

# Christ the King Presbyterian Church

## Child Protection Policy

### SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

#### Child Protection Committee

At Christ the King Presbyterian Church (CTK), we take the protection of our children seriously. Because of this, we have a CTK Child Protection Committee (CPC) which handles any issues relating to abuse or concerning behavior. You are encouraged to reach out to the CPC with any concerns or observations regarding child abuse or concerning behaviors toward our children by emailing: **[childprotection@ctkroanoke.org](mailto:childprotection@ctkroanoke.org)**. The members of the CPC are:

- Doug Eggleston
- Mary Leatherland
- Frank Smith
- Woman #2 TBD

**Table 1: Process of Reporting Abuse**

*(If a child is in immediate danger, call 911 and stay with the child until authorities arrive.)*

1. Contact the **Virginia Child Protective Services hotline at 1-800-552-7096** within 24 hours if you witness abuse, if abuse is disclosed to you, if you observe indicators of abuse, or if you have any other causes for suspicions of abuse.
2. Notify the CTK Child Protection Committee at **[childprotection@ctkroanoke.org](mailto:childprotection@ctkroanoke.org)** to report the allegation to the church leadership. Expect acknowledgement of your report by the next business day.

*Parents will be notified of the situation as deemed appropriate.*

*The above contact information will also be posted publicly in the church building.*

Understanding how childhood abuse can traumatize a child and have lasting impact in the life of a surviving adult is a critical first step in preventing abuse and responding compassionately.

CTK will at a minimum comply with the legal definitions and laws of Virginia as found in the Code of Virginia: <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodefull/title63.2/>

CTK takes all indicators and suspicions of child abuse seriously. We are aware of the research on polyvictimization, which tells us that children who are abused in one way are at a significantly higher risk of being abused in multiple ways. Therefore, as our church becomes aware of an indicator or report of a child being abused in one way, we will be alert to the possibility that this child might also be abused in another way. We will take steps to protect the child from known

*To report abuse, contact the Virginia Child Protective Services hotline at 1-800-552-7096.*

risks and be extra attentive to and supportive of the child. For descriptions of various kinds of abuse, see the definitions below.

## **SECTION 2: DEFINING ABUSE**

CTK utilizes the following terms and definitions:

Child - Any person ranging from 0-17 years of age.

Youth - a subset of “child”; refers to those in grades 6-12.

Sexual Abuse - Physical contact with a sexual or intimate part of the body, or other forms of sexual activity, conducted without consent, or engaged in for the purpose of sexual gratification or to degrade, exploit or abuse. See Appendix A for further descriptions of sexual abuse.

Physical Abuse - A non-accidental physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) as a result of hostile physical contact that is inflicted by a parent, caregiver, or other person who has responsibility for the child. Such injury is considered abuse regardless of whether the caregiver intended to hurt the child. Physical discipline by parents, such as spanking or paddling, is not considered abuse as long as it is reasonable and causes no bodily injury to the child. See Appendix A for further descriptions of physical abuse.

Emotional Abuse - Cruel acts toward a child that have a substantial likelihood of causing harm to the child’s physical, psychological, social, spiritual, or moral development. See Appendix A for further descriptions of emotional abuse.

Neglect - The continued failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention, or adequate supervision, to the extent that the child’s health, safety, and/or development is, or is likely to be jeopardized. Neglect can also occur if an adult fails to adequately ensure the safety of a child where the child is exposed to extremely dangerous or life-threatening situations. See Appendix A for further descriptions of neglect.

Spiritual Abuse - Abuse, including the desire to control someone, administered under the guise of religion. See Appendix A for further descriptions of spiritual abuse.

## **SECTION 3: INDICATORS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE AND CHILD ABUSE**

CTK is familiar with and attentive to potential indicators of child sexual abuse. We are committed to training and equipping staff, volunteers, and congregants to recognize possible indicators of sexual abuse and child abuse as outlined Appendix B.

## **SECTION 4: PEOPLE WHO ABUSE CHILDREN**

People who sexually abuse children utilize authority, trust, or physical force/threats to gain access and control over children so they can perpetrate the abuse. The vast majority of people who abuse children are known by the victim.

### **Understanding Predatory Behaviors**

We at CTK seek to equip our congregants to identify, deter, and respond to common behaviors used by sexual predators to gain access to and control over children so they can perpetrate abuse.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, National Sex Offender Public Website, <https://www.nsopw.gov>:

Grooming is a method of building trust with a child and adults around the child in an effort to gain access to and time alone with her/him. However, in extreme cases, offenders may use threats and physical force to sexually assault or abuse a child. More common, though, are subtle approaches designed to build relationships with families. The offender may assume a caring role, befriend the child, or even exploit their position of trust and authority to groom the child and/or the child's family. These individuals intentionally build relationships with the adults around a child or seek out a child who may have fewer adults in her/his life. This increases the likelihood that the offender's time with the child is welcomed and encouraged.

The purpose of grooming is:

- To reduce the likelihood of a disclosure.
- To reduce the likelihood of the child being believed.
- To reduce the likelihood of being detected.
- To manipulate the perceptions of other adults around the child.
- To manipulate the child into becoming a cooperating participant which reduces the likelihood of a disclosure and increases the likelihood that the child will repeatedly return to the offender.

See Appendix C for examples of grooming behaviors.

## SECTION 5: VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS & SCREENING

Volunteers for Children's and Youth Ministry must be members of CTK in good standing and have been regularly involved in the life of the church for 6 months.

In keeping with our values of protecting the children in our care, as we hire employees or recruit volunteers, CTK will require prior screening. The below table depicts which screening measures will be required for each category of staff and/or volunteer:

**Table 2: Required Screening Measures for CTK Staff & Children's/Youth Ministry Volunteers**

Employee / Volunteer	Written application	Background check	Internet search	Reference checks	Interview
Paid staff	X	X	X	X	X
Interns	X	X	X	X	X
Officers (prior to election)	X (less formal informational profile)	X	X	X	X
SS Teachers	X (less formal informational profile)	X	X	X (As needed)	X (informal)
Nursery volunteers		X	X		X (informal)
VBS volunteers		X	X	X	X (informal)
Youth chaperones / volunteers	X (less formal informational profile)	X	X	X	X (informal)
Teen / youth volunteers (12+ in age)			X	X	X (informal)

See Appendix D for more detailed requirements for each category mentioned above.

If the candidate or proposed volunteer is not a good fit with CTK's values, vision, and culture, the candidate might not be able to work with children.

If the screening process yields information that an individual abused a child in any way, or has been convicted of a violent and/or sexual crime, that individual will not work with children in any capacity, and CTK will contact a child protection expert about how to proceed as necessary. If the screening process shows that a candidate has ever been accused of a violent and/or sexual crime OR convicted of any other type of crime, CTK will consult with a child protection expert to assess the situation.

## **SECTION 6: SAFE BEHAVIORS**

Because most child abuse happens in isolated situations and because most adults seeking to harm a child prefer to do so in private, CTK requires two, preferably (but not required) unrelated adults to supervise all children's events, including, but not limited to:

- Sunday morning nursery & Sunday school classes up to and including 5th grade
- Vacation Bible School
- Childcare for women's Bible studies\* or any other church events
- Youth group day or overnight trips

*\*Childcare for women's Bible studies may be provided by two or more youth workers, rather than adults, who have undergone screening procedures as outlined above.*

The two adult rule does not apply to some situations including youth gatherings or youth Bible studies so long as the meeting takes place in a public setting or if another adult is in the vicinity (such as a Bible study that meets in a home), making the meeting observable and interruptible.

Some events might result in one-on-one adult-child interactions. In these situations, the adult will inform the child's parent/caregiver of each meeting. The adult and child will meet at a time and place where the caregiver or others can interrupt and/or observe the meeting from a distance. Furthermore, the meeting will take place at a public place with high visibility. The below table, while not an exhaustive list, explains possible one-on-one adult-child interactions and safety requirements for each:

**Table 3: Safety Requirements for One-on-One Adult-Child Interactions**

Possible One-on-One Adult-Child Interactions	Safety Requirements
Youth One-on-One Mentoring Sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meetings are in a public place, and are observable and interruptible</li><li>• The child's caregiver is informed of and gives permission for the meeting</li></ul>
Giving a ride in a car  (Note: one-on-one car rides for the opposite gender are prohibited)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The child's caregiver is informed of and gives permission for the ride beforehand</li></ul>

CTK prohibits its volunteers and staff from spending time alone with children- without a caregiver's consent, without a supervisor's knowledge, and in a private home or other isolated setting.

### **Appropriate Touch**

Touch should always be welcomed by the child. Adults should understand and respect that children do not always welcome touch. CTK requires that all touch between an adult and a child is observable by another adult.

#### CTK prohibits the following touch:

- Sexually or physically abusive touch
- Touching a child's thighs, stomach, or lower back
- Corporal punishment
- Any touch that is unwanted by a child and not for the purpose of protecting the individual or another child from harm
- Lap sitting for children older than the Toddler Sunday School class and nursery\*
- Tickling
- Massages
- Playing with hair
- Adult-initiated full frontal hugs
- Any other unnecessary touch

*\*We encourage adults in the toddler Sunday school class or toddler nursery to only hold children in their laps briefly and when necessary (e.g. to comfort a child if they are crying).*

CTK desires to show healthy affection to its children in ways such as:

- Displays of affection that are observable and interruptible
- Kind words
- High fives/fist bumps
- Brief pats on the shoulder or upper back
- Side hugs

### **Special Attention**

- Staff and volunteers are prohibited from displaying favoritism towards a child or group of children.
- Staff may not give gifts to individual children, unless the gifts are:
  - Able to be given to other children at other times for similar reasons (e.g., gifts to graduating seniors; a new Bible for students entering middle school; end of the year thank you gifts to older children who volunteer in the nursery)
  - Signed from the church rather than the individual staff member
  - Given together with another staff member
  - A personal gift from a staff member that meets social expectations and does not signify preferential treatment
- In cases where staff believe that a child would benefit from special attention:
  - Staff should be able to articulate a clear reason for providing special attention to a child, outside of the norms of relationship-building and discipleship, that focuses on the child's needs.
  - Staff must receive authorization from a supervisor before providing special attention to a child. In cases where there is no supervisor (e.g., the staff member is a senior pastor), staff should inform a fellow staff member or church elder of the plan.
  - When possible, supervisors might organize a rotation of staff and volunteers so that extra attention is not provided solely by one individual.
  - Staff providing special attention must always abide by the Policy (e.g., meet in observable and interruptible spaces).
  - Supervisors should occasionally drop by unexpectedly during outings or meetings.
  - Supervisors should periodically reevaluate the situation to determine if special attention is still necessary.

### **Sexual Language**

CTK acknowledges that sexual language is more than mere jokes, but a serious boundary violation. As such, the following are prohibited:

- Sexually suggestive language, racy jokes, sexual innuendo, descriptions of sexual experiences/habits
- Uploading, downloading, or viewing of pornography
- Music, video games, and movies with sexual themes

If the church staff or volunteers want to give a lecture or organize a training session to help youth understand age-appropriate questions about their body or sexuality, the event must be planned in advance and CTK parents notified beforehand. When children or teens raise questions about their bodies or sexuality, CTK volunteers and staff will answer the question at hand in an age-appropriate way and inform the teen's parent(s) as well as a supervisor.

CTK encourages positive verbal interactions, including:

- Encouragement
- Kind words
- Positive reinforcement
- Appropriate jokes

### **Bathroom Policy**

While we encourage parents to have their children use the bathroom before church events (Sunday school, nursery, VBS, etc.), we understand that children will still need to use the bathroom at times while in the care of CTK staff members or volunteers. CTK uses the following bathroom safety guidelines:

- 2 adults must be present and/or have line of sight when entering and/or helping a young child use the bathroom.
- For children in the 1st - 4th grade classes that are able to use the bathroom independently, 2 adults must have line of sight with one another while the child is traveling to and from the bathroom. An adult must make sure the bathroom is empty before allowing a child to enter alone. The following steps outline a possible option for carrying out this procedure:
  - The teacher's aide notifies the designated floater.
  - The floater ensures that the bathroom is empty and then stands in the hallway outside of the bathroom.
  - After the floater has inspected the bathroom and returned to the hallway, the teacher's aide sends the child to the bathroom.
  - The teacher's aide remains in the classroom doorway to maintain line of sight with the lead teacher in the classroom and the floater in the hallway.
  - As the child enters the bathroom, the floater remains in the hallway to prevent other adults from entering the bathroom and to maintain line of site with the teacher's aide.
  - After the child exits the bathroom and has re-entered the classroom, the floater continues his/her rounds and the teacher's aide re-enters the classroom.
- For children in the nursery, only the nursery captain is permitted to change diapers and/or take a child to the bathroom with another adult in line of sight. Please see Appendix E: Specific Nursery Policy for more information.

During the Sunday worship service, we leave it up to a parent's discretion whether he will accompany his child to the restroom or if the child is permitted to go alone.



## SECTION 7: ROUTINE PROTECTIVE MEASURES

### Registration

CTK will create a registration for a child who attends activities and programs. The registration will list the people authorized to pick up the child from an event. It will also give helpful information about the child for the purpose of keeping him safe while in our care. At the end of an event, a designated caregiver is responsible to pick up children in a timely manner.

#### Registration information includes:

- Who may or may not pick up a child from a church event
- Allergies
- Any medical and/or behavioral concerns
- Contact information for those authorized to pick up the child
- Child's birthday
- Child's grade
- Additional notes if needed

### Check In / Check Out procedures:

All children grade 5 and under must be **checked in** to all children's ministry events, including, but not limited to, nursery, Sunday School, etc. Similarly, all children grade 4 and under must be **picked up and checked out** by a parent or designated caregiver for all children's ministry events, including, but not limited to, nursery, Sunday school, etc. Children grades 5 and above are permitted to leave Sunday school independently when dismissed by the teacher.

For VBS, all registered children will be checked in and checked out by a parent or designated caregiver.

### Security Measures

CTK assigns a "deacon of the day" every Sunday to monitor the building during Sunday School and worship, including the lounge area, hallways, stairwells, parking lot, etc. There are additional adult "floaters" in the children's hallway to serve as needed.

## SECTION 8: POLICY VIOLATIONS

CTK takes Policy violations seriously. Any staff member, volunteer, parent, or church member who witnesses or is made aware of a violation or other concerning behavior is expected to practice **bystander intervention**, or contact the CTK Child Protection Committee for assistance.

**Table 4: How to Practice Bystander Intervention**

When an individual is seen violating the policy, bystanders should intervene as follows:

1. Name the problematic behavior
2. Explain the policy rules
3. Redirect the individual toward safe behavior
4. Email the CTK Child Protection Committee at **childprotection@ctkroanoke.org**. The committee will help you document the violation using the Policy Violation form found in Appendix F.

While policy exceptions should be rare, CTK allows Policy exceptions that are preapproved or for emergencies. All exceptions should be documented using the Policy Exception Request Form found in Appendix G and the Necessary Deviation from Policy Notification Form found in Appendix H.

## **SECTION 9: LIMITED ACCESS AGREEMENTS**

CTK utilizes Limited Access Agreements to clarify safe behavior around children for community members who have:

- engaged in concerning or risky behavior
- violated the Policy repeatedly
- in some cases, offenses that are not related to children (e.g. stealing, drug use, DUI, et cetera) at the Child Protection Committee's discretion

A Limited Access Agreement is a written and agreed-upon boundary between an individual and CTK wherein we:

- detail restrictions and expectations
- require an elder to monitor the agreement
- establish a timetable for regular review of compliance with the monitoring elder, Child Protection Committee, and the Session if necessary
- use discretion in communicating information about the agreement to the church body

Limited Access Agreements apply to members of a church community. They do not apply to known offenders or church staff members.

If a convicted offender wants to join CTK's community, we will contact a child protection expert for counsel on how to best interact with a known sex offender. Similarly, if an individual has been credibly accused of child sexual abuse or any form of child maltreatment but has not yet been, or was not convicted, we will seek appropriate counsel with a child protection expert on how to best proceed.

If a staff member violates the Policy, they will be formally warned and then additional disciplinary action, including removal from their position, may be taken if the violation occurs again.

Refusal to sign or failure to comply with the agreement will be grounds for referral to leadership for further action.

## **SECTION 10: REPORTING**

### **What to report**

Virginia state law states that all can report suspected abuse and neglect. CTK practices reporting for:

- Witnessed abuse
- Disclosures (regardless of source)
- Indicators of abuse (see Appendix B)
- Any other causes for suspicions of abuse

### **Who should report abuse?**

For a list of mandated reporters in the state of Virginia, see Appendix I.

In addition to the Virginia mandated reporters, which includes clergy/pastors, CTK also requires the following to report abuse:

- Staff
- Adult volunteers
- Church leadership

Because the abuse of children is not only a sin but a serious crime, CTK also encourages all members and regular attenders to be vigilant in the protection and care of our children by reporting abuse.

## Process of Reporting Abuse

**Table 1: Process of Reporting Abuse**

*(If a child is in immediate danger, call 911 and stay with the child until authorities arrive.)*

1. Contact the **Virginia Child Protective Services hotline at 1-800-552-7096** within 24 hours if you witness abuse, if abuse is disclosed to you, if you observe indicators of abuse, or if you have any other causes for suspicions of abuse.
2. Notify the CTK Child Protection Committee at **childprotection@ctkroanoke.org** to report the allegation to the church leadership. Expect acknowledgement of your report by the next business day.

*Parents will be notified of the situation as deemed appropriate.*

*The above contact information will also be posted publicly in the church building.*

### Uncertain about reporting abuse?

If you observe something concerning that you are unsure mandates reporting, please reach out to the CTK Child Protection Committee at [childprotection@ctkroanoke.org](mailto:childprotection@ctkroanoke.org).

### After a report is filed

As a church body, CTK will fully cooperate with the investigating authorities. The leadership at CTK will also use discretion in notifying the church body of reported abuse. Other churches in the area may also be notified as appropriate. If an alleged offender is on staff at CTK, the individual will be immediately suspended from their position and will not have access to the victim or any other child in any church related activity.

## SECTION 11: INDEPENDENT REVIEWS

Under the following circumstances, CTK may consult with a child protection expert to determine if an independent review should be pursued:

1. When a suspicion of child maltreatment is reported to the civil authorities and they decline to investigate or prosecute the alleged abuses.
2. A district attorney has not pursued legal prosecution because no suspected criminal behavior is reported; however, the Child Protection Committee believes the individual's behavior might still violate the church policy, be immoral, inappropriate, or unsafe.

If an investigation is deemed necessary, CTK may retain an organization that meets the following criteria:

1. Completely independent of CTK
2. Experienced in proper investigation techniques
3. Up-to-date on child maltreatment research

## **SECTION 12: ABUSE DISCLOSURES**

Because children and adult survivors are reluctant to disclose abuse, CTK acknowledges that when survivors choose to do so, they need our community's utmost support.

When **children** disclose, they often do so by accident, and may later recant even when there is proof that the abuse occurred. If questioned directly, many child victims may deny the abuse. When children disclose intentionally, children may first test the adult's reaction by pretending that the abuse happened to a friend or by supplying only a small bit of information. If a child discloses abuse to you, following are helpful tips on how to respond in the moment:

- Stay calm
- Allow the child to talk freely; do not interrupt, ask the child to repeat words, or probe for details. Use open-ended questions such as "What happened next?" or "Tell me more."
- Show love and respect for the child
- Thank the child for telling you and praise the child's courage
- If the child expresses guilt or concerns about getting in trouble, reassure the child
- If the child expresses concerns about not being believed, reassure the child
- Do not offer false assurances, such as promising to keep the child's disclosure a secret
- Let the child know what to expect next, and incorporate their input where possible
- Protect the child immediately from the suspected offender
- Report the abuse as outlined in Table 1 below
- Protect the child's right to privacy and avoid the urge to turn indiscriminately to colleagues, friends, or family for advice
- Contact the CTK Child Protection Committee at [childprotection@ctkroanoke.org](mailto:childprotection@ctkroanoke.org) for additional guidance and support

**Table 1: Process of Reporting Abuse**

*(If a child is in immediate danger, call 911 and stay with the child until authorities arrive.)*

1. Contact the **Virginia Child Protective Services hotline at 1-800-552-7096** within 24 hours if you witness abuse, if abuse is disclosed to you, if you observe indicators of abuse, or if you have any other causes for suspicions of abuse.
2. Notify the CTK Child Protection Committee at **childprotection@ctkroanoke.org** to report the allegation to the church leadership. Expect acknowledgement of your report by the next business day.

*Parents will be notified of the situation as deemed appropriate.*

*The above contact information will also be posted publicly in the church building.*

Receiving an **adult's** abuse disclosure is an honor, not a burden; it is a sign of trust. Victims often choose to disclose their abuse years, even decades, after it has occurred. CTK encourages anyone receiving an adult's abuse disclosure to be guided by the suggested responses in Appendix J.

### **SECTION 13: ONGOING SURVIVOR SUPPORT**

If CTK becomes aware that a child has been, or is suspected to have been, abused, after following the above reporting procedures, we will seek to offer support in ways such as the following:

- Public support
  - designate a support person to reach out and aid the child and the child's family
  - commit to protecting the privacy of the child
  - publicly support and defend the child as needed
  - reach out to a child protection expert for guidance as needed
- Therapeutic support
  - help the child find professional help/therapy
- Pastoral support
  - work alongside professional therapists to provide care and support for the child
- Community support
  - strive to create a culture where abuse prevention and survivor support is understood and practiced

*To report abuse, contact the Virginia Child Protective Services hotline at 1-800-552-7096.*

## **SECTION 14: DISSEMINATION & TRAINING**

CTK will provide the policy in the following locations:

- Website
- Posted on REALM
- Church office
- Included in new member packets
- Located in the nursery and Sunday school classrooms

All members are asked to sign a form stating they have received and read the Child Protection Policy. Additionally, all members working in children's ministry in any capacity are asked to sign a form stating they have received, read, and agree to abide by this Child Protection Policy. The forms can be found in Appendix K.

### **Training procedures:**

- All adults are encouraged to attend a Sunday school class held on the first Sunday of the Fall quarter in which the policy is reviewed.
- All staff and volunteers working in children's ministry in any capacity, will undergo an annual online training session where the policy is reviewed and then a short quiz is administered for certification.

## **SECTION 15: EVALUATING AND UPDATING THIS POLICY**

CTK will solicit feedback from parents and volunteers using the Child Safety Evaluation form found in Appendix L. The first evaluation will be done 6 months after the policy is implemented and then annually thereafter. The evaluations will be reviewed and changes will be made to the policy as necessary.

## **SECTION 16: ADDITIONAL NURSERY SPECIFIC POLICIES**

Please see Appendix E for the Specific CTK Nursery Policy.

This policy is adopted by the action of the Session of CTK this 17th day of August, 2019 and was updated on April 28, 2021.

Outside Expert Reviewer: Mike Sloan, GRACE Certification Specialist on August 17, 2019.