

Child Protection Policy

First Congregational Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment that abides by Biblical principles. By implementing the practices noted below, our goal is to protect the children in our midst from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) 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” includes both paid and unpaid persons who work with children. This would include anyone involved in church programs for minors, in overnight activities involving minors, in counseling of minors, or in one-on-one mentoring of minors.

Selection of Workers

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

a) Evaluation Period

No person will be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with First Congregational Church for a reasonable period of time. This time of interaction between our congregation and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

b) Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign an application which gives the individual an opportunity to self-disclose areas of potential concern. The application will also request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file.

c) Personal Interview

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled to discuss the applicant's suitability for the position.

d) Reference Checks

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, one or more of the applicant's references will be checked. References may 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.

e) Criminal Background Check

Regardless of position, the First Congregational Church may request potential employees and volunteers to submit to a national criminal background check. Prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church 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 Personnel Committee 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 and/or grounds for termination.

The background check will be repeated after 3 years.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at church.

Adopted April 19, 2017

Amended July 14, 2021