

**SAFE BOUNDARIES POLICY**

**PREAMBLE**

... As [God] who called you is holy,  
be holy yourselves in all your conduct;  
... Tend the flock of God that is in your charge, ...  
not under compulsion but willingly, ...  
not for sordid gain but eagerly. ...  
Do not lord it over those in your charge,  
but be examples to the flock.

... You know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.  
1 Peter 1:15; 5:2-3; James 3:1, NRSV

The ethical and responsible conduct of all who minister in the name of Jesus Christ is of vital importance to the church because through these representatives an understanding of God and the gospel's good news is conveyed. "Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world" (*Book of Order*, G-2.0104).

The basic principles guiding this policy are as follows:

- A. Professional misconduct is a violation of the rule that those who are called to leadership roles in the church are called upon to exercise integrity, sensitivity, and caring in a trust relationship. Professional misconduct breaks the covenant to act in the best interests of those whom the church serves.
- B. Sexual misconduct is a misuse of authority and power that breaches Christian ethical principles by misusing a trust relationship to gain advantage over another for personal pleasure in an abusive, exploitative, and unjust manner. If the person being served initiates or invites sexual content in the relationship, it is the responsibility of the person providing service to maintain the appropriate role and prohibit a sexual relationship.
- C. Sexual misconduct is often perpetrated against persons who are less able to protect themselves, including children. It is antithetical to the gospel call to work as God's servant in the struggle to bring wholeness to a broken world, and violates the mandate to protect children and others from harm.
- D. Children and youth are vulnerable to more than the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse by adults or peers. Physical and emotional abuse or neglect are also grievous violations of the scriptural command to "Tend the flock of God that is in your charge." The church must be safe for children before it can offer *shalom* to all persons entrusted to its care.

**I. APPLICABILITY**

- A. **Scope.** Except as otherwise expressly provided, this policy governs all activities, proceedings, meetings, retreats, worship services and other functions of any kind carried on by the Presbytery of Chicago or on Presbytery property. This policy is implemented by two interrelated programs: the True North program, administered by the True North Response Team, and the Safe Space Standards.

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- B. Persons Governed by Policy.** This policy governs all staff and volunteers who are employed by or engaged in any activity or function carried on by the Presbytery of Chicago. This policy also governs teaching elders who are members of the Presbytery of Chicago, commissioned local pastors serving under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery of Chicago, certified Christian educators, certified associate Christian educators, and ministerial inquirers and candidates. In addition, the Safe Space Standards apply to all persons or groups participating in Presbytery of Chicago events.
- C. Congregations in the Presbytery of Chicago.** This policy shall not apply to the activities and functions carried on by congregations in the Presbytery, except to the extent that such activities or functions are engaged in by a person who is governed by the policy as provided in Subsection B, above. Sessions are required by the Book of Order to adopt and implement sexual misconduct and child protection policies that apply to persons and activities within their congregations (G-3.0106).

## II. DEFINITIONS

- A. Accused.** The person against whom an accusation of sexual misconduct or child abuse or neglect is being made.
- B. Accuser.** The person claiming knowledge of sexual misconduct or child abuse or neglect by a person covered by this policy. The accuser may or may not be the victim of the alleged sexual misconduct, child abuse or neglect.
- C. Activity.** A program or event sponsored by or under the control of the Presbytery of Chicago.
- D. Child.** Any person under the age of eighteen years.
- E. Emotional Abuse.** Unusually harsh, offensive or insensitive conduct toward another person that causes or is likely to cause emotional distress.
- F. Mandated Reporter.** Any person required by law to report to the appropriate state agency all suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect that come to his or her attention
- G. Misuse of Technology.** The use of technology that results in the harassing or abusing of any person.
- H. Neglect.** The failure of a parent or responsible caretaker to provide adequate supervision, food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education or other basic necessity to a child or an adult without the mental capacity to consent.
- I. Parent.** A parent or legal guardian of a child who is participating in an activity.
- J. Physical Abuse.** Any act that results in non-accidental injury to another or involves harmful, potentially harmful or offensive touching of another.
- K. Presbytery of Chicago or Presbytery.** A mid-council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); for purposes of this policy, the term 'Presbytery of Chicago' shall include any corporation

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controlled by the Presbytery of Chicago through which the Presbytery of Chicago employs staff and carries on its programs and activities.

- L. Presbytery Property.** Property owned or controlled by the Presbytery.
- M. Response.** The action taken by the appropriate Presbytery of Chicago staff or entity when a report of sexual misconduct or child abuse or neglect is received.
- N. Sexual Abuse.** Any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to:
  - 1. any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without the mental capacity to consent; or
  - 2. any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of office or position (D-10.0401c).
- O. Sexual Harassment.** Conduct that includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, tormenting based on gender, and other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature. In particular, sexual harassment occurs if:
  - 1. submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or of his or her participation in Presbytery of Chicago activities;
  - 2. submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is the basis for employment decisions or other Presbytery of Chicago-related decisions affecting that individual;
  - 3. such conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with an individual's work performance or participation in Presbytery of Chicago activities by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment; and/or
  - 4. such conduct, regardless of its intention, is objected to by the person at whom it is directed.
- P. Sexual Misconduct.** Any sexual abuse of children or adults and/or any sexual harassment or other conduct that violates the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) *Standards of Ethical Conduct* (1998).
- Q. Social Media.** Social media are web-based and mobile technologies, that allow people to share, express themselves and interact with one another.
- R. Staff Member or Employee.** A person employed by or contracted with the Presbytery of Chicago.
- S. Victim.** A person who has allegedly suffered an act of sexual misconduct or physical or emotional abuse, or, a child or an adult without mental capacity to consent who has allegedly suffered neglect.
- T. Volunteer.** A person who provides services for the Presbytery and/or its entities and receives no benefit or remuneration.

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- U. Volunteer Congregation Member.** A member of a congregation, non-ordained employee of a congregation, or other congregational participant in a Presbytery of Chicago event or activity whose role may include leadership or representation of a congregation or its participant members.

### **III. TRUE NORTH PROGRAM**

- A. Purpose.** The purpose of the Presbytery of Chicago's True North Program, through the leadership of the True North Response Team, is to provide an effective program of prevention relating to sexual misconduct, ethical misconduct and child protection among participants in Presbytery of Chicago events and programs.

#### **B. The True North Response Team**

- 1. Formation.** The True North Response Team is appointed by and accountable to the Presbytery of Chicago's Commission on Ministry.
- 2. Membership.**
  - a. The Response Team shall consist of nine to twelve persons who are Presbyterian teaching or ruling elders, or others with specialized training or credentials appropriate to the role of the Response Team. Members shall serve for two three year terms. No person who has served a full six years shall be re-appointed until one full year has elapsed.
  - b. The Commission on Ministry shall appoint a moderator, a secretary and other officers as needed from among True North members.
- 3. Responsibilities.**
  - a. The Response Team shall coordinate the program of ongoing education and training of persons covered by the True North Program and the provision of resources for the use of individual congregations.
  - b. The Response Team shall develop and maintain a list of recommended supportive services such as counseling and spiritual directors, for those who are affected by sexual misconduct.
  - c. The Response Team shall provide training as needed on child protection and/or the Safe Space Standards.

### **IV. SAFE SPACE STANDARDS**

- A. Purpose.** Child abuse and neglect is a serious problem in our society and, unfortunately, within the Christian community. As people entrusted with the lives of children, we believe that we have a profound moral and legal obligation to prevent abuse and neglect from happening to and promote the health and safety of the children who participate in activities of the Presbytery of Chicago.

**B. Safe Space Standards**

- 1. Two-deep leadership.** At least two adults are required to provide leadership for all trips and outings. Appropriate adult leadership must be present for all overnight activities; coed overnight activities require male and female leadership, both of whom must be adults, and must have completed all required training and screening.
- 2. Adult-Child Ratios.** In addition to having a minimum of two adult leaders for each event, the following ratios of adults to children shall be maintained:

<u>Youth Age</u>	<u>Adult</u>	<u>Overnight Events</u>	<u>Day Events</u>
4-5 years	1	5 children	6 children
6 – 8 years	1	6 children	8 children
9 – 14 years	1	8 children	10 children
15 – 18 years	1	10 children	10 children

- 3. Two-Years-Older.** All staff and other leadership must be at least 24 months older than the oldest child participating in the activity.
- 4. No one-on-one contact.** One-on-one contact between adults and children is not permitted. In situations that require personal conferences, such as pastoral counseling, the meeting is to be conducted in view of other adults and children.
- 5. Separate accommodations.** When engaged in overnight activities, adult supervision is required in the sleeping accommodations and the adult – child ratio as stated in paragraph IV.B.2. above will be followed. Separate shower and bathroom facilities must be available for males and females. When separate facilities are not available, separate times for male and female use should be scheduled and posted for showers. Likewise, children and adults must shower at different times.
- 6. Respect of privacy.** Adults must respect the privacy of children in situations such as changing clothes and taking showers, and intrude only to the extent that health and safety require.
- 7. Alcohol, tobacco, and controlled substances.** The use of alcoholic beverages and controlled substances shall not be permitted by any person at any time during Presbytery of Chicago activities involving children.
- 8. Cameras, imaging, and digital devices.** It is inappropriate to use any device capable of recording or transmitting visual images in shower houses, restrooms, or other areas where privacy is expected by participants. Any transmission of sexually explicit photographs or videos electronically and any “sexting” by cell phones is prohibited.
- 9. No secret organizations.** The Presbytery of Chicago does not recognize secret organizations. All aspects of Presbytery-sponsored activities are to be open to observation by parents and adults.
- 10. Hazing prohibited.** Hazing and initiations are prohibited and shall not be included as part of any activity.

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11. **Bullying prohibited.** Verbal, physical, and cyber bullying are prohibited.
12. **Use of social media.** Appropriate boundaries shall be maintained on social media.
13. **Environmental Safety.** Presbytery of Chicago events shall be conducted so as to minimize the risk of accidental injury. Necessary protective gear, such as life jackets, shall be provided.
14. **Group responsibilities.** Adult leaders of group activities are responsible for monitoring the behavior of youth members and for interceding when necessary. Parents of youth participants who misbehave shall be informed and appropriate disciplinary measures shall be taken.
15. **Covenant of Christian Community.** A covenant agreement (Appendix C) must be signed by all persons, adult or child, participating in any Presbytery of Chicago event and also by the parents of any child participating in the event.

## V. PREVENTION

### A. Screening.

1. **Reference checks.** Except for volunteer congregation members who are certified by their particular congregation as provided in paragraph V.A.4. below, all persons governed by this policy shall have reference checks.
2. **Background checks.** Except for volunteer congregation members who are certified by their particular congregation as provided in paragraph V.A.4. below, criminal background checks and sex offender reviews will be performed on all persons governed by this policy. Other background checks, such as motor vehicle record reports and credit reports, will be performed as needed.-
3. **Transportation.** All persons providing transportation must provide a copy of their drivers' license and a copy of their insurance card to the person in charge of the activity. Any professional transportation provider should be bonded and provide proof of insurance.
4. **Volunteer congregation members.** Prior to their participation in any Presbytery of Chicago event or activity, background checks on a volunteer congregation member shall be performed by a staff member or ruling elder of that person's congregation. The congregation must certify that the volunteer congregation member has passed the congregation's background check. As a minimum standard, volunteer congregation members shall be known to the congregation for at least one year.
5. **Additional Checks.** Any person attending an activity and/or any volunteer congregation member may, at the discretion of the person in charge of the activity or the Executive Presbyter, be asked to undergo any or all of the Presbytery screening procedures outlined above e.
6. **Responsibility for reference and background checks.** The Presbytery shall be responsible for all applicable reference checks and shall maintain appropriate records.

All records shall be strictly confidential and may be shared only on a need-to-know basis.

**B. Education and Training.**

1. **Distribution of policy.** The Presbytery of Chicago shall make copies of this policy available to all persons who are governed by it.
2. **Detecting and Reporting Abuse.**
  - Those working with children will be trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of neglect and of physical and sexual abuse prior to working with children.
  - Training will be given regarding procedures to follow when an incident of suspected abuse, neglect, or misconduct is to be reported.
3. **Workshops and Seminars**
  - a. The True North Response Team will sponsor boundary training consisting of at least two workshops, seminars or similar education and training events each year on the recognition and prevention of sexual misconduct, ethical misconduct, and the appropriate use of social media.
  - b. Persons governed by this policy are required to attend approved boundary training within the year they first become subject to this policy, and at least once every third year thereafter. The first training event attended shall be at least five hours long; subsequent training events shall be at least three hours long. Training may be attended at any time during the third year.
  - c. If a teaching elder newly received by Presbytery has attended boundary training within 3 years before becoming a member of Presbytery and the training received is acceptable to the True North Response Team, he/she shall be required to attend training in the third year following the year of the person's previous training.
  - d. If a teaching elder newly received by Presbytery has not attended boundary training within 3 years before becoming a member of Presbytery, he or she shall be required to attend training during the year he or she is admitted to the Presbytery. At the request of a newly received teaching elder, the True North Response team may extend this deadline to allow the newly admitted teaching elder to attend boundary training within the year following his or her admission to the Presbytery.
  - e. The Stated Clerk, with the assistance of the staff person for this policy, shall keep records of attendance at education and training events sponsored by the True North Response Team and of training received from other sources that have been accepted by the True North Response Team.:-
  - f. The procedures to be followed in the event a person governed by this policy fails to comply with the training requirements are set forth in the Presbytery's Encouraging and Maintaining Safe Boundaries Policy, [Appendix A](#).

4. **Other resources.** The True North Response Team shall make ~~other~~ resources available to local congregations and others on request.

## **VI. RESPONSE TO INCIDENT**

- A. Immediate Safety.** Anyone who suspects sexual, physical, or other abuse shall immediately provide for the safety of the alleged victim(s) involved.
- B. Reporting the Incident.**
  1. **Initial Report to Executive Presbyter.** Anyone who suspects sexual abuse, ethical misconduct, or any other form of abuse or neglect, shall report the incident immediately to the Executive Presbyter and to the person in charge of the activity.
  2. **Report to Child Abuse Hotline.** The Executive Presbyter will determine if there is reasonable cause to believe that a child participating in a Presbytery of Chicago activity is an abused or neglected child. If such reasonable cause exists, the Executive Presbyter will immediately call the applicable Child Abuse Hotline. (See Appendix B for information on child abuse hotlines and mandated reporters.)
  3. **Notification of Parent or Guardian.** If the victim of the alleged abuse is a child, the Executive Presbyter shall inform the child's parent or guardian of the incident as soon as possible.
  4. **Reports.** If reasonable cause exists to believe that sexual misconduct may have occurred, the Executive Presbyter shall make all appropriate reports, including notifying other authorities, as needed.
- C. Suspension/Administrative Leave.** After receiving the initial report, the Executive Presbyter shall determine whether the alleged abuser's employment or volunteer service should be suspended or restricted pending further investigation.
- D. Church Disciplinary Proceedings.** If the accused is subject to the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and reasonable cause exists to believe that an offense has occurred, the Executive Presbyter shall commence disciplinary proceedings against the accused under the Rules of Discipline.
- E. Investigation.** The person or persons making the initial report to the Executive Presbyter shall not conduct an investigation of the incident, but shall take all necessary steps to insure the immediate safety of the alleged victim.
- F. Pastoral care and professional counseling.** The Executive Presbyter shall report any alleged incident of sexual misconduct to the staff person for this policy and the moderator of the True North Response Team.
- G. Confidentiality.** Because the accused is presumed innocent until proven guilty, care will be taken to protect confidentiality. While the incident is being investigated, all persons with knowledge of the incident shall maintain strict confidentiality and shall share information with

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others only as requested or permitted by the Executive Presbyter or as required by mandated reporting laws.

**APPENDIX A**

**ENCOURAGING AND MAINTAINING SAFE BOUNDARIES**

*The power that Jesus Christ has vested in his Church, a power manifested in the exercise of church discipline, is one for building up the body of Christ, not for destroying it, for redeeming, not for punishing. It should be exercised as a dispensation of mercy and not of wrath so that the great ends of the Church may be achieved, that all children of God may be presented faultless in the day of Christ. (D-1.0102)*

The Presbytery of Chicago has established the following four step program for encouraging teaching elders to stay in compliance with the training requirements of the Safe Boundaries Policy. For teaching elders who are members of the Presbytery of Chicago who have either failed to participate in a boundary training or who have not taken the training within the third year following the person's last training the following steps will be taken thirty days after the Presbytery has exercised due diligence in notifying the affected teaching elder of the consequences:

First Year: Teaching elders who are less than one full year out of compliance with the boundary training program:

- Will have their names published in the Presbytery meeting papers.
- Will not receive their clergy ID cards.

Second Year: In addition to the consequences listed above, teaching elders who are less than two full years out of compliance with the boundary training program:

- Will not receive a statement from the Presbytery attesting to their good standing.
- Will not have their Personal Information Forms attested to by the stated clerk.
- Will not receive a favorable recommendation from the Presbytery staff.

Third Year: In addition to the consequences listed above, teaching elders who are less than three full years out of compliance with the boundary training program:

- Will be classified as no longer engaged in a validated ministry. Such persons "shall not have voice or vote in meetings of the presbytery" (G-2.0508).

Fourth Year: In addition to the consequences listed above, teaching elders who are more than three full years out of compliance with the boundary training program:

- will be declared to be released from the exercise of the ordered ministry of teaching elder. "Release from the exercise of ordered ministry requires discontinuance of all functions of that ministry. The designations that refer to teaching elders shall not be used" (G-2.0507).

Any teaching elder who has been classified as no longer engaged in a validated ministry or who has been released from the exercise of ordered ministry, may, upon completion of boundary training, reapply for admission. Upon approval by the True North Response Team and the

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Commission on Ministry, and “upon the reaffirmation of the ordination questions, and the resumption of a ministry that qualifies that person for membership in the presbytery, [the person] shall be restored to the exercise of the ordered ministry as a teaching elder without re-ordination” (G-2.0507).

Any honorably retired teaching elder who is no longer engaged in the exercise of ordered ministry, or any teaching elder who cannot participate in boundary training for health or other personal reasons, may request a waiver of the boundary training requirements from the True North Response Team. This waiver will be reviewed every 3 years and may be renewed.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Child Abuse Hotline**

#### Child Protection Statutes

Most states have child protection statutes that provide for reporting incidents of child abuse or neglect. The Illinois statute is the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act, 325 ILCS 5/1 et seq. administered by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (“DCFS”).

#### Mandated Reporters

Mandated reporters are professionals who may work with children in the course of their professional duties. Mandated reporters are required by the applicable child protection statute to report to state authorities when they have reasonable cause to suspect that child abuse or neglect may have occurred. The Illinois statute names seven categories of mandated reporters, namely: medical personnel, school personnel, social service/mental health professionals, law enforcement personnel, coroner/medical examiner personnel, child care personnel and members of the clergy. The Illinois statute requires that mandated reporters sign a statement acknowledging their status as mandated reporters before they commence employment. The statement is made on one of two DCFS forms, entitled Acknowledgement of Mandated Reporter Status and Acknowledgement of Mandated Reporter Status (Clergy). The acknowledgement forms must be retained by the employer. Presbytery of Chicago staff and volunteers who are not teaching elders and who are not among the categories of professionals listed in the applicable child protection statute are not mandated reporters.

#### Child Abuse Hotline

A mandated reporter who has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect is required to immediately report or cause a report to be made to DCFS, DHS or the applicable child protection agency. In most cases, the reporting requirement will be satisfied if the Executive Presbyterian makes the report, but if the Executive Presbyterian fails to report, the mandated reporter must nevertheless make the report if he or she has reasonable cause to believe that child abuse or neglect may have occurred. Note, however, that the Illinois statute requires that mandated reporters who are staff members of a medical or other public or private institution, school, facility or agency or a member of the clergy, must make the report personally, and may not rely on the institution, school, facility, agency or congregation to make the report. Presbytery of Chicago staff members and volunteers who are teaching elders, therefore, should make the report themselves and should inform the Executive Presbyterian that they have made the report.

The initial report is made by calling the Child Abuse Hotline:

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services: 1-800-252-2873.

National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-422-4453  
1-800-4-A CHILD

Illinois Elder Abuse Hotline: 1-866-800-1409 (For suspected abuse in the home).  
1-800-252-8966 (For suspected abuse in facilities)

**APPENDIX C**

**TO ALL YOUTH PARTICIPANTS, LEADERS, AND PARENTS: PLEASE READ CAREFULLY**

**YOUTH AND ADULT PARTICIPANTS:** Your signature is required.

**PARENTS:** Your signature is required.

**YOUTH LEADERS:** Be sure each person has completed this Covenant. Please bring these forms to the registration table at the retreat.

Name of Participant (please print) _____
Church _____

**THE COVENANT**

***At this gathering, we will be doing our best to live together as a family in Christian community. Family life is based on love, respect, trust, support, and on spending time together. To create and maintain this relationship of family and community, each person agrees to the following covenant:***

1. As members of different congregations, we will welcome every individual as a person deserving of trust and respect. Bringing our different congregational families together calls us to be caring and sensitive to our differences and open to making new friends.
2. As guests of the congregation and mission partners, each person is to abide by the congregation's/ mission partner's guidelines for conduct and respect their wishes regarding care of their property. At our mission projects and retreats there will be no smoking, no alcoholic beverages, no illegal drugs, and no inappropriate sexual behavior.
3. As a participant of this planned event, each person is expected to attend all scheduled activities and to follow the instructions of adult leaders. Adult leaders are responsible for helping all youth keep the covenant and are expected to keep it themselves.

***I recognize that I am joining this Christian family and community. I agree to abide by this covenant while I am a member of this community. I understand that if I break this covenant, I may be sent home at my parent's expense and my congregation's session may be notified.***

**Signature of Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TO BE SIGNED BY PARENT/GUARDIAN (for any participant under age 18 at the time)**

I have read the Presbytery Retreat Covenant and I understand that if my son/daughter breaks the covenant and a decision is made to send him/her home, it will be at my expense.

Signature of Parent / Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_