

**Minor and Adult Protection Policy**  
*First (Scots) Presbyterian Church*  
53 Meeting Street, Charleston, South Carolina 29401  
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## Introduction

Jesus said, “Whoever welcomes (a) child . . . welcomes me” (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, and our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.

Jesus also said, “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones . . . , it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6).

### Statement of Intent

First (Scots) upholds the sanctity of human life and the importance, worth, and dignity of each individual as a child of God. This Minor and Adult Protection Policy has been created for the intentional protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults, as well as for the protection of our employees, volunteers, visitors, and our church family as a whole.

This policy is established in order to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all Minors and Vulnerable Adults in our congregation as well as those visitors we welcome from the community who attend activities at First (Scots), including church-sponsored activities, i.e., First (Scots) Kindergarten, Kirk Club, and VBS. We are also committed to protecting the Adults who make our ministry to children, youth, and Vulnerable Adults possible, from any false allegations of abuse or neglect.

### Definitions

\**Minors* include the following: newborn through the age of 17.

\* A *Vulnerable Adult* is an Adult who lacks the physical, mental or emotional capacity to provide for their daily needs.

\*An *Adult* is a person 18 years old or older.

\* A *Caregiver* is an employee or volunteer at least 18 years old with direct supervision of Minors or Vulnerable Adults while they are attending any First (Scots) activities.

## POLICY GUIDELINES

### SCREENING

#### Employee:

Applicants for full-time or part-time employment at First (Scots) will be required to provide, complete or undergo the following:

- A. A written statement that the individual has no prior conviction for child or Vulnerable Adult abuse or sexual misconduct.
- B. Reference check covering the two immediate past employers, or personal references unrelated to the applicant if no information can be obtained from past employers.
- C. Prior to hiring an applicant, First (Scots) will obtain a national background check for that individual. Every three years, First (Scots) will repeat the background check on existing employees.

- D. Upon being hired, each new employee will be required to sign an acknowledgement that he or she has received a copy of the First (Scots) Minor and Adult Protection Policy, understands it, and will comply with its terms.
- E. Each new employee will be required to undergo training on child abuse, including its recognition and prevention, as well as on the terms and conditions of this policy within their first three months of employment. Every employee shall be required to repeat this training every three years. Darkness to Light Training will also be mandatory for all staff at First (Scots). This training shall happen within their first year of employment and be repeated every three years.
- F. Any candidate for employment who has a past conviction of or pending proceeding addressing an allegation of child or Vulnerable Adult abuse or neglect cannot be employed by First (Scots).

**Volunteers:**

Volunteers working with Minors or Vulnerable Adults at First (Scots) in any volunteer ministry will be required to provide, complete or undergo the following:

- A. If the volunteer is a nonmember or has been a member for less than six months, two personal references will be required.
- B. Prior to becoming a volunteer, First (Scots) will obtain a national background check for that individual. Every three years, First (Scots) will repeat the background check on existing volunteers.
- C. Each new volunteer shall sign a statement that he or she has no prior conviction for child or Vulnerable Adult abuse or sexual misconduct.
- D. Any candidate for volunteer service who has a past conviction of or pending proceeding addressing an allegation of child or Vulnerable Adult abuse or neglect cannot be a volunteer at First (Scots).
- E. Each new volunteer, prior to beginning any volunteer role, will be required to sign an acknowledgement that he or she has received a copy of the First (Scots) Minor and Adult Protection Policy, understands it, and will comply with its terms.
- F. Each new volunteer will be required to participate in a First (Scots) training on child abuse, including its recognition and prevention, as well as on the terms and conditions of this policy. Every volunteer shall be required to repeat this training every three years. It is advisable that all volunteers who work with Minors and Vulnerable Adults participate in a Darkness to Light training and repeat it every three years.

Note: Any independent contractor or person using First (Scots) facilities to provide instruction or other services to Minors or Vulnerable Adults shall be required to read the Minor and Adult Protection Policy and sign an acknowledgement that he or she has received a copy of the same, understands it, and will comply with its terms.

**CLASSROOM STAFFING STANDARDS**

Every church desires to provide a safe, loving classroom where Minors and Vulnerable Adults feel comfortable and where learning can take place; therefore, the following shall be the standard for First (Scots) Presbyterian Church:

- A. There shall be a minimum of two Caregivers in any room with Minors and/or Vulnerable Adults, except in the event of an emergency situation.

- B. No windows in doors shall ever be blocked so as to prevent observation into the room.
- C. When it is necessary that only one Caregiver be in a room with Minors or Vulnerable Adults, the door of that room must remain open.
- D. If the ratio in a classroom is one Caregiver to one Minor or Vulnerable Adult, the Caregiver should immediately join others or move to a public space where they are visible to others.

### **RECORD KEEPING**

- A. First (Scots) will carefully maintain the names, addresses, and contact information of parents or guardians of Minors and Vulnerable Adults participating in any First (Scots) sponsored activity.
- B. First (Scots) will follow an accurate sign-in procedure for preschool Minors who attend a First (Scots) sponsored activity, including the child's name, parent or guardian's name and contact information, location while the child is in First (Scots) care, and any special needs/allergies of the child. Parents or guardians will follow through with an accurate sign-out procedure as well.
- C. Minors, ages preschool through fifth grade, will remain in the classroom or with their Caregivers until picked up by a parent or guardian. Caregivers may release a first through fifth grade child unescorted from Sunday school, only with prior written permission.

### **RESTROOMS**

Caregivers should not enter a restroom alone with a Minor or Vulnerable Adult who is capable of handling his or her own toileting needs. If one Caregiver takes a Minor or Vulnerable Adult to the restroom, he/she must stand in the open restroom doorway. If a Minor or Vulnerable Adult needs assistance with toileting, and only one Caregiver is available, the door to the restroom must remain open. If a Caregiver is escorting a Minor or Vulnerable Adult to the restroom, it should be checked for safety before allowing a Minor or Vulnerable Adult to enter.

### **DIAPER CHANGING**

Diaper changing should always take place in such a way that another Caregiver can easily see the Minor or Vulnerable Adult that is being changed.

### **FIRST AID AND EMERGENCIES**

- A. Caregivers are not to give or apply medication (other than routine first aid such as application of band-aids, antibiotic ointment and ice packs) without written permission by the Minor's or Vulnerable Adult's parent or guardian, such permission to include directions for the appropriate administration of the medication.
- B. First aid supplies are available on every floor of the Educational Building, Kirk House, and in Molly Wier Hall. Their contents shall be reviewed biannually and maintained by the Director of Christian Education. All Caregivers shall be made aware of the locations of the first aid supplies.
- C. An Accident Report form shall be completed and filed with the Church Administrator by the Caregiver for any accident or injury requiring first aid or medical attention which occurs during church-sponsored activities.

### **OFF CAMPUS ACTIVITIES, TRIPS, AND RETREATS**

The following steps will be taken in planning and implementing off campus activities:

- A. A signed Permission and Release statement for each Minor must be obtained from his or her parent or guardian before participating in any retreat, trip or off campus activity of First (Scots).
- B. A signed Permission, Medical Consent, Waiver, and Indemnity Agreement will be obtained, when deemed necessary by the Christian Education Committee, from the parent or guardian of each Minor before participating in any off campus overnight activity.
- C. The Caregiver shall keep copies of all medical forms and First Aid supplies for the duration of the activity.
- D. The Caregiver shall complete and file with the Church Administrator an Accident Report form in the case of any accident, injury, or medical emergency.
- E. At least two Caregivers must be present at all off campus activities.
- F. If it is necessary to transport a single Minor to or from an off campus activity, at least two Caregivers must be present in the vehicle.
- G. Any all-day activity or overnight retreat involving Minors of both sexes shall be supervised by both male and female Caregivers.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION**

Healthy and appropriate boundaries regarding Caregivers' communications and relationships with Minors and Vulnerable Adults will be upheld using the following criteria:

- A. Communications will remain public and readable on all forms of social media, text and email.
- B. Caregivers will not maintain the same level of contact or communication with a Minor or Vulnerable Adult after a church sponsored program or activity they have been involved in has concluded.
- C. Caregivers will not share or ask for any inappropriate details about a Minor or Vulnerable Adult's life and will not share their own personal life details with Minors or Vulnerable Adults.
- D. Caregivers will obtain written parental or guardian permission for photographs of a Minor or Vulnerable Adult to be shared on the church website or any social media.
- E. Caregivers will not use profanity or share jokes or media that is racially demeaning, violent or sexually implicit or explicit in the presence of Minors and Vulnerable Adults.

### **REPORTING**

Caregivers who observe questionable or inappropriate behavior affecting Minors or Vulnerable Adults must immediately report it to the Associate Pastor responsible for pastoral care and the Director of Christian Education, who together will then report the incident to the Senior Pastor and/or Head of Staff and the Associate Pastor for Youth and Families. If the Associate Pastor responsible for pastoral care is not available, the incident shall be reported immediately to an available Pastor and the Director of Christian Education or in their absence, two staff members.

## PASTORAL COUNSELING

Occasions may arise when a Minor or Vulnerable Adult seeks counseling from the pastoral staff of First (Scots). In such instances the office or classroom used for the pastoral counseling of a Minor or Vulnerable Adult must have a window in the door, or the door is to be left open during the counseling session. Another adult who understands the importance of maintaining the privacy of the Minor or Vulnerable Adult being counseled, as well as the importance of maintaining the safety of the space, should be in close proximity during any counseling session.

### **First (Scots) Code of Conduct for Caregivers**

#### **First (Scots) Caregivers:**

1. Will not neglect or verbally, emotionally, physically, or sexually abuse any child or Vulnerable Adult.
2. Will provide a safe environment for all Minors and Vulnerable Adults.
3. Will ensure that all interactions with Minors and Vulnerable Adults are observable, interruptible, and appropriate as outlined in our policy.
4. Will not use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while participating in any church sponsored activity or program.
5. Will not discipline children using physical punishment, restraint or by failing to provide necessary care.
6. Will respect a Minor or Vulnerable Adult's rights not to be physically touched in ways that make the individual uncomfortable.
7. Will make every effort to support fellow employees and volunteers in upholding the terms of First (Scot's) Minor and Adult Protection Policy.
8. Will be familiar with the signs of child abuse and neglect.
9. Will adhere to our policy in relation to the identification, documentation, and reporting of child or Vulnerable Adult abuse of any kind.
10. Will not touch, interact with, or otherwise communicate with Minors or Vulnerable Adults in any way that is intended to be sexually stimulating.
11. Will know that common expressions of affection (hugs), affirmation (pats on the back), support (prayers), or physical care taking (changing diapers, toileting) are appropriate in this community of caring Christians. Care must be taken, however, that expressions of affection and affirmation are not excessive, unwanted or imposed upon a Minor or Vulnerable Adult.

## **ATTACHMENTS to Minor and Adult Protection Policy**

### **DEFINING SEXUAL ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

Caregivers involved with programs for Minors or Vulnerable Adults at First (Scots) have a unique opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect or harm involving those in our care. For purposes of this policy, “abuse or neglect” or “harm” occurs when a parent, guardian, or other person responsible for a Minor’s or Vulnerable Adult’s welfare:

1. Inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon the Minor or Vulnerable Adult, physical or mental injury or engages in acts of omission which present a substantial risk of physical or mental injury to a Minor or Vulnerable Adult, including injuries sustained as a result of excessive corporal punishment;
2. Fails to supply a Minor or Vulnerable Adult with adequate food, clothing, shelter, education, health care, or supervision appropriate to age and development;
3. Abandons a Minor or Vulnerable Adult by willfully deserting or willfully surrendering physical possession of a child or Vulnerable Adult without making adequate arrangements for the Minor’s or Vulnerable Adult’s needs or continuing care;
4. Encourages, condones, or approves the commission of delinquent acts by a Minor or Vulnerable Adult; or
5. Has committed abuse or neglect of another Minor or Vulnerable Adult such that a Minor or Vulnerable Adult who subsequently becomes a part of the person’s household is at substantial risk of one of the above forms of abuse or neglect.

### **First (Scots) Procedures for Responding**

#### **PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO REPORTS OF QUESTIONABLE OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR AGAINST MINORS OR VULNERABLE ADULTS**

Those receiving a report of questionable or inappropriate behavior affecting Minors or Vulnerable Adults will respond according to the requirements of state law, in accordance with The Book of Order (D-10.000 Chapter X Disciplinary Cases) and as set forth below:

1. If there is reasonable suspicion that abuse or neglect has occurred, the notified pastor(s) shall immediately report the suspected abuse or neglect to the South Carolina Department of Social Services and law enforcement for investigation in accordance with South Carolina law, as well as initiate procedures for investigation and, if appropriate, discipline as set forth in the Book of Order.
2. The initial report shall be documented on the Abuse and/or Neglect Report which shall be filled out by the two staff members who have received the report and kept on file in the church office.
3. The existence and/or contents of such report shall not be disclosed to anyone other than representatives of the South Carolina Department of Social Services involved in the investigation of the matter, representatives of a law enforcement agency involved in the investigation of the matter, or others designated to have access to such information pursuant to the provisions of this policy and/or the Book of Order.

4. Notification shall be made to the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the Minor or Vulnerable Adult, except in instances where the parent or guardian of the Minor or Vulnerable Adult is the alleged perpetrator of the abuse or neglect.
5. The alleged perpetrator of the abuse or neglect shall be immediately prohibited from participating as a Caregiver to Minors or Vulnerable Adults at First (Scots) Presbyterian Church or First (Scots) Presbyterian Church programs or activities pending completion of a full investigation by the South Carolina Department of Social Services and/or law enforcement, as well as, completion of any investigation and/or disciplinary proceedings pursuant to the Book of Order.
6. In the event that a person possessing specific duties to report and/or investigate pursuant to this policy is the alleged perpetrator of abuse or neglect, that person shall be immediately relieved of such duties and a new person shall be appointed to serve in his or her place.
7. The incident shall be reported to the church's insurance carrier.
8. First (Scots) Presbyterian Church shall cooperate with any investigation of the incident by the South Carolina Department of Social Services and/or law enforcement. In the event there is no investigation of the incident by the South Carolina Department of Social Services and/or law enforcement, the incident shall be investigated by the Associate Pastor responsible for pastoral care in accordance with the Book of Order and in consultation with the Senior Pastor and/or Head of Staff, the Associate Pastor for Youth and Families, the Director of Christian Education and the church's insurance company and/or attorney.
9. Any person who is found to have committed abuse against or neglect of a Minor or Vulnerable Adult as set forth above by affirmative determination of the South Carolina Department of Social Services, by finding of a judge or jury, or as a result of an in-house investigation in accordance with the Book of Order shall be unable to serve as a Caregiver to Minors or Vulnerable Adults at First (Scots) Presbyterian Church or First (Scots) Presbyterian Church programs or activities.
10. The Senior Pastor and/or Head of Staff shall be the spokespersons to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect in consultation with the church's insurance company and/or attorney. In the event the Senior Pastor and/or Head of Staff is the alleged perpetrator of the abuse or neglect, the clerk of session, in consultation with the church's insurance company and/or attorney, shall be the spokesperson. All others should refrain from speaking to the media and other third parties except as provided herein.
11. Pastoral visits and counseling shall be arranged for all who desire the same.