



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

4221 W. Gulf to Lake Highway
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THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY OF SEVEN RIVERS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW 4

 Purpose 4

 Requirements 4

 Definitions 4

APPROVAL PROCESS 5

 Six (6) Month Rule 5

 Required Forms 5

 Background Checks 5

 Background Checks on Teenagers..... 6

 Reference Checks..... 6

 Applicant Interview 7

 Worker Clearance & Training..... 7

 Record Retention 7

CHILD SUPERVISION PROCEDURES 8

 Two (2) Worker Rule 8

 Observability 8

 Teenage Workers..... 8

 Prohibited Behavior..... 8

 Inadequate or Improper Supervision..... 9

 Church Oversight 9

 Receiving and Releasing Children 9

REPORTING ABUSE..... 10

 State Requirements 10

 External Reports of Abuse 10

 Internal Reports of Abuse 10

 Prohibitions 11

APPLICATION TO WORK WITH MINORS 13

BACKGROUND CHECK AUTHORIZATION FORM 15

BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEENAGE APPLICANTS..... 17

RECEIPT OF THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY..... 19

OVERVIEW

PURPOSE

It is the goal of Seven Rivers Presbyterian Church (a.k.a. “SRPC,” “Seven Rivers,” “the Church”) to provide a safe, healthy, and secure environment to the children entrusted into our care, whether they are participating in activities through our church, school, or preschool.

The purpose of this document is to state the policies and procedures that will ensure this goal is met and maintained. Additionally, this policy serves to establish clear guidelines as to how, as an organization, we determine who is allowed to work with children, what is expected of those workers, and how these expectations will be enforced.

REQUIREMENTS

Under Florida Statute 39.201 “any person who knows, or has a reasonable cause to suspect, that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected” has a mandatory duty to report the suspected abuse to the authorities via the 1-800-96-ABUSE (1.800.962.2873) hotline.

The Church does not condone abuse of any kind. This includes verbal, emotional, physical, or sexual abuse as well as any form of neglect. No abuse will be tolerated towards anyone under the care of SRPC. All workers are responsible to report known or suspected abuse of a child to the hotline.

If at any time a worker witnesses abuse occurring, he or she is to immediately: 1) stop the abuse, 2) ensure the safety of the child, and 3) report the abuse to the authorities.

If at any time a worker becomes aware or suspects, either through first hand or second hand knowledge, that a child is being abused outside SRPC, he or she is to immediately report such suspicion of abuse to the authorities.

In addition to contacting authorities, the worker is to notify the Director of Business Operations, a pastor, or a ministry director and complete an Incident Report.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy, a “child” is defined as any individual under the age of eighteen (18). Such individuals will also be referred to within this policy as “minors.” Additionally, a “worker” is any volunteer or employee, regardless of age, who has been approved by SRPC to have access to a child under the Church’s care.

For the sake of brevity, any reference to SRPC will also include Seven Rivers Christian School (“SRCS,” “the School”) due to its close affiliation.

Child abuse occurs when an individual in a position of power, trust, or responsibility commits any form of verbal, emotional, physical, or sexual maltreatment upon a child, which causes actual or potential harm to the child’s health, development, or life. This maltreatment can also include neglect or negligence of care as well as any form of exploitation.

APPROVAL PROCESS

Any individual seeking to work with a minor, in any capacity and regardless of the length of time, is required to be cleared by SRPC via the following approval process (unless otherwise noted). The individual must pass the [waiting period](#), complete all [required forms](#), submit to a [background check](#), provide [references](#), and meet for an [applicant interview](#) with church staff. SRPC reserves the right to deny any individual the ability to work with children.

SIX (6) MONTH RULE

No volunteer will be eligible to work with children, in any capacity, until he or she has become a member of SRPC for no less than six (6) months, or has shown regular attendance with SRPC for a minimum of one (1) year. All volunteers must be active and participating in worship services at SRPC before they will be considered eligible to work with children. The purpose of this prohibition is to ensure church leadership has an opportunity to evaluate the suitability of the individual seeking to work with children.

REQUIRED FORMS

All individuals seeking to work with children will be required to complete the following forms:

1. [Application to Work with Minors](#)
2. [Background Check Authorization Form](#)
3. [Receipt of the Child Protection Policy](#)

Additionally, teenage applicants and their parent(s) will be required to complete the [Background Questionnaire for Teenage Applicants](#) Form. See [Background Checks on Teenagers](#) for more information.

All applicants will be required to provide any personal and confidential information necessary to perform a national criminal background check and [reference checks](#).

BACKGROUND CHECKS

No individual found to have a criminal background of a sexual or violent nature will be allowed to work with minors. Additionally, any individual found to have a background that involves any form of child mistreatment will not be allowed to work with minors.

A complete list of convictions that would disqualify an individual from working with children at SRPC can be obtained from the Director of Business Operations (i.e. Ineligibility Offenses List) or directly from Florida's 2007 [Ethics in Education Act](#) section of the Florida Department of Education website (http://www.fldoe.org/edstandards/background_screening.asp).

Any falsification, omission, or failure to disclose information regarding one's criminal background, regardless of the offense, will result in an applicant not being eligible to work with children and/or the dismissal of the worker from service. Any worker who is convicted of a crime (as listed under the above stated Act) after his or her eligibility to work with minors has commenced will be removed from service.

All charges or convictions for these crimes, or for any other crimes not listed above, will be reviewed by the Director of Human Resources; a pastor; the Director of Business Operations; and the ministry leader. Only

THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY OF SEVEN RIVERS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

these individuals, or others with an express need to know, may view the information obtained on the criminal background check.

If any information within the background check is found to be incorrect by the applicant, he or she may file an official written dispute with SRPC. Upon receipt of the dispute, SRPC will contact the background check provider to seek a resolution of the matter. While the matter is pending, the applicant's internal review process will be placed on hold.

Ongoing background checks of workers will be performed randomly, as deemed necessary by SRPC leadership, or as required by state guidelines.

Any worker who is being investigated for a possible criminal offense is to inform the Director of Business Operations of that situation. This is to determine if continued access to children will be allowed while the investigation is pending. Failure to report an active investigation will result in the worker being removed from service, regardless of the outcome of the investigation.

BACKGROUND CHECKS ON TEENAGERS

Because of the sealed nature of juvenile criminal records, teenage applicants along with his or her parent(s)/legal guardian(s) will be required to answer the following questions via the [Background Questionnaire for Teenage Applicants](#) form:

1. Does the teenager have any current or past legal issues?
2. Has the teenager been convicted of a crime?
3. Has the teenager ever had a parole officer?

All answers on this form must be in writing and signed by the teenage applicant and his or her parent(s)/legal guardian(s). If the applicant has/had a parole officer, the officer's contact information will be required. If any of the above stated individuals refuse to answer these questions in writing, and provide their signature, SRPC will deny that teenager's application to work with children.

Any teenage worker who is being investigated for a possible criminal offense is to inform the Director of Business Operations of that situation. This is to determine if continued access to children will be allowed while the investigation is pending. Failure to report an active investigation will result in the worker being removed from service, regardless of the outcome of the investigation.

REFERENCE CHECKS

After completion of the criminal background check, the Church may conduct reference checks on each individual seeking to work with children. References will be requested on the [Application to Work with Minors](#) form of which the applicant can provide any combination of friends, family, or professional acquaintances (so long as at least one (1) professional reference is given). If possible, applicants are encouraged to provide references from places where they have previously worked with children.

Other potential reference checks can include the applicant's current and previous employment experience, church attendance, and volunteer service.

THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY OF SEVEN RIVERS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

APPLICANT INTERVIEW

Once all forms have been completed, background checks conducted, and references obtained, the Church will compile and review all information. Upon completion of the review, the Church will conduct a personal interview with the applicant.

This interview may involve one (1) or more individuals and will be comprised of standard interview questions, a discussion of all relevant information found during the application process, and a review of the applicant's qualifications for the position. All records pertaining to the interview will be noted in writing and held secure.

WORKER CLEARANCE & TRAINING

At no time will an applicant be given clearance to work with children prior to completion of the entire [application process](#).

Once clearance has been granted, the worker will receive training in SRPC child protection and safety policies, identification and prevention of child abuse guidelines, and the legal requirements on child abuse reporting.

RECORD RETENTION

All records and information obtained during the approval process and thereafter will be retained in a file and held secure by Human Resources (HR). Access to this confidential information will be restricted to only those with an express need to know.

An individual may request to review his or her file at any time by notifying Human Resources. Upon receipt of a request, HR will schedule an appointment for the review. The review of the file will be conducted in the presence of HR.

At no time will any information found within the file be copied, viewed in private, or allowed to leave the premises. Exceptions to this prohibition will only be allowed via a valid subpoena.

CHILD SUPERVISION PROCEDURES

TWO (2) WORKER RULE

It is the policy of SRPC that children, regardless of their number or location, are to be supervised by no less than two (2) workers during any church activity. This rule will apply when transporting children or on any overnight or off-site activity. Exceptions to this policy may include employees of SRPC (e.g. teachers who are working in a classroom setting with their assigned students, school nurse, etc.).

OBSERVABILITY

Workers are to conduct all SRPC child activities in visible areas. At no time are doors to be closed unless the door has a window in it or nearby, which makes the inside of the room clearly visible from any hallway or walkway. In situations where a windowed door is closed, the workers are to keep all children in parts of the room that are clearly visible from the outside.

In the event a pastor is requested by a parent to counsel a child in private, that meeting will occur in a room with an unobstructed window (e.g. open blinds) or the door is to remain open.

TEENAGE WORKERS

If at any time SRPC allows a minor to work with children, that individual will be at least 14 years old and have gone through the entire [approval process](#)

PROHIBITED BEHAVIOR

SRPC will not tolerate any violation of this Child Protection Policy, which will cause any manner of intentional (i.e. non-accidental) harm upon a child under its care. Workers are at all times required to be above reproach in all interactions with any child. As such, acts that violate this expectation will be dealt with accordingly. Such acts include, but are not limited to:

- Threatening or inflicting intentional physical harm upon a child.
- Bullying, harassing, or picking on a child.
- Verbally abusing or demeaning a child.
- Using inappropriate language in front of a child (e.g. swearing).
- Having inappropriate contact with a child (e.g. back/neck rubs, messaging, kissing, etc.).
- Making sexual comments or innuendo to any child or around any child.
- Having any sexual contact with a child or making any form of sexual advance.
- Possessing, promoting, or distributing any form of inappropriate materials (e.g. sexually based).
- Possessing or providing a child with alcohol or drugs, or being under the influence of either while working with any child of SRPC.

THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY OF SEVEN RIVERS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

- Failing to treat each child with respect and dignity, regardless of his or her gender, race, nationality, religion, or background.
- Failing to report suspected child abuse.
- Failing to provide adequate or proper supervision of a child.

INADEQUATE OR IMPROPER SUPERVISION

The Church will not condone the inadequate or improper supervision of children entrusted to its care. As such, direct supervision of all activities they partake in is required.

CHURCH OVERSIGHT

Ministry leadership is responsible to ensure the coordination of workers and proper staffing for all child related activities. Additionally, leadership is responsible to ensure all workers are properly trained, informed of activity requirements, and kept in regular communication.

When SRPC child activities are in progress, leadership is responsible to regularly visit those areas where children are being supervised to ensure children are receiving proper supervision.

RECEIVING AND RELEASING CHILDREN

Each area of Seven Rivers that involves childcare will abide by check in/out procedures that are appropriate for their specific operations (i.e. Seven Rivers Christian School/Preschool and SRPC child/youth care).

At no time will a child be released to anyone other than his or her parent(s), legal guardian(s), or designated caregiver(s). A parent's designated caregiver must be made known to the Church in writing. If a parent has a restraining order against anyone, that individual(s) is to be made known to Seven Rivers in writing. Church leadership will handle any emergency situation on a case-by-case basis.

REPORTING ABUSE

STATE REQUIREMENTS

Under Florida Statute 39.201 “any person who knows, or has a reasonable cause to suspect, that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected” has a mandatory duty to report the suspected abuse to the authorities via the 1-800-96-ABUSE (1.800.962.2873) hotline.

EXTERNAL REPORTS OF ABUSE

If at any time a worker becomes aware or suspects (either through first or second hand knowledge) that a child is being abused outside SRPC, he or she is to report such suspicion of abuse to the authorities.

Upon conclusion of the call to 1-800-96-ABUSE, the worker is to immediately notify church leadership of the report.

INTERNAL REPORTS OF ABUSE

If at any time a worker witnesses abuse occurring, he or she is to immediately: 1) stop the abuse, 2) ensure the safety of the child, and 3) report the abuse to the authorities.

In situations where abuse has allegedly occurred at SRPC or at an outside sanctioned activity, the worker is to notify the authorities via the 1-800-96-ABUSE hotline. Upon conclusion of the call to authorities, the worker is to immediately notify church leadership of the report and complete an internal Incident Report. Once notified by the worker, the Church will:

1. Notify the child's parent or legal guardian.
2. Place the suspected worker(s) on leave pending the results of the authority's investigation.
3. Complete an internal Incident Report, and any external documents required by the authorities, detailing all information given by first hand witness(es).
4. Make pastoral staff available to assist in the needs of the family and to keep them as informed as possible within the context of the authority's investigation.
5. Cooperate fully and quickly with the authorities in their investigation of the alleged abuse.
6. Notify the Church's insurance carrier and forward any requested documents for their review.
7. Designate a spokesman for any media inquiries and consult with legal counsel prior to issuing a response.
8. Maintain confidentiality of all information while the investigation is pending. This prohibition is for the sake of the victim and the innocence of the alleged perpetrator until proven guilty.
9. Notify the congregation of the situation and relay all appropriate information to them in a timely manner.
10. If the worker has been found guilty of the alleged abuse, he or she will no longer be allowed to work with children at SRPC in any capacity.
11. If the worker has not been found guilty of the alleged abuse, the Church will determine if the worker will be reinstated to work with children at SRPC.

THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY OF SEVEN RIVERS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

PROHIBITIONS

It is the role of law enforcement and designated state agencies to conduct an investigation into any allegation of suspected child abuse. As such, no individual associated with SRPC (regardless of position) is to conduct any form of investigation, interrogation, or examination into an allegation of suspected child abuse. Because such interruptions can impact the effectiveness of an external investigation and negatively affect witnesses, at no time will workers act in the capacity of an investigator.



APPLICATION TO WORK WITH MINORS

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____ Middle Initial: _____
Nickname: _____ Date of Birth: _____ Current Age: _____
Gender: _____ Maiden Name: _____ Marital Status: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____
Can we text you? Yes ___ No ___ Email Address: _____
Street Address: _____ Apt: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

CHURCH INFORMATION

Are you a member of Seven Rivers Presbyterian Church: Yes ___ No ___ Years Attended: _____
If you are not a member of Seven Rivers, what date did you first start attending: _____
Previous Church Attended: _____ City/State: _____
Ministries Involved In: _____ Date Left: _____
Contact Person: _____ Phone #: _____

VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

Have you volunteered with any other organization: Yes ___ No ___ Years Involved: _____
Name of Organization(s): _____ City/State: _____
Type of Volunteer Work: _____ Date Left: _____
Contact Person: _____ Phone #: _____

WORK INFORMATION

Current Employer: _____ Job Title: _____
Hire Date: _____ Years Employed: _____
Supervisor: _____ Phone #: _____

THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY OF SEVEN RIVERS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Previous Employer: _____ Job Title: _____

Hire Date: _____ Years Employed: _____ Reason for Leaving: _____

Supervisor: _____ Phone #: _____

REFERENCES (Must provide at least one professional reference)

Name: _____ Phone #: _____

Relationship to You: _____ Years Known: _____

Name: _____ Phone #: _____

Relationship to You: _____ Years Known: _____

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever been accused, investigated, charged, or sued for a child-related, sexual-related, or violent crime? Yes _____ No _____ If yes, provide an explanation and dates: _____

2. Have you ever been convicted of a crime? Yes _____ No _____ If yes, provide an explanation and dates: _____

SIGNATURE SECTION

By signing below, I certify that the information I have provided is complete, accurate, and contains no material omission. I authorize Seven Rivers Presbyterian Church (SRPC) and/or its agents to verify the validity and accuracy of any and all information contained within this application as well as any other information gained via other means. I authorize all references to provide you with any information, including opinions, which they may have regarding my character and fitness for work with minors. I understand that each reference will be asked to submit the name of one additional person to be used as a potential additional reference.

Furthermore, I hereby release any individual, church, youth organization, charity, employer, reference, or any other person or organization, including record custodians, both collectively and individually, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family, on account of compliance or any attempts to comply with this authorization. Additionally, I waive any right that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified within the application form or obtained otherwise unless so required by law.

I understand that this information is being requested to determine my suitability to work with minors. If approved, I will be required to abstain from unscriptural conduct and abide by SRPC's bylaws and Child Protection Policy. I acknowledge that I have carefully read this release and understand its contents. I acknowledge that this document is being signed of my own free will and is a legally binding agreement.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Printed Name: _____



BACKGROUND CHECK AUTHORIZATION FORM

I hereby authorize Seven Rivers Presbyterian Church and/or its agents to make an independent national investigation of my: 1) background, 2) references, 3) character, 4) past and present employment, 5) past and present volunteer service, 6) education, and 7) criminal records. This investigation will include all records maintained by both public and private organizations. The purpose of this investigation is to confirm my information and determine my suitability for employment, volunteering, or to work with minors.

I release Seven Rivers Presbyterian Church and/or its agents and any person or entity, which provides information pursuant to this authorization, from any and all liabilities, claims, or lawsuits in regard to the information obtained from any and all of the above referenced sources used.

The following is my true and complete legal name, and all information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Last Name: _____ Suffix: _____ First Name: _____

Middle Name: _____ Prefix: _____ Maiden Name: _____

Nickname: _____ Other Names Used: _____

IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

SSN: _____ Gender: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Drivers License #: _____ Issuing State: _____ Place of Birth: _____

ADDRESS

Street #: _____ Street Name: _____ Apt: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____ County: _____

SIGNED CONSENT

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____ Phone #: _____



BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEENAGE APPLICANTS

In addition to completing the [Background Check Authorization Form](#), all teenage applicants, and their parent(s)/guardian(s), are required to answer the following questions and provide all associated information. If either the teenager or his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) refuse to complete this questionnaire; falsifies or omits any information; or refuses to provide their signatures, SRPC will deny that teenager's application to work with children.

1. **Do you have any current or past legal issues?** Yes: _____ No: _____

If yes, explain: _____

2. **Have you been convicted of a crime?** Yes: _____ No: _____

If yes, explain by listing offense(s), date(s), and circumstances: _____

3. **Have you ever had a parole officer?** Yes: _____ No: _____

Officer's Name: _____ Phone #: _____

APPLICANT & PARENTAL SIGNATURES

1. Teenager's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Teenager's Printed Name: _____

2. Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Printed Name: _____

3. Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Printed Name: _____



RECEIPT OF THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the child protection policy for Seven Rivers Presbyterian Church ("the Church"). I agree to read the policies contained within this document and fully abide by its requirements. I acknowledge that I am at all times to conduct myself in a manner that is above and beyond reproach when interacting with children and will at a times seek to ensure their safety.

I also acknowledge that my ability to work with children is contingent upon approval from the Church after successful completion of its applicant approval process. I agree to complete all required documents and disclose any and all information necessary to complete the approval process. I acknowledge that any falsification or omission of relevant information either during the approval process or anytime thereafter, I will be disqualified from working with minors under the care of Seven Rivers.

Finally, I acknowledge that I am free to seek guidance from the Director of Business Operations, at any time, regarding any question(s) I may have surrounding the contents of this policy.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____