



**providenceroad**  
CHURCH OF CHRIST fearlessly following Jesus

# Safechurch

Creating a safe environment  
for vulnerable individuals

## EMPLOYEE & VOLUNTEER WORKER MANUAL

Version 5

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# I. REPORTING POLICY

## PROVIDENCE ROAD CHURCH OF CHRIST ABUSE PREVENTION REPORTING POLICY

It is the policy of this church to report all instances of suspected abuse of a vulnerable individual by anyone in the church including all employee and volunteer workers to the appropriate authorities. Any person having cause to suspect that a vulnerable individual is abused or neglected shall make report in accordance with North Carolina law and this procedure.

1. An oral report shall be made immediately upon forming a suspicion or learning of the abuse or neglect.

To report suspected abuse or neglect of a *juvenile* call:

**Mecklenburg County Child Protective Services 980-314-3577**

To report suspected abuse or neglect of a *vulnerable adult* call:

**Mecklenburg County Adult Protective Services 704-336-2273**

2. All reports should include as much information as is known about the vulnerable individual such as the person's name and address, the name of person(s) responsible for his or her care, and any other pertinent information.
3. The elder leading the Abuse Response Team (A.R.T.) must immediately be informed as to the nature of the suspicion and the details of the report made to authorities.
4. A vulnerable individual is defined as a juvenile (one under age 18 or an adult whom has mental or physical disabilities).

## **A. Compliance with North Carolina General Statute**

The church will fully comply with the following NC statute:

### **§ 7B-301. Duty to report abuse, neglect, dependency, or death due to maltreatment.**

(a) Any person or institution who has cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent, as defined by G.S. 7B-101, or has died as the result of maltreatment, shall report the case of that juvenile to the director of the department of social services in the county where the juvenile resides or is found. The report may be made orally, by telephone, or in writing. The report shall include information as is known to the person making it including the name and address of the juvenile; the name and address of the juvenile's parent, guardian, or caretaker; the age of the juvenile; the names and ages of other juveniles in the home; the present whereabouts of the juvenile if not at the home address; the nature and extent of any injury or condition resulting from abuse, neglect, or dependency; and any other information which the person making the report believes might be helpful in establishing the need for protective services or court intervention. If the report is made orally or by telephone, the person making the report shall give the person's name, address, and telephone number. Refusal of the person making the report to give a name shall not preclude the department's assessment of the alleged abuse, neglect, dependency, or death as a result of maltreatment.

(b) Any person or institution who knowingly or wantonly fails to report the case of a juvenile as required by subsection (a) of this section, or who knowingly or wantonly prevents another person from making a report as required by subsection (a) of this section, is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

## **B. Incident of Abuse**

Should an incident of abuse be suspected or confirmed *at PRCOC*, the following steps must be taken immediately:

1. The person who observes, is made aware of, or has reason to suspect an incident must inform an elder or minister.
2. The elder or minister receiving the initial report is LEGALLY responsible for confirming the facts reported, gathering any additional information available (such as home addresses) and making report to Child or Adult Protective Services. Protective Services will determine the source of the alleged abuse, and take appropriate action to ensure the safety of the victim.
3. On the same day that the case is first reported verbally to Protective Services, the information must also be documented on an Incident Report Form. These forms are available in the wall file holder outside of the interior door to the church office. Copies of this form must be made available to Protective Services, the church's insurance provider, and law enforcement. Be sure to keep a copy.
4. The A.R.T. elder will convene the A.R.T. Membership which includes:
  - a. The ART Team Leader
  - b. The Executive Minister or Administrative Minister
  - c. The individual(s) who report the abuse
  - d. Our designated public spokesperson (Minister of the Word if available; Executive Minister or Administrative Minister if he is not).
  - e. If the victim is a member, then the victim's family's elder is included.
  - f. If the accused is a member, then the accused's family's elder is included.
  - g. If the accused is an employee, then the Elder Oversight Committee (EOC) would be included.
  - h. Other specialists may be called in to help; for instance, a lawyer or a public relations person.
5. The A.R.T elder will inform the EOC of the incident and keep them informed throughout the process.
6. Any accused employee will be suspended from the performance of duties involving vulnerable individuals until the investigation has been completed. This suspension may be either with pay or without pay.
7. The church will take action on all reported suspicions and will maintain strict confidentiality.

8. The A.R.T. will inform the victim and the victim's family of the steps that are being taken by the church.
9. If there is strong evidence to suggest that an employee of PRCOC has abused a vulnerable individual, the EOC will address the issue according to Personnel Policy.
10. If there is strong evidence to suggest that a volunteer of PRCOC has abused a vulnerable individual, a minister supervising the volunteer must immediately suspend or dismiss the volunteer from any and all positions held.
11. In instances of inconclusive evidence, the A.R.T. must take action as warranted by the evidence available.
12. The A.R.T. will keep the congregation informed of the investigation (with respect to matters which are not confidential), so that the congregation may be informed about the investigation from within the church rather than from news media.
13. The A.R.T. will promptly engage the Crisis Management Communications Team to handle internal and external communications. Messages should emphasize the church's position against abuse, its concern for the victim and the extensive steps the church is taking to address the present occurrence and plans to reduce risks and provide a safe environment for all vulnerable individuals.
14. The A.R.T. should also immediately contact the church's insurance company and its attorney to report the incident.

## **II. EMPLOYEE and VOLUNTEER WORKER APPROVAL**

### **A. Employee - Specific Approval Process**

1. All paid employees will be required to complete and sign an Application for Employment.
2. A staff member or designated volunteer must contact and verify an applicant's personal references and any prior employers.
3. An individual that has been indicted or convicted of sexual misconduct or child abuse will not be considered for employment.
4. Criminal background checks must be performed on each employee and volunteer prior to their start date and every three (3) years thereafter. If an employee's attendance lapses for more than six (6) months, a new background check should be performed upon his or her return to work.
5. Church staff will permanently maintain a separate personnel file for each paid employee.

### **B. Volunteer - Specific Approval Process**

1. A volunteer will be required to complete and sign a volunteer worker enrollment form specifically designed for volunteers who will be working with vulnerable individuals. Chaperones on trips away from the PRCOC campus are volunteer workers subject to this enrollment process.
2. No volunteer will be allowed to work with minors until they have regularly attended the church for a minimum of 6 months. Those who have attended for less than 6 months may serve as an occasional volunteer worker (see #7). If the applicant has not placed membership with the church, the minister he or she will be serving under will discuss membership with the applicant and determine if they are eligible to proceed with the approval process.
3. The church member who receives the application must verify and document the applicant's personal references. Any prior church service references should also be documented.
4. Any prospective volunteer worker that has prior incidents of sexual misconduct or child abuse will not be allowed to serve in any capacity where they would have contact with vulnerable individuals.

5. Criminal background checks will be performed on each new volunteer worker. If a worker's attendance lapses for more than 6 months, a new application and background check will be required. Only one elder will receive the background information.
6. Standard interview questions will be developed and used in personal interviews with volunteer worker applicants after reviewing the applications and verifying references. The date and name of the interviewer should be documented.
7. Adults who volunteer occasionally must complete and sign the Volunteer Enrollment form. Generally, no criminal records check will be required. (Examples of an occasional volunteer worker would be someone who serves cookies at VBS annually or someone who is a guest storyteller in a class.) These volunteers will not be allowed, under any circumstances, to be alone while supervising minors.
8. Teenagers under 18 who help in the children and youth programs must complete and sign a volunteer enrollment form. Generally, no criminal records checks will be required. Teen volunteers may also be asked to participate in a brief personal interview and attend periodic training.

### **C. Adequate Supervision**

1. Workers (paid or unpaid) must maintain proper supervision of children, teens and vulnerable individuals. Litigation often results from "a failure to properly supervise." In the aftermath of an accident or incident, legal representatives look for instances of negligence. If other types of negligence cannot be found, the legal representative will attempt to substantiate inadequate supervision. Instances where improper or inadequate supervision will likely be alleged are:
  - On the playground
  - During Bible classes or tutoring (on any day offered)
  - On church outings
  - During sporting events
  - On youth trips
  - In classrooms
  - Counselling, formal and informal
2. In order to provide adequate supervision implement the following:
  - a. Determine the number of volunteers needed to provide adequate supervision prior to each event.
  - b. Complete the critical step of identifying the proper number *and location* of supervisors on playgrounds and outings and during events.
  - c. Consider the level of maturity and experience of each supervisory volunteer in order to minimize risks to vulnerable individuals.
  - d. Provide volunteers with instructions about where, when, and how they are to supervise.

### **D. Worker Training**

1. Each new volunteer worker will be provided with the legal definition of child abuse and with the church policy on the reporting of vulnerable person abuse.
2. New volunteer workers will also be asked to view a child abuse prevention video and read the written materials available on this subject to help them identify the signs of child abuse.
3. Children's Ministry volunteer workers will be given a copy of the classroom discipline policy, and the Children's Minister or Coordinator will review this with each worker.

4. Workers should receive annual training on the risks and prevention of child/vulnerable person abuse.
5. Training and equipping workshops will be offered periodically for workers to enhance their skills in working with children and to communicate any policy or procedural changes.

**E. Worker Supervision**

1. The church will adopt the “2 deep rule” when workers are interacting with vulnerable individuals. This means that two adults will be present when at all possible. Any one-on-one interactions must be highly visible at all times.
2. When assigning adult workers to supervise groups of children, the minister responsible should consider:
  - a. The number of children likely to be present
  - b. The age of the children
  - c. The location where volunteers will supervise
  - d. The special needs of any children in the group
3. To reduce the possibility of kidnapping, workers must use the Child Identification System to ensure that the individual who picks up the child (age 0 through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade) is authorized to do so.
4. Each classroom will display a copy of the PRCOC Classroom Discipline Policy for workers to follow.
5. Leaders should obtain parental permission forms for each vulnerable individual involved in church-sponsored programs or activities and whenever an adult might be spending time alone with a child.
6. Church staff will supervise activities with vulnerable individuals on an ongoing basis or make unannounced visits from time to time.
7. Only ministers or elders should hold private counseling sessions with minors. Whenever possible, the minister or elder should obtain parental permission prior to meeting privately with a minor. At a minimum, the “2 deep rule” should be used, and the meeting should be held in a visible location.
8. The church will maintain windows in classrooms or on classroom doors.

### III. WORKER CODE OF ETHICS AND RULES

While you are acting in your capacity as an employee or volunteer for PRCOC, the following rules shall apply:

1. Employees and volunteers shall not abuse children, youth or vulnerable individuals. This includes:
  - a. Any direct observations or evidence of sexual activity.
  - b. Any display or demonstration of sexual abuse, insinuation of abuse or evidence of abusive conduct.
  - c. Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any adult and a minor or vulnerable individual.
  - d. Sexual harassment or sexual activity of any kind between minors.
  - e. Infliction of bodily injury or physically abusive behavior.
  - f. Physical neglect, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of PRCOC.
  - g. Mental or emotional injury.
  - h. The presence or possession of obscene or pornographic materials at any function of PRCOC.
  - i. The presence, possession, or being under the influence of any illegal drugs at any function of PRCOC.
  - j. The consumption of or being under the influence of alcohol while leading or participating in a children's or youth function at PRCOC.
2. Employees and volunteers will supervise appropriately by having two adults present whenever possible and by positioning themselves to provide visibility to others if alone.
3. Employees and volunteers should not be in a car alone with a vulnerable individual without explicit permission from the individual's parent, guardian, or caregiver.
4. Smoking or using tobacco products in the presence of children or youth is prohibited.
5. Employees and volunteers must treat minors of all races, religions, and cultures with respect.
6. Employees and volunteers shall not use or tolerate profanity in the presence of minors.
7. Employees and volunteers will act as positive role models for minors by maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy and maturity.
8. Employees and volunteers will be expected to act and react with Christian love and understanding in all situations.
9. North Carolina state law requires that *all citizens* report any suspected abuse or neglect of a minor up to age 18 or vulnerable adult to the North Carolina Department of Child (or Adult) Protective Services.

I understand that as an employee or volunteer for PRCOC, I will be subject to a background check including criminal history.

I also understand that any violation of this code may be grounds for removal as an employee or volunteer.

Name (Signature): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_