

Sexual Misconduct Policy

Polk Presbyterian Church

Purpose

In all organizations, there must be standards to which each person should adhere. Polk Presbyterian Church has established such standards to provide a safe and productive work environment and to protect the interests of members and others who visit our church. Employees are expected to provide all visitors with a professional, service-oriented, and pleasant environment in which to conduct their business. It is the policy of Polk Presbyterian Church that all church members, church officers, employees, and volunteers are to maintain the integrity of the ministerial, employment, and professional relationship at all times. It is never permissible or acceptable for a church member, officer, employee, or volunteer to engage in sexual misconduct. Therefore, as part of the ministry of Polk Presbyterian Church this policy is created to establish proper preventative measures to protect individuals against sexual misconduct and to specify courses of action in the case of allegations or an actual incident regarding sexual misconduct.

Standard of Conduct

All workers, volunteer, paid, full-time and part-time, of Polk Presbyterian Church are expected to comply with the established policy on Sexual Misconduct. Any actions contrary to the church policy will be dealt with immediately and may include disciplinary measures up to and including termination, as well as legal ramifications when applicable.

Definitions

Sexual Abuse - any sexual activity with a child, adult, or senior citizen-whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day care situation, a foster/residential setting, or any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the person. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child, provided the child is four years older than the victim" (National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse, 1992).

Sexual Activity - may be violent or non-violent, touching or non-touching, and is an exploitation of a child's, adult's, senior citizen and/or other victim's vulnerability and powerlessness. It involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially, and developmentally ready.

Sexual Misconduct - any inappropriate behavior (physical, verbal, or other) relating to or involving a sexual nature.

a) Principles

1. In responding to allegations of sexual misconduct, members, officers, and employees of Polk Presbyterian Church should seek healing and assure the protection of all persons. Where possible, the privacy of persons should be respected and confidentiality of communications should be maintained.

2. In responding to allegations of sexual misconduct, members, officers, and employees of Polk Presbyterian Church should seek to uphold the dignity of all persons involved, including persons who are alleging harm, persons who are accused of sexual misconduct, and the families and communities of each.
3. Polk Presbyterian Church has jurisdiction over its members, officers, and employees such that if a member, officer, or employee is alleged to have committed an offense against applicable laws, rules, or regulations, the church has the duty to inquire into the allegations and, if the allegations are proven, to correct the behavior of the member, officer, or employee and ensure the safety of others in the community.
4. If the person accused of sexual misconduct is no longer a member, officer, or employee of Polk Presbyterian Church, but the conduct occurred while the person was acting on behalf of Polk Presbyterian Church, the church does not have jurisdiction to correct the behavior, but it does have a duty to hear the allegations of offense and to take measures to prevent future occurrences of harm. The governing body may appoint an administrative committee or commission to hear the allegations of sexual misconduct. The governing body may also take measures to prevent future occurrences of harm through education and policy.

b) Common Supervisory Policies and Procedures

1. Two Adult Rule - Whenever possible, a minimum of two (2) adults in any setting or activity regarding children. In cases where an adult has a legitimate reason to be alone with a child (i.e., counseling, visitation), all workers shall obtain the consent of the child's parent or guardian prior to being alone with the child.
2. Whenever Possible, Have adults (age 18 or older) present with teenage volunteers.
3. Any supervisor is responsible to address suspicious behavior or any behavior that may be contrary to church policy and to document and report such occurrences to the proper authorities.

c) Reporting Procedures

1. All allegations must be taken seriously.
2. All allegations should be reported to the established authority and/or Pastor as immediately as possible.
3. The established authority and/or Pastor will notify the parents or legal guardian in cases involving a child.
4. All situations will be handled forthrightly with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality.
5. Full cooperation will be given to civil authorities when applicable.

6. No accused will be addressed by anyone other than the established authorities until the safety of the child or victim is secured.
7. No victim involved in an allegation or anyone responsible for reporting an allegation will be retaliated against.

d) Investigation of an Allegation

1. In responding to allegations of sexual misconduct, members, officers, and employees of Polk Presbyterian Church should seek healing and assure the protection of all persons. Where possible, the privacy of persons shall be respected and confidentiality of communications should be maintained.
2. In responding to allegations of sexual misconduct, members, officers, and employees of Polk Presbyterian Church shall seek to uphold the dignity of all persons involved, including persons who are alleging harm, persons who are accused of sexual misconduct, and the families and communities of each.
3. All allegations will be investigated expeditiously by established authorities.
4. Any accused worker will be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is completed.
5. All details, interviews, and information will remain confidential to those legitimately involved in the investigation. Any individual or group responsible for a breach in this confidentiality is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.
6. No individual involved in an allegation or anyone responsible for investigating an allegation will be retaliated against.