during the period of investigation of the allegation.

335 **B. Concerns** 336

- 337 1. Every report of a concern regarding the children or youth of EPC shall be
338 evaluated to determine if it represents a report or a suspicion of Child Abuse.
339 Such concerns will be processed as described by this policy.

- 340 2. The Safe Place Committee shall evaluate any concern related to child and
341 youth protection and safety to assure proper follow up on the issue.
342 3. All concerns reported shall be documented and maintained for long term
343 review of notable trends or patterns of unacceptable activity by the Safe Place
344 Committee. If a conflict of interest is noted during the review, other church
345 staff will perform the review.
346
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348 **VI. Addressing Known Offenders Who Are Members or Who are** 349 **Visiting Easley Presbyterian Church**

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351 At Easley Presbyterian Church, we seek to live in covenant with God and with one
352 another and to be a redemptive community to all who are members. We also
353 acknowledge that redemptive action and responsible action can, at times, be in tension or
354 even in seeming opposition. We embrace this fact as a natural part of seeking to be the
355 church in the world. We adopt these procedures for ministering to those among us who
356 are known offenders of children and youth while maintaining our focus on protecting the
357 children and youth of our church.
358

- 359 1. Known offenders are required to make their status and any terms of probation
360 known to the Head of Staff.
361 2. The Head of Staff, in conjunction with the Safe Place Team, will establish
362 appropriate boundaries, in writing, governing the life of the offender within the
363 church. This group will also assign covenant partners to the offender. No
364 decisions made by this group will conflict with any provisions of the EPC Safe
365 Place Policy. All Boundary Covenants must also be approved by the Session of
366 Easley Presbyterian Church.
367 3. The known offender will give written acknowledgement and acceptance of EPC's
368 Safe Place Policy and of the boundaries imposed.
369 4. At no time is a known offender to be assigned to ministries with children and
370 youth.
371 5. At no time is a known offender to congregate with children and youth without
372 proper supervision.
373 6. At no time is a known offender allowed in areas of the church or grounds
374 dedicated to children and youth or in use primarily by children and youth without
375 proper supervision.
376 7. As circumstances warrant, the Head of Staff may identify a known offender to
377 church employees and volunteers whose ministries should be informed of this
378 fact.
379 8. Known offenders will receive the normal pastoral care afforded any member.
380 9. Should a known offender violate their Boundary Covenant, they will be denied
381 access to all future church functions and the church property.
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383 **- END OF POLICY -**
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387 Amended by the Session of Easley Presbyterian Church, November 20, 2011.

