



## PCOM

# Child and Youth Protection Policy

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## **Overview of the PCOM Safety System**

### **Adult Volunteers:**

In order to protect our children, staff and volunteers, PCOM requires all staff members and adult volunteers working with children or youth (and other vulnerable populations) to complete PCOM's **Child Protection Training (CPT)** program. This includes **1) written acknowledgement of having received and read this Child Protection Policy, 2) a Written Application and/or Verbal Interview to volunteer with children, 3) California Sexual Abuse Awareness Training, 4) a California Background Check** before ministry work or volunteer placements begin. Whether the prospective volunteer undergoes an application or an interview is up to the discretion of the CM team.

### **Sub-Adult Volunteers:**

Students in 6th grade and above are eligible to apply to volunteer in Sunday School. Teenagers aged 13 and older are eligible to apply to volunteer in the Nursery; and teenagers 16 and older are eligible to apply for a paid staff position in the Nursery. If offered a staff position, they must undergo steps 1-3 of the child protection training process, but will not be background checked until they are 18. The Nursery Coordinator may approve new volunteers for the Nursery. The Sunday School Coordinator may approve new volunteers for Sunday School. The Children's Director may approve any new volunteers in the Children's Ministry.

High School students are eligible to volunteer as high school youth leaders. They are required to undergo steps 1-3 of the child protection training process, but will not be background checked until they are 18. They will be considered child protection-trained (CPT) once these 3 steps are complete.

### **Sexual Abuse Awareness Training**

To proactively protect children and to best equip PCOM staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, PCOM requires all staff members and adult volunteers to complete Ministry Safe's California Sexual Abuse Awareness Training online at [www.MinistrySafe.com](http://www.MinistrySafe.com). This training will be renewed every two years.

### **Criminal Background Check**

PCOM requires that all adult staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in children's or student activities or programming more than 15 hours per year undergo a Live Scan background check. Certain past criminal acts may preclude an applicant from serving minors.

## **Volunteer Application**

All new volunteers will undergo a written application and/or a verbal interview with a CM staff member. The purpose of the application or conversation is to assist PCOM in providing a safe and secure environment for children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities.

## **Children's Ministries (CM)**

### **Supervision Policies**

There will be at least two child protection-trained (CPT) adults at all times in every classroom/environment involving the supervision of children.

#### **Exceptions**

- **Cars**
  - CM Employees may transport children in a vehicle without a second adult if there are at least two children in the car.
- **Family**
  - A parent/legal guardian is not obligated to follow the PCOM Child Protection Policy with their own child.
  - A close family member (e.g. grandparent) is not obligated to follow the PCOM Child Protection Policy if the child's parent/legal guardian has given such permission..

### **Nursery/Sunday School Check-in and Check-out**

Upon check-in, each child will receive a nametag and the adult dropping them off will be given a claim tag. Upon check-out time, the adult picking up must present that claim tag. Volunteers must check each claim tag before releasing a child at pick up. If a claim tag is lost, an ID must be presented.

### **Restroom Policy for Sunday School**

*Under the conditions of hosting two or more Sunday School classrooms with two adult staff or volunteers in each:*

- Classroom staff or volunteers will call the Staff Hall Monitor on duty to accompany two or more students to the bathroom.
- The Hall Monitor must be a staff member.
- There must always be two or more children if there is only one adult staff member.
- If two adult staff or volunteers are available, two adults may accompany one or more children to the bathroom.
- Always notify the parents at check-out that you accompanied their child to the bathroom.
- Adults will not enter the bathroom alone with a child, but they may stand outside with the door propped open. Adults will check the bathroom for safety before sending children into the bathroom.

- If two adults are present and a child requires assistance, one female adult should assist with the door propped open while the other adult remains present. Announce to another adult staff member or child protection-trained volunteer if you need to enter the bathroom to help a child.
- If there is only one Adult Staff Member present and a child needs help, ask the child to come out of the bathroom and assist them, if possible. If entering the bathroom is absolutely necessary to help the child, prop the door open and notify the Sunday School Classroom staff and volunteers as well as the parent that you entered the bathroom to assist the child.
- Never use or occupy a bathroom that is in use by children. If you need to use the bathroom, be sure no children are present before entering.

## **Restroom Policy for Pizza and Praise**

*Under the condition that Pizza and Praise is hosted in the Youth Room:*

- Two CPT adult volunteers may accompany one or more students to the downstairs bathroom outside the Youth Room.
- One PCOM Staff member may accompany two or more children to the downstairs bathroom outside the Youth Room.
- Adult volunteers need to always check the bathroom for safety before letting the children enter. Ensure no one else is in the bathroom before the children enter.

## **Physical Contact**

- Side hugs, pats on the shoulder, hand-shakes, and high-fives are examples of appropriate forms of physical contact.
- Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children or staff members and volunteers.
- Do not force physical contact, touch, or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.
- Avoid holding children in your lap. Instead, have them sit next to you.

## **Nursery**

- Diapers may be changed in the Nursery only by paid, adult, female PCOM Nursery Staff members.
- Changing diapers should be done in plain sight of other PCOM nursery staff.
- Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diapers.
- Notify the parent at check-out that you changed a diaper.
- Toilet-trained children may use the nursery restroom with the top portion of the door open. If the child needs assistance, a nursery staff member may enter and assist the child, leaving the door completely open.
- Notify the parent at check-out that you assisted the child.

## **Additional Good Practices**

- If a student needs to speak to you privately, move to a visible area of the room that is audibly removed from others where you are still visible to another CPT volunteer or staff member. Communicate to the other CPT adults in the room that you are going to step aside to have a conversation with the child.
- Written permission from parents is required for all off-campus events.
- If anything in violation of the policies outlined in this document occurs, tell a staff member immediately. If you witness or experience any circumstance that might lead to misinterpretation, tell a staff member immediately.
- Report and/or intrude on ALL situations that do not follow the above policies/procedures. If it makes you uncomfortable, report it. When in doubt, report it.

## **Youth Ministry (YM)**

### **Supervision Policies**

There will be at least 2 Child Protection Trained (CPT) adults at every program or event involving students/youth (children 6th grade through 18 years old).

### **Exceptions**

- **Cabins/rooms for trips and Sunday Morning small groups**
  - There will be at least 1 CPT adult and 1 CPT high school youth leader per cabin/room/small group.
- **Cars**
  - A CPT adult may transport youth in a vehicle without a second adult if there are at least two youth in the car at all times.

### **Restroom Policies**

- Adults will not enter the bathroom alone with a student; they can stand outside with the door open.
- When using public bathrooms off PCOM campus, a CPT adult must enter the public bathroom with two or more students to ensure that the bathroom is safe.

## **Physical Contact**

Physical contact with minors should be kept to a minimum and only in the presence of other adult leaders. Acceptable contact includes: a brief hug, handshake, high five, brief pat on back or shoulders.

## **Additional Good Practices**

- Private meetings with students should be kept to a minimum. In one-on-one counseling situations, make sure another adult knows that you are meeting with a student. Meet in a public place. If confidential counseling is needed, two CPT leaders must be present. The Director should be notified prior to a private meeting with a student.
- One adult must never be alone with one student.
- A signed permission slip from parents is required for all off-campus events.
- If anything in violation of the policies outlined in this document occurs, tell a staff member immediately. If you witness or experience any circumstance that might lead to misinterpretation, tell a staff member immediately.
- Report and/or intrude on ALL situations that do not follow the above policies/procedures. If it makes you uncomfortable, report it. When in doubt, report it.
- All protocols apply to off-campus events and activities as well.

## **Child Safety Policy**

*\*It is hoped that the proactive prevention policies will ensure that the following procedures for responding to allegations of child abuse within PCOM will never be needed.*

### **Reporting Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors:**

Any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and promptly reported and investigated. Every effort will be made to protect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties involved.

### **Procedures:**

If staff or volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors (i.e., policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual), it is their responsibility to immediately report their observations to their immediate supervisor or the Executive Pastor.

### **Protecting Your Children:**

Statistics ([ministrysafe.com](http://ministrysafe.com)):

- 1 in 4 females and 1 in 6 males will have been sexually abused before reaching 18 years of age

- Less than 8% of outcries or allegations of child sexual abuse are false even if the child recants.
- Less than 10% of child sexual abusers will encounter the criminal justice system, ever.
- 2 out of 3 children don't tell about abuse until adulthood, if ever.

Be educated and aware of the signs and threats of child abuse to help keep children safe. Maintain open communication and trust with your children to help protect them, as well.

### **Some Guidelines for Age-Appropriate Information Are:**

- 18 months: Teach your child the proper names for body parts
- 3-5 years: Teach your child about private parts of the body and how to say "no" to inappropriate advances
- 5-8 years: Discuss safety away from home and the differences between good and bad touch. Encourage your child to talk to you openly.
- 8-12 years: Stress personal safety. Discuss rules of sexual conduct that are acceptable to the family. Maintain a calm, safe and approachable demeanor when talking to your children.
- 12-18 years: Stress personal safety. Discuss rape, date rape, sexually transmitted diseases, and pregnancy.

### **Ways to actively protect your child against any form of exploitation or abuse:**

- Let your child know they can talk to you about anything. Maintain an open and non-judgmental demeanor. Talk about the body and sexuality at an age-appropriate level for the children (See descriptions above)
- Let them know you will not be angry if they tell you about inappropriate touching. Together you will do something to investigate the problem or concern.
- Talk about secrets. Let your child know they do not need to keep secrets, and they can talk to you about any secret anyone has asked them to keep, no matter who has asked them to keep the secret.
- Assure them that they are not a bad child no matter what has happened.
- Assure them that nothing bad will happen if they tell their secret. As a parent, assure your child you will protect them from being hurt.

### **Child Abuse Prevention Council of Orange County- Definition of Child Abuse:**

Child abuse is any act of omission or commission that endangers or impairs a child's physical or emotional health and development. It is the act rather than the degree of injury that determines intervention by medical professionals. When a child tells a medical professional about being abused, the communication is not privileged and must be reported by law.

**Physical Abuse:** any act that results in a non-accidental physical injury. Most often, inflicted physical injury represents unreasonably severe corporal punishment, unjustifiable punishment, or intentional assault.

- Damage to the brain, skeleton, and other internal organs
- Damage to the skin and surface tissue

**Physical Neglect:** the negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child by a parent or caretaker who willfully causes or permits the child to be placed in a situation where their person or health is endangered.

- Severe malnutrition or medically diagnosed, non-organic failure-to-thrive
- Failure to provide adequate food, clothing, hygiene, shelter, medical or dental care
- Leaving young children without supervision

**Sexual Abuse:** exposure to sexual stimuli inappropriate for the child's age level, psychological development, or role in the family. It encompasses a broad spectrum of acts of sexual exploitation of minors that may have occurred over a long period. The child's guilt, shame, fear, and the possibility of involvement of parents or caretakers make it extremely difficult for children to come forward to report.

- Touching the child's genitals and/ or breasts or telling a child to masturbate
- Having the child touch or exhibiting someone else's genitals to a minor
- Showing a child pornography and promoting prostitution by minors
- Putting objects inside a child's vagina, anus, or mouth
- Having oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with a child
- Photographing a child nude or in sexual intercourse positions/situation
- Voyeurism

**Emotional Abuse:** can scar and incapacitate a child emotionally, behaviorally, and/or intellectually. Severe psychological disorders have been traced to excessively distorted parental attitudes and actions.

- Verbal assaults: belittling, screaming, threats, blaming, and sarcasm
- Continual negative mood and double message communication
- Constant family discord and unpredictable responses

**Ritual Abuse:** consists of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and the use of rituals. Ritual abuse, which usually involves repeated abuse over an extended period, is done to indoctrinate the victim into cult beliefs and practices. Most victims are in a state of terror, mind control, and dissociation in which disclosure is exceedingly difficult.

- The physical abuse is severe. Sometimes including torture and killing
- Sexual abuse is painful, sadistic, and humiliating
- The psychological abuse involves ritual indoctrination and intimidation