



PALMA CEIA

Presbyterian Church

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**[www.palmaceia.org](http://www.palmaceia.org)**

# **Child and Youth Volunteer Handbook**

Adopted by Session: September 2011

Effective: September 2011



## **WELCOME**

On behalf of the Session at Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church, we want to welcome you as a member of our team of volunteers and thank you for being willing to serve in a needed and non-compensated capacity. We want you to know your efforts are appreciated by all of us, as they will bring glory to God and both joy and pleasure to those with whom you work. We could not function as a church nor could we offer the programs and various special ministry areas without our dedicated and hard working team of PCPC volunteers. We are extremely pleased to have you give your time and God-given talents to a ministry at PCPC.

As a standard procedure, and based upon the recommendation of our insurance provider and the Presbytery, we are instructed to perform a detailed background check on all volunteers as a precaution since many children and youth are always in and around our campus and may be using our facilities. An independent company, which specializes in this type of professional service, performs this confidential background check. When information is received from the company, only our Head of Staff and the Administrator will view it, and the results will be stored digitally.

Your cooperation and understanding of this initial screening requirement is appreciated.

Thank you again for being willing to serve as a volunteer at Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church.

Sincerely,

The Session of PCPC

September 2011

# **CHURCH VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION**

## **A PCPC Child and Youth Volunteer Position**

### **POSITION DESCRIPTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

A PCPC volunteer is a vital component of the work that PCPC is called to do in our service to the Body of Christ. A PCPC volunteer is responsible to the congregation and staff to abide by the policy and procedures as adopted and accepted by PCPC and in obedience to the Holy Scriptures.

### **PREREQUISITES (of all child and youth volunteer positions):**

1. Be of good character with a demonstrated commitment and organization skills.
2. Submit a completed PCPC Volunteer Application.
3. Agree there is no monetary compensation paid for volunteer work. However, expenses approved in advance will be reimbursed.
4. No person may serve as a volunteer until he or she has been a member of the Church for at least six (6) months or has been involved in the life of the Church for one year, as demonstrated by regular worship attendance and involvement in another volunteer ministry.
5. Any “youth” wishing to volunteer with children must be paired with a Screened Adult Volunteer or Employee.
6. Each person, paid or volunteer, applying to work with children/youth shall complete a release form authorizing the church to conduct a background check. The screening will involve completion of an online application and authorization and may include a short interview session with a member of the respective Committee overseeing the function. Volunteers will be re-screened every three years. See the Appendix for instructions and details.
7. All volunteers who are driving or providing transportation must provide the information required for a Motor Vehicle background check. Drivers must also provide a copy of a valid driver’s license and proof of insurance for the vehicle being used. Drivers will be re-screened every three years. See the Appendix for instructions and details.
8. Adult/Youth volunteers who work regularly with children/youth will be required to complete approved training on child protection issues prior to beginning their regular involvement.
9. Before beginning work with children/youth, each employee and Adult/Youth Volunteer must sign a statement that they have read, understood and agree to abide by the Child/Youth Protection Policy. See the Appendix for instructions.

## **Confidentiality**

While the volunteer screening process understandably intrudes into the privacy of an individual's life, our congregation believes that the safety of our children and youth outweighs the potential personal invasion inherent in this process. A neutral third party outside the church will be retained to conduct criminal history checks, sexual offender database searches and motor vehicle reports. All personal information voluntarily disclosed, the results of all third party database searches, and the refusal of any person to participate in a program or activity in lieu of making such disclosures, will be considered confidential. The results of background searches will be presented to the Head of Staff and the Administrator, who will be the only individuals to handle this information. The Pastor/Head of Staff will maintain a secured storage facility in the church's business office for all confidential information not securely stored online.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

1. Follow and abide by the PCPC Policies and Procedures.
2. Work with members, Elders, and Staff to fulfill the responsibilities of selected ministry.
3. Use good judgment and limit liability while performing volunteer work.
4. Maintain and follow instructions regarding tools and equipment used while performing volunteer work.
5. Report any act and/or interactions that you believe are inappropriate to the program leader, who must then immediately notify the Pastor/Head of Staff.

## **TERM OF VOLUNTEER SERVICE:**

1. PCPC volunteers serve for a term of one year as approved by the Elders.
2. Volunteers may serve longer terms, but rotations of volunteers in ministries are encouraged.
3. **All** volunteers serve at the discretion of the Session and Staff of PCPC.

## **TERMINATION:**

PCPC volunteers may be relieved of their duties, if they perform in a manner that does not conform to PCPC Policy and Procedures, or their services are no longer required.



## **CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY**

### **PURPOSE**

To ensure the welfare of the children, youth and adults participating in church sponsored events, while reducing the risk of abuse and sexual misconduct.

### **DEFINITIONS**

- A. What is a “Child”, “Youth”, or “Adult”?

***Child:*** Any person under age 12.

***Youth:*** Any person aged 12 through 18, or anyone over the age of 18 without the mental capacity to consent.

***Adult:*** Any person 18 years of age or older, with the mental capacity to consent.

- B. What is an “Employee”, “Screened Adult/Youth Volunteer”, or “Adult/Youth Volunteer”?

***Employee:*** any person paid by PCPC, overseen by the Session, and screened.

***Screened Adult/Youth Volunteer:*** a volunteer who has met the requirements and been approved to hold a position of responsibility with children/youth.

***Adult/Youth Volunteer:*** a volunteer that has not been screened and occasionally works with children/youth. This person can work with children and youth on a case-by-case basis as long as a Screened Adult Volunteer or an Employee is present.

- C. What is abuse? (As defined in the 2007 Florida Statutes, Chapter 39.01)

Abuse means any willful act or threatened act that results in any physical, mental or sexual injury or harm that causes or is likely to cause the child’s physical, mental or emotional health to be significantly impaired. Abuse of a child includes acts or omissions. Corporal discipline of a child by a parent or legal custodian for disciplinary purposes does not itself constitute abuse when it does not result in harm to the child.

**Physical Abuse:** Includes hitting, kicking, shaking, squeezing, burning, biting, administering poisonous substances, suffocating, drowning, excessive force and/or any other action that inflicts physical harm.

**Sexual Abuse:** Involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children or adolescents, in sexual activity that they do not fully comprehend, or to which they are unable to give informed consent, or which violate the social taboos of family roles or laws.

**Emotional Abuse:** Harming by threats, verbal attacks, taunting or shouting or by constant lack of love and affection. May also include cold or distant behavior that is harmful.

## **PREVENTION AND SAFEGUARDS**

### **A. Ongoing Education of Persons Who Work with Children and Youth**

The church shall ensure that regularly scheduled training focused on the current child/youth protection issues is available to and required for volunteers and employees regularly working with children/youth.

The training includes:

1. The definition and recognition of child abuse.
2. Policies for reporting and responding to child abuse.
3. Guidance for maintaining a positive environment, including appropriate discipline.
4. Age level characteristics.
5. Appropriate behavior for teachers and leaders of children/youth.
6. Definition of appropriate interpersonal boundaries.

### **B. Supervision of Children and Youth**

#### **1. General Rules**

- a. Two or more volunteers or employees must be present at events/programs involving children/youth, one of whom must be a Screened Adult Volunteer.
- b. Children/youth shall not be dismissed from Church School until the worship service ends.
- c. Nursery and toddler room workers shall adhere to an identification system for release of children to the proper adult.
- d. Children below first grade shall only be released to a properly identified and pre-authorized adult. Children grades 1-5 may be released to siblings who are in middle school or above, but may not leave the classroom on their own.
- e. K-1<sup>st</sup>: Children using the bathroom should always have an adult within listening range, standing in the doorway open to the hall.
- f. Pre-K: Children using the bathroom must always have an adult outside the bathroom door within listening range.
- g. When events/programs are away from the church campus (including, but not limited to overnight events) both adults must be Screened Volunteers or employees. If two Screened Adult Volunteers or employees are of the same family, a third adult volunteer must be present.

- h. Overnight events require a Screened Adult Volunteer or employee of each gender, providing there are children/youth participants of each gender

## 2. Open Door Policy

- a. Classrooms: Observation of childcare rooms and classrooms of children and youth may be randomly conducted. Classroom doors with clear observation panes may be kept closed. Whenever children/youth are present, classrooms without a clear pane shall be left standing open.
- b. Offices: All office and meeting room doors having clear observation panes may be kept shut when occupied, but shall remain unlocked whenever occupied by two or more individuals. Offices and meeting room doors without clear observation panes shall be left standing open when occupied by children/youth.
- c. Covering windows in a classroom or office is prohibited.

## C. Transportation

When adult volunteers or employees are transporting children/youth for any church related function, there must be a 1:7 ratio of adults to children/youth. Adjustments to the ratio may need to be made based on the age of the children/youth. The Youth Coordinator maintains approved ratio numbers.

## **REPORTING ABUSE**

If a volunteer or employee has any knowledge or suspicion that abuse has or is occurring, it must be reported immediately to the Program Leader, who must notify the Head of Staff. The volunteer or employee will be assisted/supported in making a confidential report to DCF. It is imperative that neither the volunteer nor the employee engages in questioning the alleged victim or the alleged perpetrator.

Information reported shall include:

- A. The identity of the person(s) who are reporting the suspected abuse and where they can be located if further information is needed.
- B. The identity of the child or youth who is the suspected victim.
- C. The identity of the alleged perpetrator.
- D. The nature of the alleged abuse, injuries, and statements made by the alleged victim.

A record will be kept in a designated confidential file that a report of suspected abuse or neglect was made, with documentation of resolution of each such incident.

# Appendix

## **BACKGROUND SCREENING AND MOTOR VEHICLE RECORDS SEARCH**

As mentioned in the policy above, all volunteers and employees must complete an application and authorize PCPC to use a third party to conduct a background check. If you will be using your personal vehicle to transport children or youth, please be sure to include your driver license information in the appropriate places in the online application. For anyone who will not be driving during their service as a volunteer, this information is not required. To start the application and authorization processes go to:

[www.ministryopportunities.com/palmaceia](http://www.ministryopportunities.com/palmaceia)

- a. If you have any concerns about the potential outcome or results that may be delivered on the criminal background report, sexual offender database search or a motor vehicle record search please contact the Church Administrator by emailing your name and a contact phone number to [volunteer@palmaceia.org](mailto:volunteer@palmaceia.org). He will contact you to discuss the background screening process.
- b. If you are unable to access a computer or the website listed above, you may submit a paper application through the Church office. Email your request to complete a paper application for volunteer background screening to [volunteer@palmaceia.org](mailto:volunteer@palmaceia.org). Please include your name and a contact phone number so we can provide the application form to you and answer any questions.

If any further information is required to complete the screening process or verify results, the Church Administrator or an assigned staff person will contact you. Once the application is completed and submitted, the results will only be available to the Head of Staff and Church Administrator.

If you are not contacted about results from your background check, then you are eligible to begin volunteering. All volunteers that are still serving any Children or Youth ministry programs will be re-screened three years from the date of the original background screening.

## **Policy Acknowledgement**

As referenced in the policy, before beginning work with children/youth, each employee and Adult/Youth Volunteer must sign a statement that they have read, understood and agree to abide by the Child/Youth Protection Policy. Please print the following page, sign the acknowledgement, and return it to the program Director for the appropriate Child or Youth program you will be serving. Or you can return it to the Church office. The acknowledgement must be received before you begin as a volunteer.



## Child and Youth Policy Acknowledgement

I, \_\_\_\_\_(print name), have read, understood and agree to abide by the Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church Child and Youth Protection Policy.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please return the completed form to the Church office or directly to the program Director.*

Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church  
Linda Beckham – Director of Educational Ministries (all children and recreational ministries)  
David Bonnema – Youth Coordinator (middle and high school youth ministries)

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