

Child and Youth Safe Church Policies and Procedures

First Draft Parish Committee, 02/27/2019

The First Parish in Lincoln is a special place, an open, welcoming church seeking to nurture and support all its parishioners from the youngest to the oldest. This community is committed to creating and maintaining a safe and healthy environment, free of all forms of harassment, discrimination and sexual exploitation. It is the intention and responsibility of our church to proactively adopt policies and procedures that protect children and youth from harm and promotes their spiritual growth.

Hiring Requirements for paid Religious Education staff:

- A. All applicants for paid lead teacher positions that involve working with children need to be a minimum of 21 years or older. All applicants for paid assistant teacher positions that involve working with children need to be a minimum of 14 years or older. All applicants for paid lead teacher positions that involve working with youth need to be a minimum of 25 years or older.
- B. All applicants for positions that involve working with children or youth need to fill out a screening application form and provide three pertinent references.
- C. All applicants agree to a criminal background check.
Criminal background checks may include Massachusetts Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI), National Criminal Background, National Sex Offender Public Registry and Massachusetts Sexual Offender Board. Criminal background checks are made for staff, and volunteers working with children, youth, and teenagers. The checks are performed to ensure that people do not have a history of inappropriate behavior for the position they are to hold. National and Massachusetts criminal background checks will be performed for all paid staff prior to their date of hire.
- D. Failure to give permission for a background check will mean the retraction of any potential job offer.
- E. Criminal background checks for all paid and volunteer RE teachers, members of the Youth Program Committee and Religious Education program staff will be performed every three years for active volunteers and staff. Criminal background checks may also be performed for other volunteers working with children, youth and teenagers on a random or selective confidential basis.
All who are to have criminal background checks made (including staff, church members, and others), must be notified in advance and give written permission for the checks to be performed. The DRE will determine if someone is ineligible for a volunteer position working with children and youth. The results from the all National Criminal Background and CORI checks must be kept in a secure location in the church administrator's office. They will not be made available to members of the congregation.
- F. All Religious Education staff and volunteers will be required to review these policies and sign both a *Code of Conduct*, and *Agreement to Teach* form. (Appendix A & B)

Requirements for non-paid Religious Education volunteers:

Volunteers in the Religious Education (RE) programs at First Parish in Lincoln must meet the following criteria:

- A. Lead teachers must be a minimum of 21 years of age to volunteer with children or a minimum of 25 years to volunteer with youth and known in the First Parish community. Assistant teachers must be a minimum of 14 years of age to volunteer with children.
- B. Prior to participating in RE and Youth Group programs, all volunteers will agree to a yearly background check which includes a satisfactory reference and a CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information). *Criminal background checks may include Massachusetts Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI), National Criminal Background, National Sex Offender Public Registry and Massachusetts Sexual Offender Board. Criminal background checks are made for staff, and volunteers working with children, youth, and teenagers. The checks are performed to ensure that people do not have a history of inappropriate behavior for the position they are to hold.*
- C. All Religious Education staff and volunteers will be required to review these policies, and sign both the *Code of Conduct*, and *Agreement to Teach* form. (Appendix A & B)

Standards of Conduct:

It is the policy of The First Parish in Lincoln that all adult/youth Religious education volunteers and paid Religious Education leaders must adhere to the following guidelines when working with minors.

- A. Paid or volunteer adults/youth shall not touch or interact with children or youth in any way that is sexually stimulating, emotionally demeaning or exploitative. Common expressions of affection and affirmation (hugs and pats on the back, with permission) or physical care (diaper changes or first aid) are appropriate.
- B. Paid and volunteer adults and youth working with children and youth are also tasked with guarding the physical and emotional safety of those in their care and to be aware of signs indicating neglect of the child's well-being
- C. All paid and volunteer RE staff agree to sign a *Code of Conduct for Working with Children and Youth* form. (See appendix A)

Sunday Morning RE Policies:

- A. A parent or guardian needs to be present, either on the church or Parish House property, while their child(ren) are participating in RE classes.

- B. Parents are responsible for picking their children and youth up from their classes at the end of the RE program (11:30 a.m.) and following the sign-out procedure.
- C. Parents must sign their children out of RE classes each Sunday unless there is a signed *Parental Release of Liability* form. (Appendix C)
- D. Visiting children or youth who attend RE classes with a FPL family are the responsibility of that family while the child/youth are on FPL property and must abide by the RE Sunday morning policies.
- E. The DRE or designate will do a walkthrough of RE spaces to check in on the Sunday morning activities.
- F. All classrooms must have either internal windows, doors with glass panes or open doors.
- G. It is the policy of this church to provide adequate supervision and safeguards for child and youth activities. In situations where participants are not readily visible to each other, there will be no fewer than two unrelated adults present with children. Youth age 14 and over may assist an unrelated adult in supervising children and youth activities; however, such assistance does not alter the requirement that at least two unrelated adults be present in closed classrooms. In classrooms with clear visual access via windows or doors, one adult lead teacher and one youth assistant teacher may supervise children.
- H. Parents or guardians of children attending RE programs may have access to the classroom and are welcome to visit at any time.

RE Fieldtrip policy:

- A. Qualified drivers must be a minimum of 25 years old to transport minors.
- B. At a minimum, 2 adults are required per car for children and youth. No child or youth will ride alone with an unrelated adult.
- C. A signed permission slip is required for all offsite visits/events. (Appendix D)
- D. Leaders will have emergency information for each minor and will be responsible for the minors assigned to them.
- E. The DRE will determine if additional, special rules are required for the trip and all drivers will be trained on any applicable rules.

Sleepover: Youth Lock-In

- A ratio of one adult per five youth with a minimum of two adults present in the same room as youth during sleeping hours.
- Chaperones will be screened as required by policy.
- Adult supervisors will maintain a list of attendees.
- All external doors will be locked as soon as possible after all participants have arrived.
- Youth are required to stay in the building during sleeping hours.

- No alcohol, drugs or tobacco will be allowed during a sleepover.
- Youth and their parent(s) will need to sign a Youth Code of Conduct. (Appendix

Other church sponsored activities involving children and youth

- All First Parish in Lincoln church sponsored events require a minimum of two adults. At other church sponsored activities involving both children and adults, parents/guardians are ultimately responsible for the oversight of their children.

Guidelines for Relationships between Adult and Youth

Relationships with screened adults serving as either a mentor or youth adviser are important to the faith development of youth. However, friendships between advisers and youth should be discouraged. An unhealthy relationship initiated by a sex offender may masquerade as a mentor or friend relationship; therefore any relationship developed with a youth by volunteer adviser or mentor, outside of First Parish in Lincoln events, must be with the full knowledge and consent of parent or guardian.

To ensure the safety of the adult and youth, certain guidelines will be in place. If one of these guidelines has been violated it must be reported immediately to the Minister or Director of Religious Education.

- A. Both adult and youth will maintain appropriate physical, mental and verbal boundaries.
- B. Parents will be kept informed of all appointments made between a youth and mentor.
- C. Confidentiality will be maintained between the adult and youth.
- D. Confidentiality does not include any information indicating that a youth is being hurt by someone, is hurting him/herself, or is going to hurt (or has hurt) someone else
- E. Adult must alert the DRE/Lead Minister in the event that a child or youth is either being harmed/ abused/ neglected or is responsible for harming/ abusing/ neglecting him/her self or others.