

Piedmont Community Church
Child and Youth Protection Policy

Adopted June 14, 2004
By the Board of Trustees
Piedmont Community Church

Sexual Harassment

Awareness of the realities of child abuse has led to the formalization of the following policies that seek to prevent the likelihood of abuse in the church environment. We seek to respect and protect children as well as to avoid false accusations directed toward our leaders.

The Piedmont Community Church commits to protecting children in its care from sexual harassment. Parents, through this document, shall inform them that they need not endure any form of sexual behavior or communication from staff or fellow student.

Prohibited Behavior

Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to the following behaviors:

- Unwelcome sexual flirtations or propositions.
- Sexual slurs, epithets, threats, verbal abuse, sexually related comments or sexually degrading descriptions.
- Graphic verbal comments about an individual's body.
- Sexual notes, stories, drawings, pictures or gestures.
- Spreading sexual rumors.
- Touching an individual's body or clothing in a sexual way.
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects.
- Comments around the issue of sexual orientation.

Notification

A copy of this policy will be provided to each employee and volunteer. It will be provided to the parents of each child participating in church school or off-campus youth activity.

Reporting Procedure

Children who feel harassed and/or parents of harassed children should immediately contact a staff member. Within 24 hours that staff member shall report to the Senior Minister or designee with the complaint and his or her observations. Staff shall similarly report any such incidents they may observe, even if the victim has not complained.

Investigation

Information related to a complaint of sexual harassment shall be confidential to the extent possible. Individuals involved in the investigation of such a complaint shall not discuss the matter outside of the investigation.

The Senior Minister or designee shall promptly investigate all complaints of sexual harassment. In so doing he/she will speak with the complainant, the accused, witnesses and others who might have pertinent information.

The complainant shall have the opportunity to describe the incident, present witnesses and other evidence of harassment and put the complaint in writing.

While confidentiality is desired, the Senior Minister or designee may find it necessary to also interview the parents or guardians of children involved, other staff, civil authorities and legal counsel for the church.

A written report shall be prepared of the complaint, investigation, and findings. If sexual harassment is deemed to have occurred, the action taken to end the harassment will be recorded. Follow-up observation for recurrence of the behavior will be undertaken.

The penalty for harassment may include dismissal from church staff as well as referral to the appropriate civil authorities, including child protective service.

Child Abuse

The church has adopted a policy aimed at preventing opportunities for abuse within its children's programs. The policy focuses first on staff selection, and then on placing barriers to abuse.

Staff

We select our program staff with care using interviews and recommendations in screening. In addition, potential program staff is reviewed by a professional background information research company in the final stage of the employment decision.

Staff selects volunteers to work in children and youth programs from the congregation after study of their character and behavior. The majority of these individuals are parents of children in the program now or in the past. Some are more recent graduates from the program. They are deemed to be of low risk for sexual abuse and do not have professional background information checking done.

Barriers to Abuse Within the Program

Piedmont Community Church adopts the following policies for the protection of children in our programs; they also serve to protect staff from false accusations of abuse.

- Two adult members of the staff, paid or volunteer, should be present at any gathering or outing. If the second adult is not available for any reason, the gathering or outing may proceed if in the opinion of senior staff it is appropriate to do so.
- One-on-one contact between staff and child needs careful handling. Where such personal attention is required as a part of our ministry, the meeting is best held in view of other adults or children. A child's parent or legal guardian may allow for one-on-one contact with the staff by providing written permission. We recognize, however, that on occasion a spontaneous need for immediate and personal attention between our staff and a child is a necessary part of our ministry. Nothing in this policy should prevent such a meeting.
- When children's activities involve overnight stays, no child is to sleep alone in the same room as staff or volunteer, other than his/her parent or legal guardian. Males and females are to have separate restroom and shower facilities. Should such separate facilities not be available, separate times for the genders will be scheduled and adhered to.
- Corporal punishment is never permitted.
- Smaller children who require it may have adult assistance in using a toilet. In such cases the door is to be left open.

Parents

Parents participate in the protection of their children in our programs in many ways. They are encouraged to maintain open lines of communication so that their child brings troubles to them for advice and counsel. Similarly parents are encouraged to participate in the church youth program as volunteers. This document is provided to all parents and should be reviewed by parent and child. Parents are encouraged to discuss any apparent deviations from these regulations with the Senior Minister or designee.

Reporting Responsibilities

In general, California state law (Cal. Penal Code, Sec.11165.7) states that any adult administrator, employee, teacher, volunteer or other; for either a public or a private organization; whose duties include either direct contact with, or supervision over children; **has a mandatory duty to report child abuse.**

People are concerned about being sued for reporting child abuse. Please note that one is not required to know for certain that a child has been abused. All the law requires is that the reporter has both a reasonable suspicion and that the report is made in good faith. When these requirements are met, the state provides immunity from liability for child abuse reporters.

Staff members are to discuss with the Senior Pastor or delegate their suspicion of child abuse prior to making a report to civil authority.

Acknowledgment of Receipt

All Piedmont Community Church staff, employees and volunteers, as well as the parents of children in the program are asked to read and understand this written policy statement on protection of youth from harassment and abuse. Should any questions occur, please bring them to the Senior Minister or delegate. When staff and parents are satisfied that they understand these policies, they are requested to sign the attached form and return it to the Church office for inclusion in our files.

Procedures

The church will maintain a locked file. It will contain:

- Signed statements by staff as having read and understood this policy.
- Permits from parents or guardians for one-on-one meetings with children and staff.

- Materials collected and reports generated from investigations.
- Application forms submitted by those volunteering to work with children.

One-time leaders in children's activities will be accompanied by staff when with children.

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I _____ (please print name) acknowledge receipt of the Youth Protection Policy of the Piedmont Community Church. I have read and understand this policy. If a parent, I have reviewed the policy with my child.

Signature

Date

Please check all that apply:

Staff member

Parent

Volunteer

Other _____