

**COMMITTEE TO FORMULATE A CHILD PROTECTION POLICY  
REPORT TO THE GREAT LAKES-GULF PRESBYTERY – MARCH 2022**

**I. Introduction**

The attached report is the product of appointment by the Moderator according to the following special resolution of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery, June 17, 2021:

A special resolution was moved, seconded, and passed by a two-thirds majority vote that the moderator appoint a 5-person committee to develop a child-protection policy for all presbytery youth activities to be submitted by the next meeting of presbytery; and that presbytery encourage GLG sessions to share their respective youth protection policies with each other for the purpose of review and improvement, and consider the document provided at synod, entitled, “First Steps After an Abuse Allegation” (*Minutes*; June 2021 GLG Special Meeting; Marion, IN).

After first presenting this Committee’s work in the November 2021 meeting of Presbytery, the proposed policy was referred to the Spring 2022 meeting:

That presbytery refer the proposed child protection policy back to the committee to report back at the spring meeting, with the understanding that it will seek further feedback from the delegates as well as a professional legal review during the intervening period. This motion was seconded, debated, and adopted (*Minutes*; November 2021 GLG Special Meeting; Southfield, MI).

**II. The Work of this Committee**

This Committee met several times via Zoom Video-Conference Call and communicated regularly since our appointment in order, by God’s grace, to carry out the tasks given to us in service to Christ and His Church.

Following the Fall Meeting of Presbytery, this Committee held an open-forum meeting via Zoom on Thursday, December 16, 2021, which was well attended by both elders and members under the jurisdiction of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery. After this meeting, this Committee met together to address the many questions raised in that open-forum meeting, as well as from email communications this Committee received.

With a newly edited draft, this Committee sent the policy to the Risk Control Center of Church Mutual Insurance, through whom Covfamikoi is insured. On January 5, 2022, this Committee received feedback on the Policy with three recommendations from the Risk Control Center (to include reference checks in addition to background checks, to include a group bathroom policy for children, to include clarification regarding sharing sleeping space and providing privacy for minors). The agent wrote to this Committee, “You folks have done a very good and thorough job on this . . . Other than the few recommendations above, you folks have a great policy and very well done and thought out.”

Having made further edits based on the feedback from the Risk Control Center of Church Mutual Insurance, the Child Protection Policy was submitted for legal review to Eric Oliver, of Oliver & Cline, LLP, on February 4, 2022. This Committee received feedback from Mr. Oliver (which updated specific definitions for abuse, made grammatical changes, provided further clarifications on various policies, and recommended procedural clarifications for responding to allegations of abuse) on February 18, 2022. One recommendation for consideration provided by Mr. Oliver is to make viewing MinistrySafe training videos required for all Presbytery events involving minors. However, in the open forum meeting in December, this Committee learned about past Presbytery events (such as family service-project days) that were only a brief period of time and were primarily outdoors. Thus, while this Policy does not contain minimum training requirements for all events, but rather leaves training requirements of workers/volunteers up to the leadership of particular Presbytery Children/Youth functions, Mr. Oliver’s may certainly be something to

be considered by the leadership of such events. The Policy was then updated based upon legal consultation and review, and an updated Policy was sent to Presbytery on February 22, 2022.

God willing, this Committee also will hold another open-forum meeting via Zoom for those under the jurisdiction of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery on Thursday, February 24, 2022, at 7pm Eastern Time, in order to answer any more questions regarding the Policy, as well as to give presbyters an opportunity to interact with the Committee and be better prepared for the meeting of Presbytery in March.

In the process of concluding the work of this Committee, Ruling Elder Stephen Shipp has withdrawn his support of the proposed Presbytery Child Protection Policy, which is why his name is not affixed to the signature of this report. Elder Shipp's contributions, as well as the contributions of all the men of this Committee, were invaluable to the work of this Committee, and we as a Committee are thankful to have been given the opportunity to serve the Lord and His Church through this process.

### **III. Recommendations**

- 1) That Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery adopt the proposed Presbytery Child Protection Policy for all GLG Presbytery events involving minors.
- 2) That Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery adopt the proposed Sample Congregational Child Protection Policy as a template for local Sessions.
- 3) That Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery send the adopted Presbytery and Sample Congregational Child Protection Policy to the other RPCNA Presbyteries for their information and use.
- 4) That this Committee be dismissed.

Respectfully submitted,

Sean Bird  
Bryan Dage  
Ross Fearing  
Drew Poplin, Chairman



## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY GREAT LAKES – GULF PRESBYTERY (RPCNA)**

The Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery takes the protection of her covenant children very seriously. The Covenant of Baptism, noting that children are a possession of God entrusted to the care of their parents, requires watchful protection of children by the entire church.

*Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."  
~ Matthew 19:14 ~*

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY GREAT LAKES – GULF PRESBYTERY (RPCNA)

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## I. INTRODUCTION AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

### A. Purpose

These procedures and policies have been developed to ensure a safe, loving environment conducive to the protection and care of Christ's lambs during Children and Youth Ministry functions of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery of the RPCNA.

### B. Biblical Mandate

**Matthew 19:14** - Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

**John 21:15** – So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs."

**Ephesians 5:3** - But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

### C. Confessional Foundation

**Confession of Faith I.6** – . . . There are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.

**Testimony XXIV.30** – Education of children is primarily the responsibility of parents, though they may delegate part of this responsibility to the church or other agencies . . .

**Directory for Church Government I.8** – Members should willingly consecrate their talents and gifts to the service of Christ. They should prayerfully consider accepting a position in the church when called to do so.

## II. SCOPE AND DEFINITIONS

### A. The Scope of This Policy

This Policy applies to all functions sponsored by or under the jurisdiction of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery in which adults and youth are working directly with children ages newborn up to 18 years old or vulnerable adults. This Policy enumerates the **minimum** requirements for child protection at all functions of Presbytery involving minors or vulnerable adults. Those responsible for organizing and overseeing particular events of Presbytery are at liberty to produce and enforce stricter procedures. Furthermore, this Policy is to be read and interpreted in light of the *Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*.

In the event that a reasonable exception needs to be made to this Policy due to the Lord's providence in hindering a particular policy or procedure from being followed by an approved worker during a particular Children or Youth Ministry function of Presbytery, such an exception should be communicated to the Presbytery Youth Leadership overseeing

the event, prior to said event. In the event that prior notification is not possible, said notification shall occur within twenty-four hours.

**B. Definitions of Key Terms**

- 1) **Approved Worker** – Anyone 18 years of age or older who is approved to assist with a Presbytery Children or Youth program as an employee or volunteer, under the terms of this Policy.
- 2) **Child Abuse** – Child neglect, child physical abuse, or child sexual abuse.
  - a) **Child Neglect** – Depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, safety, education, or medical care.
  - b) **Child Physical Abuse** – Any use of violence or threats of violence toward a minor with the imminent risk of serious physical harm or death.
  - c) **Child Sexual Abuse** – Any contact or interaction (visual, verbal, or emotional) between a minor and another person when the minor is being used for the sexual arousal, molestation, or gratification of the perpetrator or any other person.
    - i. *Sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult* is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child and an adult. This includes activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or child. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered to be forced whether or not the child consents to it.
    - ii. *Sexual abuse perpetrated by a child* is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between children, with or without the consent of either child, when one child has power or perceived authority over the other child. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children.
- 3) **Children** – Particularly, minors from newborn to 12 years of age.
- 4) **Children and Youth** – All persons under the age of 18. Also called minors.
- 5) **Presbytery Youth Leadership** – Any Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery-sanctioned leadership of an official children’s or youth program (e.g., Covfamikoι Director, Youth Secretary, Youth Committee).
- 6) **Vulnerable Adult** – Any person 18 years of age or older who is unable to legally consent, unable to comprehend or is otherwise particularly susceptible to coercion or abuse (e.g., those who are severely mentally or physically disabled).
- 7) **Youth** – Particularly, minors from 13 to 17 years old.

- 8) **Youth Volunteer** – Youth, age 13 to 17, who are approved under this policy to assist in the care of children at Presbytery Children ministry function.

### **III. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

#### **A. Who may work in Presbytery Children and Youth Ministries**

Only Approved Workers may serve in the various Children and Youth Ministries of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery.

- 1) An Approved Worker is one who:
  - a) is an adult (18 years or older) communicant member in good standing of a congregation under the jurisdiction of the RPCNA;
  - b) has submitted a completed worker Application and Reference Letter (see also, Appendix B, p. 14) to the Presbytery Youth Leadership;
  - c) has completed a criminal background check through MinistrySafe.
  - d) Approved Workers are required to satisfy the training requirements to be determined by the Presbytery Youth Leadership (see III.A.4) below).
- 2) Policy on Youth Volunteers:
  - a) If a youth desires to assist the approved workers in a Presbytery Children's Ministry function, that person shall be at least 13 years old and a communicant member in the RPCNA;
  - b) The youth must also submit a Worker Application to the leadership of the respective Presbytery Children and Youth Ministry; and,
  - c) The youth must provide a letter of recommendation from his or her Session.
  - d) Youth assisting the approved workers must remain under the supervision of an approved worker at all times.
- 3) Worker applications, disclosure statements and up-to-date background checks are to be kept on file within the Presbytery's MinistrySafe Account.
- 4) Mandatory training requirements for Approved Workers will be left to the discretion of those responsible for organizing and overseeing each particular Children and Youth Ministry function of Presbytery.

#### **B. Who may not serve in Presbytery Children and Youth Ministries**

##### **1) Definition**

Presbytery Youth Leadership will use the screening process defined in this report to evaluate the suitability of candidates to serve as Approved Workers or Youth Volunteers. Those who have not completed the proper application procedure or

have been deemed ineligible by Presbytery Youth Leadership upon the completion of the application process, will not be permitted to serve in Presbytery Children and Youth functions.

**2) Determination of ineligibility**

If anything is questionable or concerning in the application or background check, Presbytery Youth Leadership will determine eligibility for the applicant on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. This screening process is also subject to review by the elders of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery. Generally, the sort of issues that would bar an applicant from serving with children and youth include: convictions for offenses involving minors, violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency, or other similar violations of God's Law, or failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form.

**C. General principles for protection of children and youth**

1) Clear communication between the children, youth, workers, parents, and elders is vital to ensuring the ongoing protection and flourishing of Christ's lambs.

2) Workers, parents and elders shall be actively vigilant at all times, seeking to protect Christ's lambs from harm. The safety of children and youth is to be of the utmost priority.

3) Confront and report suspicious behavior (see also, Section IV, p 10).

4) Visibility is important. For example, any windows should remain cleared, if at all possible, so that outside view is not obstructed. Similarly, when appropriate, doors shall remain open and shall be unlocked.

5) To increase accountability, multiple approved workers should be present. The more workers at a given place and time, the better.

6) Approved Workers shall strive to be above reproach in all their dealings with the children and youth, as well as the elders to whom they are accountable.

7) Whether those who are not approved workers are allowed to be on the premises of a particular Children and/or Youth Ministry function of Presbytery will be left to the discretion of those responsible for organizing and overseeing that event. They shall not be permitted to supervise the children and youth under any situation.

**D. Policies and procedures for Presbytery Children and Youth Ministries**

**1) Policy on the required number of approved workers**

a) There should be a minimum of two unrelated (meaning not from the same household; e.g., not only a husband and wife) approved workers to supervise children and youth. This is often referred to as the "Rule of Two." For smaller youth group settings where this is not possible, there should always be at least three together in any situation: either one leader with at



least two youth, or two leaders with one youth. If there is only one youth present, said meeting shall occur in a public setting.

**b)** If one of the two adults must leave the room, either a parent or another approved worker is to remain in the room, if possible.

**c)** When possible, for groups of children and youth exceeding ten, one additional approved worker should be present for each ten children and youth. For example, if there are 11-20 children, there should ordinarily be a minimum of three approved workers to be present; for groups of 21-30 children, there should ordinarily be a minimum of four approved workers to be present. Youth volunteers may assist the workers, but do not count toward the required workers at a particular Children's Ministry function of Presbytery.

**d)** Children and youth should be supervised and not allowed to isolate themselves individually or in a group without the appropriate supervision. This policy is in effect during all organized sessions of Presbytery Children Ministry functions. During sessions set aside for family free-time, parents are responsible for the supervision of their children.

## **2) Procedures for overnight retreats and events**

**a)** Information on the event (e.g., location, time, agenda) is to be made available to the elders of the Presbytery and parent(s) and/or guardian(s) of the children and youth attending the Presbytery ministry function.

**b)** Except regarding the case of a husband and his wife, males and females shall be lodged separately.

**c)** Unless the approved worker is the parent or guardian of a child or youth, he or she is not permitted to share the same sleeping space with that child or youth.

**d)** There is to be ample privacy provided for children and youth for changing clothes and carrying out hygienic activities (e.g. showering). Adults shall not change at the same time and shall not be present in the same room when children and youth are changing clothes and carrying out hygienic activities.

## **3) Check-In and Check-Out Procedures**

Presbytery Youth Leadership will create a process for their particular ministry whereby children fifth grade and younger are to be signed in and out of a Presbytery Children and Youth Ministry Function only by a child's parent(s), guardian(s), or individuals at least 13 years of age approved by the child's parent(s)/guardian(s).

**4) Safety Procedures for children in the nursery**

a) No one other than approved workers and parents/guardians may enter the nurseries. If a child with special needs has a particular caregiver (whether a member of his or her family or otherwise), one of the approved workers should be informed in order to best accommodate that child. Unless the parent/guardian is an approved worker, they shall leave the nursery after dropping off/picking up the child.

b) Children who are dropped off should remain in the nursery or classroom except in the event of group activities, in the case of emergency or necessity, and when the child is picked up by his or her parent or guardian.

**5) Bathroom Policy for Children**

a) *Children younger than five years of age* should use a classroom bathroom if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, approved workers should escort children in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. One of the workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should remain outside the bathroom and the escort the children back to the classroom when the children are done.

b) *For children over the age of five*, if possible, at least one male approved worker should take at least two or more boys to the restroom, and at least one female approved worker should take at least two or more girls. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom when the children are done.

c) If a child is taking longer than seems necessary or calls for help, an approved worker may assist, but is to leave all doors open.

**6) Policy regarding the discipline of children and youth**

a) Workers shall not administer physical discipline (e.g., spanking). Workers may provide verbal correction as well as restriction from participation in particular activities as methods of discipline, but said correction and restrictions shall not be done in private. The aim of discipline is to provide an opportunity to introduce children and youth to the Gospel.

b) If the child or youth persists in misbehavior beyond the ability of the Approved Workers, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the child should be contacted and asked to remove their child from the event.

**7) Policy regarding workers providing counseling to children and youth**

There may be times when a worker will need to provide counseling to a child or youth. It is best for two or more approved adults to provide counsel, but if that is not possible, counseling should always be done in an environment with clear visibility (e.g. outdoors or somewhere with the

doors open). When counseling a child or youth, the approved worker should maintain discretionary confidence whenever appropriate. When in doubt, the approved worker should inform the parent of that youth. Counselors shall be mindful of areas of discussion which are subject to state mandatory reporting laws.

**8) Policy on movies and entertainment**

a) Workers will use discernment when viewing movies with children and youth, and will obtain approval from the appropriate Presbytery Youth Leadership overseeing the event.

b) Words, thoughts, and actions should be in conformity with God’s Law (see *Larger Catechism* 112-113, 138-139, and 144-145). Workers are to be careful concerning the activities in which they partake, and about which they discuss, including movies, social media, music, books, and games.

**9) Policy on the use of humor**

Humor is a useful tool in Children and Youth Ministry, and shall be seen as a means of making connections, engaging the minds of children and youth, and building relationships. Workers, children and youth shall avoid all humor which is degrading for someone else, sexual in nature, or involves the use of harsh sarcasm. None of this is helpful for creating an environment of godliness and flourishing (see Ephesians 4:29, 5:4).

**10) Sick Child Policy**

a) It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children and youth of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery. Parent(s) and guardian(s) are encouraged to be considerate of others and not to have their children participate if they have common symptoms of a contagious illness (e.g., fever, vomiting, diarrhea).

b) Children and youth who are observed by workers to be ill will be separated to the extent possible, and the parent(s) or guardian(s) will be contacted to request that the child be picked up immediately.

**11) Child Medication Policy**

a) Generally, workers are not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children and youth under our care. Children and youth are not permitted to administer any medications to themselves or others, or share medications with others. Rather, medications should be administered by the child’s or youth’s own parent or guardian whenever possible. For exceptional circumstances, see below.

b) Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted by parents of children and youth with potentially life-threatening conditions (e.g., asthma

or severe allergic reactions) and will write an action plan to have on file with the Presbytery Youth Leadership.

**c)** Parent(s)/guardian(s) must provide written permission for a designated approved worker to administer medication before leaving the child in the care of the approved workers. Prescription medication should be labeled with the child's name; date the prescription was filled; name and contact information of the prescribing health professional; expiration date; medical need; instructions for administration, storage, and disposal; and name and strength of the medication. Labeled medications (over-the-counter) should be brought by the parent/guardian in the original container. The label should include the child's name, dosage, relevant warnings as well as specific, legible instructions for administration, storage, and disposal.

**d)** All Children participating in Presbytery Children Ministry functions are required to fill out a Medical Release Form.

### **12) Policy on Accidental Injuries**

In the event a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps shall be followed:

**a)** For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from the event.

**b)** For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) will immediately be summoned by an approved worker. If necessary, an ambulance will be called. The Presbytery Youth Leadership will be notified of the event.

**c)** For injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional, Presbytery Youth Leadership will complete an incident report pursuant to the requirements of the Presbytery's Insurance Policy.

### **13) Policy on approved workers providing transportation during Presbytery Children and Youth Ministry Functions**

**a)** When driving, all traffic laws and seat belt rules are to be obeyed. All drivers shall be licensed and insured.

**b)** Parental permission and the approval of the Presbytery Youth Leadership must be obtained prior to transporting a child to any location.

**c)** Transportation shall be in groups of three or more, with at least one approved worker in each vehicle.

### **14) Worker Training Requirements**

**a)** All approved workers shall review the Child Protection Policy.

b) Presbytery Youth Leadership are at liberty to stipulate further training requirements for the particular event under their oversight (e.g. Ministry Safe training videos).

**E. Counsel on communicating the Presbytery Child Protection Policy**

1) This Policy is to be communicated alongside the informational materials distributed for each upcoming Children and Youth Ministry function of Presbytery.

2) This Policy is to be accessible at Children and Youth Ministry functions of Presbytery.

**IV. STEPS FOR RESPONDING TO SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR**

There are times when behavior is exhibited in which formal allegations of child abuse would not be admissible (steps for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse are provided in Section V below), yet an individual's behavior causes an instinctual concern and raises the suspicion of possibly inappropriate and/or predatory behavior. It is good and loving that we should seek to have evil restrained and warn our neighbor: "Sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it" (Genesis 4:7). Whereas Section V (see below) is reactive, Section IV is proactive. If a worker, elder, child or youth is seen exhibiting suspicious behavior, the following steps may be taken according to reasonable precaution and Christian prudence.

**Step 1:** If possible, confront the individual as soon as suspicious or problematic behavior is observed; but at a minimum, report any such suspicious or problematic behavior to event leadership and Presbytery Youth Leadership (Ephesians 5:3 "There must not be even a hint of sexual immorality ...").

**Step 2:** If dealing with a minor (whether the minor is the offender or the offended), the director overseeing the event shall speak to the child's parent(s) or guardian(s) to inform them of what is suspected to have taken place.

**Step 3:** Report any suspicious or problematic behavior to the event leadership. That person will then contact the individuals' Session(s) in a timely manner, so that there may be both pastoral care and particular vigilance among the overseers of Christ's flock.

**Step 4:** Event leadership and that individual's Session shall then investigate the matter in a timely manner and take reasonable precautions.

**V. STEPS FOR RESPONDING TO AND REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE**

Whereas Section IV (see above) addresses how to respond to non-criminal, yet suspicious, behavior, Section V addresses how to respond to and report allegations of child abuse (whether neglect, physical abuse, or sexual abuse). If an allegation of child abuse relative to an event that occurred during a Children or Youth Ministry function of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery or an allegation involving a child is raised, the following Steps are to be carefully, yet swiftly, taken.

**Step 1:** The following should be immediately contacted:

- 1) The local authorities – consult the local state’s mandatory reporting requirements (See Appendix A, p 14; and Appendix B, p 20) to determine which local authorities the matter should be reported to;
- 2) Event leadership shall ensure that the parent(s) or guardian(s) of all minors involved (accuser and/or accused) are contacted;
- 3) Event leadership shall ensure the Moderator of the Session(s) of the involved parties are contacted.
- 4) *Note*, The elders and all parties involved (accuser, accused, workers and presbyters) are to work in full cooperation with civil authorities according to their proper sphere, as well as with ecclesiastical authorities according to their proper sphere. It is neither the role nor jurisdiction of presbyters to assume the role of criminal investigation. All parties involved are to be mindful that one’s duty before the Lord, as required in both the fifth and ninth commandments, is to speak the truth at every opportunity without equivocation. To that end, there is a form for the preliminary documentation of alleged child abuse or neglect (See Appendix B, p 20).

**Step 2:** After reporting the matter to the proper persons, event leadership shall attempt to ascertain basic facts and take reasonable steps to safeguard potential victims. If the accusation of child abuse is credible (meaning that there is no clear and immediate cause for dismissal of the accusation), then for the sake of being above reproach in all matters, as well as for the protection of Christ’s lambs, the Presbytery Youth Leadership overseeing the event will not permit that person to participate in that Presbytery children and youth ministry function.

- 1) Specifically, if an approved worker is accused of child abuse, and the accusation is credible (meaning that there is no clear and immediate cause for dismissal of the accusation), he or she should immediately be given a leave of absence from his or her position by the Presbytery Youth Leadership overseeing the ministry event.
- 2) If worker(s) or elder(s) are not reasonably following through with these “Steps for Responding to and Reporting Allegations of Child Abuse” (e.g. if a worker or elder with knowledge of the allegation does not report the allegation to the proper civil authorities), then those worker(s) or elder(s) should be given a leave of absence from the function of their position as it relates to Children and Youth Ministries. These workers or elders may be reinstated to their service according to the will of Presbytery.
- 3) To be given a leave of absence is not to be understood as formal censure. Furthermore, all communications related to any alleged child abuse shall attempt to protect the dignity and privacy of those involved, including the alleged child victim and the person accused of child abuse; while at the same time ensuring that

those responsible for addressing the situation, including civil authorities, remain fully informed.

**Step 3:** A member of the Presbytery Youth Leadership overseeing the event, or someone designated by the Presbytery Youth Leadership, shall contact the insurance provider within 24 hours of the allegation and document all information per the requirements of the insurance company.

**Step 4:** If a person (either a minor or a worker) is removed from Presbytery functions due to an alleged incident of abuse which happened during a Presbytery function, a member of the Presbytery Youth Leadership overseeing the event, or someone designated by the Presbytery Youth Leadership, is to ensure the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) whose children and/or youth were present at that function are informed (via email, phone or in-person) of the nature of the allegation within 48 hours. The names of all parties involved (both the accuser and the accused) are to be withheld and protected.

**Step 5:** The Clerk of the Presbytery is to be notified by the Presbytery Youth Leadership, or someone designated by the Presbytery Youth Leadership, within 48 hours of the allegation. The Clerk is then to contact the Ad-Interim Commission. The Ad-Interim Commission shall prepare a brief statement within 72 hours of their notification. The Ad-Interim Commission shall communicate to Presbytery that a media statement has been made; and that, if asked about the allegations by news reporters, the Moderator of the Ad-Interim Commission (or another member of the Ad-Interim Commission) shall act as spokesman, while all other officers and members of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery are to refrain from speaking to the media except to refer them to the designated spokesman.

**Step 6:** Elders shall ensure that all parties involved (accuser, accused, and any possible victims), as well as all members of the Church, are able to receive the necessary pastoral care.

**Step 7:** An investigation is to be carried out by Presbytery regarding the incident and follow-up steps which were taken. If the allegations are established to be true, a report should be given to Presbytery, outlining the incident, follow-up investigation, any further recommendations, and care that is being provided to the families involved. The nature of the offense is to be disclosed, but the identities of all minors are to be withheld and protect.

**Step 8:** Upon the conclusion of investigation:

- 1) If there is an acquittal of all allegations, Presbytery will seek to encourage the reconciliation of all parties involved and the acquitted will be restored to his or her standing in the Church.

- 2) If there is admittance of guilt by the accused party, or upon the finding of guilt in accordance with the Book of Discipline, church discipline should be carried out by the court of original jurisdiction and the appropriate censure applied for the purpose of upholding the honor of Christ, seeking the repentance of the sinning

brother or sister, bringing justice to the victim(s), and warning all in the visible church against such heinous sin.

**Step 9:** In the event of an allegation of abuse, Presbytery should review this Policy in order to ensure that Christ's lambs are being protected and to inform areas in which Presbytery leadership may grow more vigilant.



## **VI. APPENDIX A: STATE REQUIREMENTS FOR REPORTING ABUSE**

*Below are online resources from each state's (under the jurisdiction of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery) government outlining mandatory reporting requirements and giving points of contact for each state for reporting at the time of this writing. Links and information may be updated and should be checked for the most up-to-date information. Furthermore, [www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov) provides a centralized library for state laws and handbooks.*

### **Alabama**

<https://dhr.alabama.gov/child-protective-services/written-report-of-suspected-child-abuse-neglect-for-mandated-reporters/>

### **Florida**

<https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/abuse-hotline/>

### **Georgia**

<https://cps.dhs.ga.gov/Main/Default.aspx>

### **Illinois**

<https://www2.illinois.gov/dcfs/safekids/reporting/Pages/index.aspx>

### **Indiana**

<https://www.in.gov/dcs/contact-us/child-abuse-and-neglect-hotline/>

### **Kentucky**

<https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dCBS/dpp/cpb/Pages/default.aspx>

### **Michigan**

[https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-73971\\_7119\\_50648\\_44443-157836--,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-73971_7119_50648_44443-157836--,00.html)

### **North Carolina**

<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/social-services/child-welfare-services/child-protective-services/about-child-abuse-and-child-neglect>

### **Ohio**

<https://jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/reportchildabuseandneglect.stm>

### **South Carolina**

<https://dss.sc.gov/child-well-being/report-child-abuse-and-neglect/>

### **Tennessee**

<https://www.tn.gov/dcs/program-areas/child-safety/reporting/faqs.html>

## **VII. APPENDIX B: FORMS**

**CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRY WORKER APPLICATION  
GREAT LAKES – GULF PRESBYTERY (RPCNA)**

*All information on this application will be kept confidential. If you have any questions about the application, please call or email the Presbytery Youth Leadership overseeing the event.*

**I. Basic Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ SSN: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

How many years have you been a communicant member of the RPCNA? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you currently a communicant member of the RPCNA in good standing? \_\_\_\_\_

Current Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

**II. Experience**

Describe any relevant experience working with children and youth.

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List any involvement you have had in children and youth programs in the last 5 years.

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Program</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Contact (email/phone)</i>
---------------------	----------------	--------------	------------------------------

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

**III. Character References**

Applicants must include a letter of recommendation from a member of their session.

In addition, list two individuals who can attest to your character and, if possible, have observed your interactions with children and youth. References must be 18 or older and may not be members of your household.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Relationship</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Email</i>

**IV. History**

Have you ever been: *(circle one)*

- Arrested for any reason? Yes / No
- Convicted of, or pleaded no contest to, any crime involving minors? Yes / No
- Convicted of, or pleaded no contest to, a moving violation in the last 3 years? Yes / No

Is there any reason why you should not work with minors? Yes / No

\*If the answer to any of these questions is “Yes,” please explain on a separate sheet of paper.

**V. Affirmations**

Place your initials on each line.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have carefully read the GLGP Child Protection Policy.

\_\_\_\_\_ I recognize that the GLGP is relying upon the accuracy of the information contained herein. Accordingly, I attest and affirm that all the information that I have provided is completely true and correct, to the best of my knowledge.

\_\_\_\_\_ I authorize GLGP to contact any person or entity listed in this application and I further authorize any such person or entity to provide GLGP with information, opinions, and impressions relating to my background or qualifications.

\_\_\_\_\_ I further authorize GLGP to conduct a criminal background investigation and/or child abuse investigation if further investigation is deemed necessary.

\_\_\_\_\_ I voluntarily release GLGP and any such organization or entity listed herein by me from liability involving the communication of information relating to my background or qualifications.

**VI. Attachments**

Please remember to include the following with this application form:

1. A letter of recommendation from a member of your session.
2. A copy of your driver's license.
3. *(If necessary)* Explanation of answers.

\_\_\_\_\_

*Applicant Signature*

\_\_\_\_\_

*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_

*Parent/Guardian Signature (if applicant is under 18)*

\_\_\_\_\_

*Date*

*For Administrative Use Only*

Date Submitted and Received: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Background Check Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Background Check Results Received: \_\_\_\_\_

Application Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Application Denied \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Application Approval or Denial \_\_\_\_\_

**MEDICAL RELEASE FORM**  
**GREAT LAKES – GULF PRESBYTERY (RPCNA)**  
*THIS INFORMATION WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery Children and/or Youth Ministry Function

\_\_\_\_\_  
Child's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth

M F  
Sex

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's/Guardian's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's/Guardian's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's/Guardian's Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's/Guardian's Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

**Alternative Emergency Contacts**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Primary Emergency Contact

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secondary Emergency Contact

\_\_\_\_\_  
Primary Contact Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secondary Contact Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Primary Contact Street Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secondary Contact Street Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Primary Contact City, State, Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secondary Contact City, State, Zip

**Medical Information**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Hospital/Clinic Preference

\_\_\_\_\_  
Physician's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Physician's Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Insurance Company

\_\_\_\_\_  
Policy Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Allergies/Special Health Considerations

I authorize all medical and surgical treatment, X-ray, laboratory, anesthesia, and other medical and/or hospital procedures as may be performed or prescribed by the attending physician and/or paramedics for my child and waive my right to informed consent of treatment. This waiver applies only in the event that neither parent/guardian can be reached in the case of an emergency.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's/Guardian's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I give permission for my child to attend the Children and/or Youth Ministry Function of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery. I release the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery and individuals from liability in case of accident during activities related to the Children and/or Youth Ministry Function as long as normal safety procedures have been taken.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's/Guardian's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*For Administrative Use Only*

Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRELIMINARY DOCUMENTATION OF ALLEGED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT**

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Name of Complainant	Date of Report	Time of Report
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Address of Complainant	Telephone Number	Email Address
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**CHILD(REN) INFORMATION**

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Name of Alleged Victim	Date of Birth	Age	M / F Sex
------------------------	---------------	-----	--------------

---

Name of Alleged Victim’s Parent(s) or Guardian(s)

---

Address of Alleged Victim	Telephone Number
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---

Name of Alleged Victim	Date of Birth	Age	M / F Sex
------------------------	---------------	-----	--------------

---

Name of Alleged Victim’s Parent(s) or Guardian(s)

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Address of Alleged Victim	Telephone Number
---------------------------	------------------

**ALLEGED PERPETRATOR INFORMATION**

---

Name of Alleged Perpetrator	Date of Birth	Age	M / F Sex
-----------------------------	---------------	-----	--------------

---

Name of Alleged Perpetrator’s Parent(s) or Guardian(s) (if Alleged Perpetrator is a minor)

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Address of Alleged Perpetrator	Telephone Number
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## **GUIDANCE FOR CONGREGATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES GREAT LAKES-GULF PRESBYTERY (RPCNA)**

### **GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

*The following steps are recommendations for each congregation of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery:*

- 1) That each congregation of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery (RPCNA) have its own child protection policy that has been formally adopted by the Session of that congregation; and that if a Session does not already have a child protection policy in effect, it does so without unnecessary delay. To this end, this Committee has provided a sample policy (APPENDIX B) that may be adapted by individual congregations to fit their congregational circumstances and applicable state law (noting that the requirements for reporting incidents of abuse vary from state to state, see APPENDIX A).
- 2) That each member of the Session become familiar with the congregation's child protection policy; and that, to this end, a plan be enacted for acknowledgment of the child protection policy by new elders as well as periodic review by the Session as a whole.
- 3) That Sessions review their insurance policy (if applicable) in order to ensure that their congregational child protection policy satisfies their insurance company's requirements, including appropriate procedures and steps required in the event of an abuse allegation.
- 4) That Sessions communicate and make easily available their child protection policy to all members and adherents.
- 5) That Sessions seek to be above reproach by exemplifying transparency and communication, insofar as circumstances allow, in matters of abuse.

### **CHECKLIST: ELEMENTS FOR A CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

*The following is a brief outline of basic elements that should be considered in a congregational Child Protection Policy:*

**Introduction** – Articulating the purpose and biblical foundations of the policy

#### **Scope and Definitions**

- 1) Where, when, and to whom does this Child Protection Policy apply?
- 2) Definitions of Key Terms (e.g., child/youth/minor, child abuse)

**Policies and Procedures**

- 1) General principles for child protection (e.g., avoiding the appearance of evil, transparency, and communication)
- 2) Guidelines for the screening and selection of Approved Volunteers – including background checks and/or reference checks
- 3) Event policies (e.g., minimum number of volunteers, the Rule of Two, policy on the discipline of children, bathroom policy)
- 4) Reporting requirements (i.e., what is required to be reported to the elders, to civil authorities, and to the congregation). For assistance in this, see APPENDIX A below.
- 5) Responding to allegations of abuse (e.g., what is reportable, who has the duty to report, to whom, by when; who is responsible for contacting the civil authorities, insurance provider, relevant parents/guardians, and within what timeframe)

**Forms**

- 1) Applications to work with Children and Youth (possibly including a disclosure of relevant past or present besetting sin or legal proceedings showing a lack of compliance to the standards articulated in the congregation’s Child Protection Policy; acknowledgment of having read and understood the Child Protection Policy; and a waiver to procure a criminal background check)
- 2) Medical release form, if applicable

## **APPENDIX A: STATE REQUIREMENTS FOR REPORTING ABUSE**

*Below are online resources from each state's (under the jurisdiction of the Great Lake Gulf Presbytery) government outlining mandatory reporting requirements and giving points of contact for each state for reporting at the time of this writing; links and information may be updated and should be checked for the most up-to-date information. Furthermore, [www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov) provides a centralized library for state laws and handbooks.*

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### **Illinois**

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### **Indiana**

<https://www.in.gov/dcs/contact-us/child-abuse-and-neglect-hotline/>

### **Michigan**

[https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-73971\\_7119\\_50648\\_44443-157836--,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-73971_7119_50648_44443-157836--,00.html)

### **North Carolina**

<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/social-services/child-welfare-services/child-protective-services/about-child-abuse-and-child-neglect>

### **Ohio**

<https://jfs.ohio.gov/ocf/reportchildabuseandneglect.stm>

## **APPENDIX B: SAMPLE CONGREGATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

The following is intended to be a comprehensive, sample policy for congregations of the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery. This sample policy is offered to Sessions to make use of if and how they deem appropriate; and to amend, add or subtract elements of this specific sample policy in order to best fit the circumstances of Children and/or Youth Ministry that are relevant to their particular congregational setting.

Places where the congregation's name is to be inserted are written as CONGREGATION.



## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY CONGREGATION (RPCNA)

This congregation takes the protection of her covenant children very seriously. The Covenant of Baptism, noting that children are a possession of God entrusted to the care of their parents, requires watchful protection of children by the entire church.

*Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."*

*~ Matthew 19:14 ~*

# SAMPLE CONGREGATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION POLICY GREAT LAKES – GULF PRESBYTERY (RPCNA)

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## I. INTRODUCTION AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

### A. Purpose

These procedures and policies have been developed to ensure a safe, loving environment conducive to the protection and care of Christ's lambs during Children and Youth Ministry functions of CONGREGATION. While God alone is the sovereign protector and sustainer of life, He has ordained in His providence ordinary and secondary means by which His will is accomplished.

### B. Biblical Mandate

**Matthew 19:14** - Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."

**John 21:15** – So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs."

**Ephesians 5:3** – But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

### C. Confessional Foundation

**Confession of Faith I.6** – . . . There are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.

**Testimony XXIV.30** – Education of children is primarily the responsibility of parents, though they may delegate part of this responsibility to the church or other agencies . . .

**Directory for Church Government I.8** – Members should willingly consecrate their talents and gifts to the service of Christ. They should prayerfully consider accepting a position in the church when called to do so.

## II. SCOPE AND DEFINITIONS

### A. Where and when does this Policy apply?

This Policy applies to all functions formally sponsored by or under the jurisdiction of CONGREGATION in which adults and youth are working directly with children ages newborn up to 18 years of age.

If a reasonable exception needs to be made to this Policy due to the Lord's providence in hindering a particular policy or procedure from being followed by an Approved Volunteer during a particular Children or Youth Ministry function of CONGREGATION, such an exception should be communicated to the Session, prior to the said event. In the event that prior notification is not possible, said notification shall occur within twenty-four hours.

## B. Definitions of Key Terms

- 1) **Approved Volunteer** – An adult person whom the Session has approved to work with children and youth based on the information obtained in the screening process.
- 2) **Child Abuse** – Child neglect, child physical abuse, or child sexual abuse.
  - a) **Child Neglect** – Depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, safety, education, or medical care.
  - b) **Child Physical Abuse** – Any use of violence or threats of violence toward a minor with the imminent risk of serious physical harm or death.
  - c) **Child Sexual Abuse** – Any contact or interaction (visual, verbal, or emotional) between a minor and another person when the minor is being used for the sexual arousal, molestation, or gratification of the perpetrator or any other person.
- 3) **Children** – Particularly, minors from newborn to 12 years of age.
- 4) **Children and Youth** – All persons under the age of 18. Also called minors.
- 5) **Member** – A communicant member in good standing of CONGREGATION
- 6) **Youth** – Particularly, minors from 13 up to 18 years of age.
- 7) **Youth Volunteer** – Youth, age 13 to 17, who are approved under this policy to assist in the children’s ministry at CONGREGATION.

## III. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### A. Who may serve in Children and Youth Ministries

Approved Volunteers may serve in the various Children and Youth Ministries of CONGREGATION.

*An Approved Volunteer is one who:*

- 1) is an adult (18 years or older) communicant member in good standing of CONGREGATION, and has been a communicant member for at least six months (For policy on Youth desiring to assist volunteers, see also, Section III.A.5. below);
- 2) has submitted a completed Volunteer Application and Reference Letter to the Session; and,
- 3) completed a criminal background check. If a volunteer has not had a background check, the Session will provide funds for a background check through an independent third party (such as the local county sheriff, MinistrySafe, etc.) with the results of that report being then accessed by the Session Clerk. Background checks should be done in accordance with the frequency required by the congregation’s insurance policy.

4) Approved Volunteers are required to satisfy the training requirements to be determined by the Session (e.g., MinistrySafe videos).

5) Policy on Youth Volunteers:

a) If a youth desires to assist the Approved Volunteers, he or she shall be at least 13 years old and a communicant member in CONGREGATION; and,

b) The youth must also submit a Volunteer Application to the Session.

c) Youth assisting the Approved Volunteer must remain under the supervision of an adult Approved Volunteer at all times.

6) Volunteer applications, disclosure statements, and up-to-date background checks are to be kept in a locked file in the Church Office.

7) Applicants are to be notified of their approval or disapproval by the Session within two weeks of receiving a completed application and the results of their background checks.

## **B. Who may not serve in Children and Youth Ministries of CONGREGATION**

1) Definition

The Session will use the screening process defined in this report to evaluate the suitability of candidates to serve as Approved Volunteers. Those who have not completed the proper application procedure or have been deemed ineligible by the Session upon the completion of the application process, will not be permitted to serve in the Children and Youth ministry functions of CONGREGATION.

2) Determination of ineligibility

If anything is questionable or concerning in the application or background check, the Session will determine eligibility for the applicant on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, the sort of issues that would bar an applicant from serving with children and youth include: convictions for offenses involving minors, violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency, or other similar violations of God's Law, or failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form.

## **C. General Principles for Protection of Children and Youth**

1) These principles, policies, and procedures can be rightly applied not only to the protection of children and youth, but also for protecting adults with disabilities (e.g. mental or physical handicaps) which make them also particularly vulnerable.

2) Clear **communication** between the children, youth, volunteers, parents, and elders is vital to ensuring the ongoing protection and flourishing of Christ's lambs.



- 3) Volunteers, parents, and elders shall be **vigilant** at all times. The safety of children and youth is to be of the utmost priority.
- 4) **Confront and report** suspicious behavior.
- 5) **Visibility** is important. For example, windows should remain clear, if at all possible, so that the view is not obstructed. Similarly, when appropriate, doors shall remain open and shall be unlocked.
- 6) To increase **accountability**, multiple volunteers should be present. The more volunteers at a given place and time, the better.
- 7) **Approved Volunteers** shall strive to be above reproach in all their dealings with the children and youth, as well as the elders to whom they are accountable.
- 8) This Policy is to be **made available** to each household of CONGREGATION. Likewise, this policy should be posted visibly in the congregation's meeting place.
- 9) If a known sex offender attends worship, he or she must be under the **supervision** of at least one elder at all times, and shall not be permitted into areas used exclusively for Children and Youth Ministry. All parent(s) and/or guardian(s) within the congregation are to be notified without unnecessary delay of the presence of sex offenders if known by the Session.

**D. Policies/Procedures for Children and Youth Ministries of CONGREGATION**

**1) Policy on the required number of Approved Volunteers**

- a) There should always be a minimum of two unrelated (meaning not from the same household; e.g., not only a husband and wife) Approved Volunteers to supervise children. This is often referred to as the "Rule of Two."
- b) If one of the two adults must leave the room, they must first ensure that either a parent of one of the children or another Approved Volunteer is able to remain in the room.
- c) For groups of children and youth exceeding ten, another Approved Volunteer should be added for every 10 children/youth added. For example, if there are 11-20 children, there is a minimum requirement of three Approved Volunteers to be present; for groups of 21-30 children, there is a minimum requirement of four Approved Volunteers to be present. Youth Volunteers may assist the Approved Volunteers, but do not count toward the required number of Approved Volunteers at a particular Children's Ministry function of CONGREGATION.
- d) No adult should ever be alone with a child that is not their own behind closed doors.

e) Children should be supervised and not allowed to isolate themselves or in a group without the appropriate supervision.

**2) Procedures for overnight retreats and events**

a) Information on the event (e.g., location, time, agenda) is to be made available to the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) of the children and youth attending the ministry function.

b) Except for the case of a husband and his wife, males and females shall be lodged separately.

c) Unless the Approved Volunteer is the parent or guardian of a child or youth, he or she is not permitted to share the same sleeping space with that child or youth.

d) There is to be ample privacy provided for children and youth for changing clothes and carrying out hygienic activities (e.g. showering). Adults shall not change at the same time and shall not be present in the same room when children and youth are changing clothes and carrying out hygienic activities.

**3) Safety Procedures for children in the nursery**

a) No one other than female Approved Volunteers and parents/guardians may enter the nursery. If a child with special needs has a particular caregiver (whether a member of his or her family or otherwise), one of the Approved Volunteers should be informed to best accommodate that child. Unless the parent/guardian is an Approved Volunteer, they shall leave the nursery after dropping off/picking up the child.

b) Children who are dropped off should remain in the nursery or classroom except in the event of group activities, in the case of emergency or necessity, and when the child is picked up by his or her parent or guardian.

**4) Bathroom Policy for Children**

a) Children five years of age and younger should use a classroom bathroom if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, the child must be accompanied to the bathroom by a female Approved Volunteer. That Volunteer should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the child inside. The Volunteer should remain outside the bathroom and escort the child back to the classroom when the child is done.

b) For children over the age of five, if possible, at least one male Approved Volunteer should take at least two or more boys to the restroom, and at least one female Approved Volunteer should take at least two or more girls. The

volunteer should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom when the children are done.

c) If a child is taking longer than seems necessary or calls for help, an Approved Volunteer may assist, but is to leave all doors open.

**5) Policy regarding the discipline of children**

a) Volunteers shall not administer physical discipline (e.g., spanking). Volunteers may provide verbal correction as well as restriction from participation in particular activities as methods of discipline, but said correction and restrictions shall not be done in private.

b) If the child or youth persists in misbehavior beyond the ability of the Approved Volunteers, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the child should be contacted and asked to remove their child from the ministry function.

**6) Procedures regarding the discipline of children**

a) Appropriate interactions and expectations will reduce the incidence of behavior problems. Volunteers should examine the environment in order to see if the setting is conducive to the learning and obedience of children. Simple changes, such as a change in the room structure, can often help steer the children towards appropriate behavior.

b) State clearly, simply, and regularly to the children expectations for behavior.

c) Observe the child's behavior. What is causing the behavior? Are the child's needs being met? If so, is there a sin that needs to be addressed?

d) If inappropriate behavior occurs, restate behavior expectations and consequences for continued disobedience.

e) Faithfully follow through with appropriate consequences if misbehavior continues.

f) If inappropriate behavior persists, you may need to separate the child from the group or situation for a quick time-out. A general principle is that time-outs should be one minute long for each year of the child's age. A chair for a time-out should be placed in an unused area of the room, away from other children.

g) Communicate with the parents when they pick up their child if it was necessary to use a time-out or other discipline. Volunteers should encourage the parents as they continue to strive to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

**h)** Share the Gospel with the children after their discipline. Take this opportunity to share with the child in a way they can understand the fact that they are sinners in need of God's grace through Jesus Christ. Pray with them for forgiveness and a changed heart. Demonstrate to the child after the appropriate discipline the grace of restoration and reconciliation.

**i)** If the child's behavior does not change, have an adult find the parent. The parent should take the child for appropriate discipline. It is the discretion of the primary Approved Volunteer whether the child may return to the group.

**7) Policy regarding Volunteers providing counseling to children and youth**

There may be times when a volunteer will need to provide counseling to a child or youth. It is best for two or more approved adults to provide counsel, but if that is not possible, counseling should always be done in an environment with clear visibility (e.g. outdoors or somewhere with the doors open). When counseling a child or youth, the Approved Volunteer should maintain discretionary confidence whenever appropriate. When in doubt, the Approved Volunteer should inform the parent of that youth. Counselors shall be mindful of areas of discussion which are subject to state mandatory reporting laws.

**8) Policy on movies and entertainment**

**a)** Volunteers will use discernment when viewing movies with children and youth, and will obtain approval from the Session.

**b)** Words, thoughts, and actions should be in conformity with God's Law (see *Larger Catechism* 112-113, 138-139, and 144-145). Volunteers are to be careful concerning the activities in which they partake, and about which they discuss, including movies, social media, music, books, and games.

**9) Policy on the use of humor**

Humor is a useful tool in Children and Youth Ministry. It can be used as to make connections, engage the minds of children and youth, and build relationships. Volunteers, children, and youth should avoid all humor that is degrading, sexual in nature, or involves the use of harsh sarcasm. None of this is helpful for creating an environment of godliness and flourishing (see Ephesians 4:29, 5:4).

**10) Sick Child Policy**

**a)** Since we desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children and youth of CONGREGATION, parent(s) and guardian(s) are encouraged to be considerate of others and not to have their children participate if they have common symptoms of a contagious illness (e.g., fever, vomiting, diarrhea).

**b)** Children and youth who are observed by volunteers to be ill will be separated to the extent possible, and the parent(s) or guardian(s) will be contacted to request that the child be picked up immediately.

**11) Child Medication Policy**

**a)** Generally, volunteers are not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children and youth under our care. Children and youth are not permitted to administer any medications to themselves or others, or share medications with others. Rather, medications should be administered by the child's or youth's own parent or guardian whenever possible. For exceptional circumstances, see below.

**b)** Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted by parent(s) and/or guardian(s) of children and youth with potentially life-threatening conditions (e.g. asthma or severe allergic reactions). The parent(s) and/or guardian(s) will write an action plan to have on file with the Session.

**c)** Parent(s)/guardian(s) must provide written permission for a designated Approved Volunteer to administer medication before leaving the child in the care of the Approved Volunteers. Prescription medication should be labeled with the child's name; date the prescription was filled; name and contact information of the prescribing health professional; expiration date; medical need; instructions for administration, storage, and disposal; and name and strength of the medication. Labeled medications (over-the-counter) should be brought by the parent/guardian in the original container. The label should include the child's name, dosage, relevant warnings as well as specific, legible instructions for administration, storage, and disposal.

**12) Policy on Accidental Injuries**

In the event a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps shall be followed:

**a)** For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, volunteers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from the function.

**b)** For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) will immediately be summoned by an Approved Volunteer. If necessary, an ambulance will be called. The Session will be notified of the event.

**c)** For injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional, the Session will complete an incident report pursuant to the requirements of the congregation's Insurance Policy.

**13) Policy on Approved Volunteers providing transportation during Children and Youth Ministry Functions of CONGREGATION**

- a) When driving, all traffic laws and seat belt rules are to be obeyed. All drivers shall be licensed and insured.
- b) Parental permission and the approval of the Session must be obtained before transporting a child to any location.
- c) Transportation shall be in groups of three or more, with at least one Approved Volunteer in each vehicle.

**14) Volunteer Training Requirements**

- a) All Approved Volunteers are to review the Child Protection Policy.
- b) The Session is at liberty to stipulate further training requirements for any particular event under their oversight (e.g. Ministry Safe training videos).

**E. Counsel on communicating CONGREGATION’s Child Protection Policy**

- 1) This Policy is to be made available to all households under the jurisdiction of the Session of CONGREGATION.
- 2) This Policy is to be available in central gathering locations for Children and Youth Ministry functions of CONGREGATION.
- 3) This Policy is to be communicated alongside the informational materials distributed for each upcoming Children and Youth Ministry function of CONGREGATION.

**IV. STEPS FOR RESPONDING TO SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR**

There are times when behavior is exhibited that does not meet the legal definition of child abuse (steps for responding to and reporting allegations of child abuse are provided in Section V below), yet an individual’s behavior causes an instinctual concern and raises the suspicion of possibly. Inappropriate and/or predatorial behavior. It is good and loving that we should seek to restrain evil and warn our neighbor: “Sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it” (Genesis 4:7). Whereas Section V (see below) is reactive, Section IV is proactive. If a volunteer, elder, child, or youth is seen exhibiting suspicious behavior, the following steps may be taken according to reasonable precaution and Christian prudence.

**Step 1:** If possible, confront the individual as soon as suspicious or problematic behavior is observed; but at a minimum, report any such suspicious or problematic behavior to an elder (Ephesians 5:3 “There must not be even a hint of sexual immorality ...”).

**Step 2:** If dealing with a minor (whether the minor is the offender or the offended), the pastor shall speak to the child’s parent(s) or guardian to inform them of what took place.

**Step 3:** Report any suspicious or problematic behavior to a member of the Session of CONGREGATION, so that there may be both pastoral care and particular vigilance among the overseers of Christ's flock.

**Step 4:** If deemed prudent, one or more elders shall be assigned to be vigilant over the person exhibiting suspicious behavior. This will ensure the safety of Christ's lambs if the person is indeed behaving in a possibly predatorial manner, or will demonstrate the individual to be above reproach.

**Step 5:** If needed, elders shall further restrict the circumstances of the Children and Youth Ministry functions (e.g., not permitting individuals to go to particular areas of the facility).

**Step 6:** If the elders overseeing the person exhibiting suspicious behavior confirm the possibility of that person demonstrating early signs of predatorial behavior, they shall confront that individual and provide counseling.

**Step 7:** If suspicious behavior persists, the elders' first duty is the protection of Christ's lambs. At the discretion of the elders, the person exhibiting suspicious behavior may be removed from their participation in Children and Youth Ministry, but may return upon the approval of the Session.

## V. STEPS FOR RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

If there is an allegation of child abuse or an allegation involving a child is raised, the following Steps are to be carefully, yet swiftly, taken.

**Step 1:** The following should be immediately contacted:

- 1) The local authorities;
- 2) The Session shall ensure that the parent(s) or guardian(s) of all minors involved (accuser and/or accused) are contacted;
- 3) The entire Session of CONGREGATION shall be informed.
- 4) *Note*, The elders and all parties involved (accuser, accused, volunteers, and elders) are to work in full cooperation with civil authorities according to their proper sphere, as well as with ecclesiastical authorities according to their proper sphere. It is neither the role nor jurisdiction of Session to assume the role of a criminal investigation. All parties involved are to be mindful that one's duty before the Lord, as required in both the fifth and ninth commandments, is to speak the truth at every opportunity without equivocation.

**Step 2:** The Session shall contact the insurance provider within 24 hours and document all allegations, reports written, statements made to officials, and to whom they were made, according to the requirements of the insurance company. Furthermore, this clear and transparent documentation will aid the civil authorities in their duties; as well as help any ecclesiastical procedures which will ensue (e.g., investigation, prosecution, censure). The

more efficient these procedures are, the more time undershepherds will have to tend to the flock of Christ.

**Step 3:** All parent(s) and/or guardian(s) whose children were at the ministry function of CONGREGATION shall be notified regarding the allegation within 48 hours. If the accused and/or accuser are minors, the nature of the allegation is to be made known, but the identities of minor(s) are to be withheld and protected.

**Step 4:** The Session shall notify the Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery of the nature of the allegation within 48 hours. If the accused and/or accuser are minors, the nature of the allegation is to be made known, but the identities of minor(s) are to be withheld and protected.

**Step 5:** For the sake of being above reproach in all matters, as well as for the protection of Christ's lambs, if a volunteer is accused of abuse, he or she should immediately be given a leave of absence by the Session from his or her position until the conclusion of the investigation. Any who are alleged of causing harm are to be removed from group activities of CONGREGATION involving minors until the conclusion of the investigation, and approval to return is given by the Session.

1) If volunteers or elders are not appropriately following through with these "Steps for Responding to Allegations of Abuse," those volunteers and elders should be given a leave of absence by the Session from the function of their position as it relates to the Children and Youth Ministry. If the Session is not following through with these Steps, then Presbytery should be petitioned to assume original jurisdiction (usually through the formation of an investigative committee or judicial commission).

2) This leave of absence is not to be understood as formal censure.

**Step 6:** The Session shall prepare a brief statement within 72 hours, which should be communicated to the Presbytery as well, if asked about the allegations by news reporters, with the Moderator of the Session (or another elder on the Session) being appointed as spokesman. All other officers and members of the congregation are to refrain from speaking to the media.

**Step 7:** Elders shall ensure that all parties involved (accuser, accused, and any possible victims), as well as all members of CONGREGATION, are able to receive pastoral care.

**Step 8:** An investigation is to be carried out by the Session. At the conclusion of such investigation, a report should be given to the congregation at a specially-called congregational meeting, as well as a report given to the Presbytery, outlining the incident, follow-up investigation, any further recommendations, and care being provided to the congregation. The nature of the offense is to be disclosed, but the identities of all minors are to be withheld.



**Step 9:** Upon conclusion of the investigation:

1) If there is an acquittal of all allegations, the Session will seek to encourage the reconciliation of all parties involved and the acquitted will be restored to his or her standing in the Church.

2) If there is an admittance of guilt by the accused party, or upon the finding of guilt in accordance with the Book of Discipline, church discipline should be carried out by the court of original jurisdiction and the appropriate censure applied for the purpose of upholding the honor of Christ, seeking the repentance of the sinning brother or sister, bringing justice to the victim(s), and warning all in the visible church against such heinous sin.

**Step 10:** In the event of an allegation of abuse, the Session of CONGREGATION should review this Policy to ensure that Christ's lambs are being protected and to inform areas in which we may grow more vigilant.

## **VI. FORMS (See Below)**

**CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRY VOLUNTEER APPLICATION  
CONGREGATION (RPCNA)**

*All information on this application will be kept confidential.  
If you have any questions about the application, please call or email the Session.*

**I. Basic Information**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ SSN: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

How many years have you been a communicant member of CONGREGATION? \_\_\_\_\_

**II. Experience**

Describe any relevant experience working with children and youth.

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List any involvement you have had in children and youth programs in the last 5 years.

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Program</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Contact (email/phone)</i>
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### III. Character References

List two individuals who can attest to your character and, if possible, have observed your interactions with children and youth. References must be 18 or older, and may not be members of your household or Session.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Relationship</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Email</i>
<hr/>			
<hr/>			

### IV. History

Have you ever been: *(circle one)*

- Arrested for any reason? Yes / No
- Convicted of, or pleaded no contest to, any crime involving minors? Yes / No
- Convicted of, or pleaded no contest to, a moving violation in the last 3 years? Yes / No

Is there any reason why you should not work with minors? Yes / No

\*If the answer to any of these questions is “Yes,” please explain on a separate sheet of paper.

### V. Affirmations

Place your initials on each line.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have carefully read the CONGREGATION Child Protection Policy.

\_\_\_\_\_ I recognize that the Session of CONGREGATION is relying upon the accuracy of the information contained herein. Accordingly, I attest and affirm that all the information that I have provided is completely true and correct, to the best of my knowledge.

\_\_\_\_\_ I authorize the Session of CONGREGATION to contact any person or entity listed in this application and I further authorize any such person or entity to provide the Session of CONGREGATION with information, opinions, and impressions relating to my background or qualifications.

\_\_\_\_\_ I further authorize the Session of CONGREGATION to conduct a criminal background investigation and/or child abuse investigation if further investigation is deemed necessary.

\_\_\_\_\_ I voluntarily release CONGREGATION and any such organization or entity listed herein by me from liability involving the communication of information relating to my background or qualifications.

**VI. Attachments**

Please remember to include the following with this application form:

1. A copy of your driver’s license.
2. *(If necessary)* Explanation of answers.

\_\_\_\_\_

*Applicant Signature*

\_\_\_\_\_

*Date*

\_\_\_\_\_

*Parent/Guardian Signature (if applicant is under 18)*

\_\_\_\_\_

*Date*

*For Administrative Use Only*

Date Submitted and Received: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Background Check Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Background Check Results Received: \_\_\_\_\_

Application Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Application Denied \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Application Approval or Denial \_\_\_\_\_

**MEDICAL RELEASE FORM**  
**CONGREGATION (RPCNA)**  
*THIS INFORMATION WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Children and/or Youth Ministry Function of CONGREGATION

\_\_\_\_\_  
Child's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth

M F  
Sex

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's/Guardian's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's/Guardian's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's/Guardian's Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's/Guardian's Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

**Alternative Emergency Contacts**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Primary Emergency Contact

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secondary Emergency Contact

\_\_\_\_\_  
Primary Contact Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secondary Contact Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Primary Contact Street Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secondary Contact Street Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Primary Contact City, State, Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secondary Contact City, State, Zip

**Medical Information**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Hospital/Clinic Preference

\_\_\_\_\_  
Physician's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Physician's Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Insurance Company

\_\_\_\_\_  
Policy Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Allergies/Special Health Considerations

I authorize all medical and surgical treatment, X-ray, laboratory, anesthesia, and other medical and/or hospital procedures as may be performed or prescribed by the attending physician and/or paramedics for my child and waive my right to informed consent of treatment. This waiver applies only in the event that neither parent/guardian can be reached in the case of an emergency.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's/Guardian's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I give permission for my child to attend the Children and/or Youth Ministry Function of CONGREGATION. I release CONGREGATION and individuals from liability in case of an accident during activities related to the Children and/or Youth Ministry Function as long as normal safety procedures have been taken.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's/Guardian's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*For Administrative Use Only*

Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_