



## Child Protection Policy

First Parish Church in Weston seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of First Parish Church in Weston from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

### Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “worker” refers to paid staff members. The term “volunteer” means anyone involved in overnight activities involving minors, in counseling of minors, or in one-on-one mentoring of minors.

### Selection of Workers

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

- a) **Six Month Rule** SEP No person will be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with First Parish Church in Weston for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children. SEP
- b) **Written Application** SEP All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous First Parish Church in Weston affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in

confidence on file at the First Parish Church in Weston. [L] [SEP]

c) **Personal Interview** [L] [SEP] Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position. [L] [SEP]

d) **Reference Checks** [L] [SEP] Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at First Parish Church in Weston. [L] [SEP]

e) **Criminal Background Check** [L] [SEP] A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and "volunteers" as defined above.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing First Parish Church in Weston to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Minister and Director of Family Ministries on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the First Parish Church in

Weston.

## Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some children and youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom must remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation.

## Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting. [L] [SEP]
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing. [L] [SEP]
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography. [L] [SEP]
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care. [L] [SEP]



## Child Protection Policy

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at First Parish Church in Weston becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the Minister and Director of Family Ministries for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law. [L] [SEP]

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at First Parish Church in Weston or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified. [L] [SEP]
2. The worker or church member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. He or she should be instructed to have no contact with the victim or with witnesses. [L] [SEP]
3. All allegations of abuse should be reported to the civil authorities, and the organization will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. The organization will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities. [L] [SEP]
4. The insurance company will be notified, and the organization will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company. [L] [SEP]
5. The organization may designate a spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice

- of legal counsel may be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of the organization should refrain from speaking to the media. [L] [SEP]
6. A pastoral visit may be arranged for those who desire it. This should be for the purpose of providing pastoral support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation. [L] [SEP]
  7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth. [L] [SEP]

### Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 14. [L] [SEP]
- Must be screened with a CORI background check. [L] [SEP]
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children. [L] [SEP]

### Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at First Parish Church in Weston. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours; [L] [SEP]



## Child Protection Policy

- Green or yellow runny nose; [L] [SEP]
- Eye or skin infections; and/or [L] [SEP]
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease.
- [L] [SEP] Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

### Accidental Injuries to Children

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

1. 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 our care. [L] [SEP]
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called. [L] [SEP]
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional. [L] [SEP]

### Training

**First Parish Church in Weston** will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and volunteers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training.