

Youth Protection Policy

The Groveland Congregational Church, United Church of Christ is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. In order to ensure this, the following policies shall be practiced when working with youth:

1. Screening

All Employees or volunteers who work with minors shall first complete a Volunteer Form/employment application and have CORI check completed.

2. Six Month Rule

All people wishing to be volunteers who work with minors will have been members or friends of the church for at least six months.

3. Two Adult Rule

All children and youth in the Church School under the age of 15, shall be in the care and supervision of at least two adults, one of whom may be a high school aide. Further, no employee or volunteer should place him/herself in a compromising situation by being alone with a child/youth or with children/youth out of the sight of other teachers, advisors, aides or parents. In the event that an employee or volunteer must be alone with more than one child or youth [under the age of 15] it must be in an environment visible to other teachers, advisors, aides or parents. A visible environment shall include:

- A. A classroom with an open door [or windowed door] to a hallway or other populated classroom.
- B. A classroom in a substantially public place such as Fellowship or Memorial Hall.

No employee or volunteer shall be alone with a child in the bathroom for purposes of toileting, clean up from craft or art projects, or care of illness or injury.

4. Parental Consent

Those working with children and youth shall have signed, written consent of a parent or guardian before chaperoning or supervising activities or programs away from the Church. A **Trip/Event Permission Slip** will be required.

5. Reporting Responsibilities (see REPORTING PROTOCOL in SAFE CHURCH POLICY:VOLUNTEERS)

Any inappropriate conduct or relationship between an employee or volunteer and a child or youth shall be promptly reported to the Pastor, Chairperson of Church/Ministry Committee, or a member of the Board of Christian Education.

6. Bathroom Supervision of Church School Children

Volunteer staff members will walk the child under six years to the bathroom and will remain outside in the hallway until the child has completed toileting. If the child needs assistance, the child's parent/guardian will be summoned. Children six years and older

will use the buddy system for toileting. All children will be instructed to wash hands after toileting. In the event that a diaper needs changing, the parents will be located.

7. Regarding discipline

When a child's behavior is deemed disruptive, the supervising individuals will use the least intrusive form of discipline possible. This might include verbal redirection, quiet time, classroom timeout and notifying the parents about the problems and/or taking a disruptive child to staff or parents. Should a child need to be separated from the class and placed in a 1:1 situation with a staff member or volunteer, this 1:1 time will be done in an open area. At all times the child being disciplined will be treated with respect and shall not be disciplined in manner that deprives him/her of a safe environment. Parent/guardian will be summoned as necessary.

8. Youth Group Activities

Physical contact such as wrestling, horseplay or other high contact games are not appropriate recreation activity. No employee or volunteer should initiate or encourage physical or intimate contact with children or youth.

9. Transportation

Employees or volunteers cannot transport children or youth between church and home. Transportation for field trips, activities, or for events is by groups is covered in the Transportation Policy.

10. Complaints of Abuse or Sexual Misconduct/Exploitation/Harassment

1. Report any incident or suspicion or observation of child abuse/neglect verbally within 12 hours to the Pastor(s), Christian Education Associate or the member of the Board of Christian Education.
2. The reporter in collaboration with one of the above staff must immediately provide a verbal report of the incident or suspicion of child abuse/neglect to Children and Families (DCF), to be followed in writing within 48 hours. (DCF form will be completed.)
3. The Office Administrator shall maintain a copy of the written report in the confidential records of Groveland Congregational Church (GCC).
4. The Response Team (see Procedure for Handling Complaints of Sexual Exploitation or Harassment) will be verbally notified by the collaborating staff member and/or reporter. This shall occur within 24 hours of the verbal report to DCF.
5. The insurance carrier of GCC and/or counsel to GCC shall be immediately notified. A member of the Board of Trustees shall make this notification verbally.