

First Presbyterian Church

CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

Approved by the Session,

05/15/2023

*A Vision for Children and the Church
Adopted by the 205th General Assembly, 1993*

*Because we affirm that all children are a gift of God, created
by God and created good;
all children are a gift to the whole of the human community;
all children have a real faith, and gifts for ministry;
all children have the right to be children;
and all children are not just tomorrow, they are today.*

*Because we believe that all children depend upon adults for safety and security in a world that
does not always value children;
all children are affected first and most deeply by those things that work against health and
wholeness;
where there is disease, children sicken and die;
where there is homelessness, children sleep on the streets and in other dangerous places;
where there is war, children are frightened and without a safe place;
where there air and water are polluted, children feel the effect in their bodies and in their
futures;
where there is shame, children's spirits are wounded.*

*Therefore we hope for a world where all children can find a safe place;
where all ages, races, genders, creeds, and abilities are recognized, valued, and celebrated;
where all adults hear the voices of children and speak with as well as for them;
where all children have "first call" on the world's resources and first place in the minds and
hearts of the world's adults.*

*Because Jesus welcomed children and encouraged us to welcome them in his name;
Jesus lifted up a child as an example of what the realm of God is like;*

*Therefore we hope for a church where we take seriously our baptismal vow to nurture all
children committed to our care;
where we bring good news to all those places where children are in need;
where adults and children alike share in ministry.*

***We covenant to act so that this vision may be made real for all children, now and in times to
come.***

“Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” ~ Mark 10:13-16

Policy Purpose

First Presbyterian Church of Haddonfield (FPCH) is committed to providing a church environment that is a safe place for children, youth, and vulnerable and legally incapacitated adults and that will protect them from any abuse when they are involved in church-related activities. FPCH adopts these policies and procedures not only to maximize safety and prevent such abuse from occurring within its church community, but also to guide and protect volunteers and employees from unwarranted allegations of such abuse.

Terms and Definitions

Child abuse - An act committed by a parent, caregiver, or person in a position of trust (even though he or she may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens harm to a child’s physical or mental health or welfare. Types of abuse may include physical abuse, including physical injury or threat of injury; physical neglect, such as failure to provide necessary care to a child; sexual abuse; mental abuse or neglect; emotional abuse; and spiritual abuse. Child abuse includes, but is not limited to:

Neglect of Basic Needs - A form of abuse. Denial of food, water, cleanliness, clothing, and sleep are not appropriate means of discipline.

Physical Abuse - Any physical force applied by an adult or older youth in a position of care or authority to a child, youth, or vulnerable adult. Physical force (hitting, spanking, shaking, shoving, etc.) is not to be used by leaders in our programs.

Sexual Abuse – Any sexual contact or sexual interaction between a child (under the age of eighteen years) and an adult; any use of a child for the sexual simulation of an adult, a third person, or the child; any risqué jokes, innuendo, unacceptable visual contact, unwelcome casual touch, unwelcome and inappropriate hugs and kisses, and sexually suggestive pictures between an adult and a child, as deemed inappropriate by any reasonable adult. Even if a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, out of ignorance, innocence, or fear does not resist, it is still abuse.

Emotional Abuse - Inappropriately belittling, hateful, or angry words and/or actions directed toward a child, youth, or vulnerable adult. Discipline by humiliation is also emotional abuse.

Spiritual Abuse- Using religious references to shame or by guilt to motivate a child into a particular action or behavior.

Employee – Any person who works for salary or wages at FPCH.

Volunteer – Any person not employed by-FPCH who, at any time during the year, teaches, supervises, or helps with children and youth activities, or is in the presence of children or youth. These activities include, but are not limited to, Church School and Worship Enrichment, Nursery, Childcare, Presbyterian Youth programs, Children & Youth Choirs, Summer Camps & Conferences, Children & Youth mission trips, Scouting, Confirmation Mentors, and Weekday Preschool.

Leader – An adult designated by FPCH or by a sponsoring organization to have responsibility for children and/or youth. The adult must be a minimum of 18 years of age. Leaders of overnight trips must be at least 21 years of age. It is suggested that leaders be a minimum of four years older than the children or youth they are supervising.

Church Sponsored Activity - Includes any and all gatherings that arise from any worship, educational, childcare, fellowship, administrative, pastoral, mission or recreational event generated or organized by FPCH, whether on-campus or off-campus.

Volunteer Ministry – Includes any church sponsored activity engaged in by a volunteer.

Child or Youth – Persons under 18 years old and considered a minor under the law. This term shall also include legally incapacitated persons.

Screening

Staff: Background Requirements

Applicants for full-time or part-time paid employment at FPCH will be required to provide, complete or undergo the following:

- An Employment and Volunteer Ministry Application which will include information regarding past employment and prior convictions for crimes;
- A specific statement that the individual has no prior conviction for child abuse or sexual misconduct; and
- A reference check covering, where possible, the two immediate past employers, or personal references unrelated to the applicant if no information can be obtained from past employers.
- Prior to hiring an applicant, FPCH will obtain a criminal record report for that individual. Every five years, FPCH will perform national criminal database searches and national sex offender registry searches on existing employees, and each employee shall be required to execute any documents that FPCH might request for such purpose. Any individual who has lived outside New Jersey in the last five years may be subject to additional county or state court search.
- Upon being hired, each new employee will be required to sign an acknowledgement that he or she has received a copy of the FPCH Child & Youth Protection Policy, understands it and will comply with its terms.
- Each new employee will be provided orientation and training on child abuse, including its recognition and prevention, as well as on the terms and conditions of this policy.

Any candidate for employment who has a past conviction of or pending proceeding addressing an allegation of child abuse or neglect cannot be employed by FPCH. Conviction for any of the following will automatically disqualify an individual from employment: pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults, indecent exposure, pornography, or abuse of a minor.

Volunteers: Background Requirements

Volunteers working with youth or children of the church in any volunteer ministry will be required to provide, complete or undergo the following:

- An Employment and Volunteer Ministry Application which will include information regarding past employment and prior convictions for crimes;
- A specific statement that the individual has no prior conviction for child abuse or sexual misconduct; and
- Prior to becoming a volunteer, FPCH will obtain a background check for that individual. Every five years, FPCH will perform national criminal database searches and national sex offender registry searches on existing volunteers

and each volunteer shall be required to execute any documents that FPCH might request for such purpose. Any individual who has lived outside New Jersey in the last five years may be subject to additional county or state court searches.

- Each new volunteer, prior to beginning any volunteer role, will be required to sign an acknowledgement that he or she has received a copy of the FPCH Child & Youth Protection Policy, understands it, and will comply with its terms.
- Each new volunteer will be provided orientation and training on child abuse, including its recognition and prevention, as well as on the terms and conditions of this policy.

Any candidate for volunteer service who has a past conviction of or pending proceeding related to an allegation of child abuse or neglect MAY NOT work with children and youth at FPCH. Refusal to complete the Volunteer Application process or a conviction for any of the following will automatically disqualify an individual from volunteer service with children and youth: pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults, indecent exposure, pornography, or abuse of a minor.

Leaders of other groups of children or youth who use FPCH facilities will also be required to read the Policy and sign the Volunteer Acknowledgement Statement.

General Procedures

Supervision: Two-Leader/Open-Door Policy

Whenever possible, any adult who is present in a church sponsored activity for children or youth should be accompanied by another adult. FPCH employees and volunteers should not, during an FPCH program, be alone with a single child where they cannot be observed by others.

In order to avoid situations where an individual is alone in a room with children, all children's and youth activities should be supervised by at least two adult leaders. Whenever possible, these adults should be unrelated. The presence of two leaders is to protect children and youth against situations in which abuse might occur, and to protect leaders against false allegations of abuse or neglect.

Classrooms, childcare rooms, and any area in which programs for children or youth are taking place may be visited without prior notice by church staff,

parents, or other volunteer church workers. No windows may ever be totally blocked so as to prevent visual observation into the classroom.

In the event that two leaders cannot be present in the room, such that one leader is alone in a room with one or more children or youth, a door or half-door from the room must be left open. The leader should not position himself or herself in the room such that other adults passing in the hallway cannot see him or her.

Furthermore, at any counseling session with children or youth, the door or half-door of the room used must remain open for the entire session. The session should be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance.

Each classroom for children and youth should ideally have a door with an observation window or a half- door, such that the upper half may be kept open. If it does not, and two leaders are not present in the room, then the door must remain open at all times.

Ratios

The recommended adult/volunteer-to-child/youth ratio, based on best practices, is 1:6, gender balance is recommended. For overnight trips, the ratio is 1:4, although 1:6 is permissible.

Parental/Guardian Consent

Children and youth must obtain parental or guardian permission for involvement in church sponsored activities or programs that involve travel away from the church's physical facilities.

"Six Month" Rule for Volunteers

A volunteer must be a member of FPCH, or have regularly attended that congregation, for six months before working with youth or children. This requirement does not apply to paid staff or volunteers involved in activities in which their own children are present. The Session shall have the authority to waive this six-month rule upon request, where appropriate.

Policy Review

The staff and Session will review the policy each year in order to be versed in proper procedures to follow if they receive allegations or inquiries.

Code of Conduct

1. Staff and volunteers are required to adhere to the FPCH Child Protection Policy guidelines in all their interactions with children and youth.
2. Staff and volunteers will respect children's rights not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable or that disregard their right to say no. This includes, handshakes, hugs, and patting.
3. Staff and volunteers may not discipline children by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care.
4. Physical restraint is used only in situations necessary to protect the child, other children, or staff from harm.
5. While supervising children and youth participating in FPCH programs, staff and volunteers should know where participants are at all times.
6. Restroom supervision: Whenever possible, volunteers will make sure any restroom used is not occupied by any suspicious or unknown individual before allowing children and youth to use the facilities. Always send children in pairs with a volunteer. The staff or volunteer, will stand in the doorway while children are using the restroom. This policy allows privacy for the children and protection for the staff or volunteer (not being alone with a child). Staff and volunteers shall strongly encourage parents to take children to the restroom whenever possible.
7. Diapering and potty training should be done primarily by staff members/paid caregivers. Volunteers may be asked to help in certain situations and should follow posted nursery guidelines when performing diapering.
8. Staff and volunteers should be alert to the physical and emotional state of children. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported according to the FPCH Child Protection Policy (see REPORTING below).
9. Staff and volunteers are discouraged from being alone with children or youth without parental permission.
10. Under no circumstances should volunteers release children to anyone other than the authorized parent, guardian, or other individual authorized by the parent or guardian.

11. Consuming, using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while working or volunteering with children or youth is prohibited.
12. Being impaired by legally prescribed drugs while working or volunteering with children or youth is prohibited.
13. Possessing or using concealed weapons or firearms while working or volunteering with children or youth is prohibited.
14. Smoking or use of tobacco *in the presence of* children, youth, or parents while working or volunteering is prohibited.
15. Staff and volunteers should not release children to any adult or family member, including older siblings, other than the child's parent/guardian unless prior verbal permission has been obtained from the parent.
16. Profanity, inappropriate jokes and media, sharing intimate details of one's personal life, and any kind of harassment in the presence of children, youth, or parents are prohibited.
17. Staff and volunteers will be mindful of the content on any portable electronic device, social networking pages, or other electronic media that might be accessible to any children and youth.
18. Staff and volunteer adult and youth leaders shall wear appropriate dress when volunteering with children and/or youth.
19. Movies used in all church settings shall meet the voluntary movie rating system guidelines established by the Motion Picture Association of America for age-appropriate content.
20. Staff and volunteers may not date or be romantically involved with program participants or church members who are younger than 18 years of age.
21. Staff and volunteers are required to read, sign, and adhere to all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse and will attend training sessions on the subject.
22. Staff and volunteers are required to report any concerns or suspicions regarding their observations of any individual's interaction with a child. Except for concerns related to alleged or potential abuse, which require mandated specific immediate reports (see REPORTING below), these concerns may be reported to the individual. If the concerns are not alleviated by a change in the individual's behavior, a second report must be made to a pastor or the clerk of Session. If it is necessary for an adult to take a child or youth home after an event, all staff and volunteers shall abide by safe driving laws when transporting children or youth. Driving

record history shall be obtained on all youth leaders and volunteers. An effort should be made to contact the family and inform them of the situation before transporting the child or youth. It is always advisable for leaders to give parents advance notice and full information regarding the event in which their child or youth will be participating.

23. In the event that a one-on-one child/youth to adult scenario arises, i.e., unexpected transportation needs, confirmation mentoring, or otherwise, parent permission should be granted in writing or by phone when possible. It is preferred to have mentors and confirmands meet in pairs or to meet in public places. The two adult rule for driving children home after an event should always be followed except for emergencies.

Confidentiality

All communications shall be conducted in as confidential a manner as is compatible with the reporting of an allegation.

Parental Notification

If an incident has occurred on church property during a church sponsored event, the parents of any minor involved in any allegation of abuse shall be immediately notified.

Potential Responses

Upon any report of potential or alleged child abuse by an employee or volunteer of FPCH, any individual accused of such conduct may be temporarily relieved of any duties involving youth or children pending an appropriate investigation.

Off-Site Trips & Events

Permission Forms

Parent/Guardian Permission Forms and Medical Consent Forms must be completed prior to all trips. The two-adult rule must be followed throughout the trip with any foreseeable exceptions clearly stated and approved in advance by the parent or guardian. The total number of adults on each trip will be adjusted according to the requirements of the planned activities. Under no circumstances may one adult alone take or accompany minors on an overnight outing.

Ratios

The required adult to child/youth ratio for chaperones for any ministry with children or youth shall be 1:6. Gender balance is preferred. For overnight trips, an

adult to child/youth ratio for chaperones of 1:4 is preferred, although 1:6 is permissible. Gender balance is required.

Rooming Arrangements

- Rooming arrangements should provide for children and youth of the same sex to room together and adults of the same sex to room together.
- Transgender and gender non-conforming youth will typically sleep in lodging areas according to their gender identity. There is not a “one-size-fits-all” housing policy for transgender or gender non-conforming youth. We will openly communicate with the youth about their needs and desires in order to create the best solution.
- When possible, adults’ rooms shall be next to youth rooms and youth may be checked on during the night.
- Ordinarily, adults should not share rooms with children. An individual minor may share a room with an individual adult if the two are related (parent/child), or if written permission has been granted prior to the event by a parent or guardian (in such cases as Intergenerational Mission Trips).
- In situations where one large sleeping area is provided, two adults of the same sex shall occupy the same area as children or youth of the same sex.

Medical

- Each child, youth, adult volunteer, and staff must submit a completed medical/insurance form. Each minor’s forms must have a parent or guardian’s signature.
- Whenever possible, all activities with children and youth shall have a staff or volunteer adult leader with current-certification first aid/CPR training.
- Group leaders should have a copy of all medical forms for overnight or off-site events. These forms will be kept on the event site for the duration of the event.
- First Aid supplies will be available on the event site. All workers will be informed of the location of First Aid supplies/equipment and shall have access to information concerning specific medical conditions and concerns of participants.
- A written report will be completed in the case of any accident, medical emergency or injury.

Driving Rules/Travel

- All drivers of children and youth must be over 21. In situations where this is not possible, parent permission shall be obtained before the trip and vehicles shall travel together.
- When one vehicle is used for an event, the two-leader rule still applies unless parental permission is obtained prior to the trip.
- Travel arrangements for off-campus events will be coordinated through the church.
- All adult drivers of children and youth will be screened through a driving history search. A valid driver's license, registration, and proof of insurance will be required.
- All vehicles should remain parked throughout the duration of the activity except for transporting children and obtaining supplies.
- Seat belts will be provided for all passengers.

Outside Groups

All leaders of non-FPCH sponsored groups and events that use FPCH facilities and supervise children and youth are expected to adhere to these policies. Upon receipt of the policy from FPCH, the leaders must review the Child and Youth Protection Policy and sign the Outside Group Leaders Release Form to acknowledge their review of it and to confirm their agreement to follow the policy. This includes, but is not limited to, groups such as: Boy/Girl Scouts, as well as outreach groups, groups renting church space, and visiting youth groups. Given the nature of the outside groups that use FPCH facilities, FPCH will not perform background checks, seek personal and professional references, review employment records, or obtain civil and criminal records for such groups. Leaders of outside groups are expected to conduct their own due diligence in this regard.

Appendix A, Indications of Abuse

CHILD and YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY **INDICATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE**

What is an “abused, neglected, or dependent child”?

The definition of an abused, neglected, or dependent child is very broad. It includes any child under eighteen or vulnerable or legally incapacitated whose parents or other person responsible for the child’s care:

- Inflicts or allows to be inflicted, or creates a substantial risk of serious physical injury not by accident;
- Creates or allows to be created serious emotional damage;
- Uses or allows to be used cruel or grossly inappropriate procedures or devices to modify behavior;
- Neglects or refuses to provide care, supervision, or discipline necessary for the individual’s health;
- Abandons such child or allows such child to live in an environment injurious to the child’s welfare;
- Is unable to provide for care or supervision and lacks an appropriate child care alternative; or
- Commits or allows to be committed any act of sexual exploitation or any sexual act upon a child in violation of the law.

How can children be at risk in a “safe” place like church?

There may be several reasons children can be at risk even in “safe” places like a church. The following factors may contribute to the risk in a church setting:

- Ready access to children
- Institutional surprise: “We’re good people”
- Many churches have historically failed to prosecute
- Fewer external barriers than other youth-serving organizations

- Challenges coordinating child protection strategies

Potential indicators of sexual abuse

A **combination** or **pattern** of indicators may indicate the possibility of sexual abuse. Potential indicators include:

- Child does not want to go to a certain place or be around a particular person
- Child shows sexual knowledge or behavior beyond that expected for his or her age
- Child is overly affectionate and seems seductive with peers and adults
- Child has recurring genital infections or pain in the genital area
- Child has difficulty in walking or sitting
- Child has torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- Child shows reluctance to change clothes
- Child is withdrawn, chronically depressed, or displays infantile behavior
- Child has exceptionally poor peer relationships
- Child is threatened by physical contact
- Child has unexplained money or “gifts”

For more information, please visit:

Prevent Child Abuse America at www.preventchildabuse.org

Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey at www.preventchildabuse.nj.org

Appendix B, Forms

- Employee & Volunteer Ministry Application Form
- Employee and Volunteer Recommitment Form
- Agreement for Non-Affiliated Groups Utilizing Church Facilities

First Presbyterian Church, Haddonfield Employee and Volunteer Ministry Application Form

This application form is to be completed annually by all FPCH employees and any volunteers desiring to serve in or continue serving in a ministry position involving the supervision or custody of children and/or youth. This form will be completed on-line or by paper copy at the onset of ministry and resubmitted every three years. It is being used to help the church provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities. This confidential information will be viewed only by those persons designated by the church as having access to this private information. It will be stored in secure locked storage or secure on-line storage.

Name _____ Date _____
 Last First Middle

Address _____

How long at this address? _____ If less than five years, give previous addresses/years:

Years _____ Address _____

Years _____ Address _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Occupation _____

Places of Employment _____

VOLUNTEERS

(Name of church) member since _____

List (names and addresses) other churches you attended regularly during the last five years:

What leadership/volunteer experience have you had with children/youth during the last five years? Be specific. Where possible, include dates and places if not at (Name of church).

Please list other (Name of church) ministries in which you were or are involved in the last five years.

Have you ever been denied participation in supervising youth activities in any organization? YES NO
_____ _____

If YES, please explain. Add more pages as needed:

Confidential Information ~ to be used only by those authorized by the Church:

Auto Insurance Carrier _____

Do you have any medical training? _____

Are you currently CPR certified? _____

Is there any health-related reason that would keep you from effectively working with or cause any potential harm to children? _____ If yes, please explain. _____

Personal References (Two are required. Must be over 18 years of age and not related to you.)

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Relationship _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Relationship _____

APPLICANT'S STATEMENT

The information contained in this application is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references, churches, or other organizations listed in this application to give you any information they may have (including employer's opinions) regarding my character and fitness for working with children or youth and I hereby release all such references, churches, or other organizations from liability for damages of whatever kind or nature that may result from furnishing such evaluations to you. I waive any right I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me in this application.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to follow the Child and Youth Protection Policy and to refrain from inappropriate conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church. I understand that any violation of this Policy or misrepresentation of information that I have provided may result in termination of employment or volunteer service with children/youth.

I have no past conviction of or pending proceeding addressing an allegation of child abuse or neglect. I authorize that a Criminal and Civil Records Check may be conducted on me and that any information which pertains to any record of convictions contained in police files or any criminal or civil file maintained on me, whether national, state, or local, be released to FPCH. In so authorizing, I

release any law enforcement agencies, FPCH or those individuals receiving the results of the check from any and all liability resulting from such disclosure.

I acknowledge that I have read the FPCH Child and Youth Protection Policy and have received a copy for my personal use.

I further state that I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE FOREGOING RELEASE AND KNOW THE CONTENTS THEREOF AND I SIGN THIS RELEASE AS MY OWN FREE ACT IN EXCHANGE FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE AS AN FPCH EMPLOYEE OR VOLUNTEER. This is a legally binding agreement, which I have read and understand. I understand that the personal information will be held confidential by the Presbytery.

Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____

**First Presbyterian Church, Haddonfield
Employee and Volunteer Recommitment Form**

This renewal of commitment form is to be completed annually by all employees and those desiring a volunteer ministry position involving the supervision or custody of children and/or youth. It is being used to help the church provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities.

Name _____ Date _____
 Last First Middle

Address _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Occupation _____

Places of Employment _____

Auto Insurance Carrier _____

Do you have any medical training? _____

Are you currently CPR certified? _____

Is there any health-related reason that would keep you from effectively working with or cause any potential harm to children? _____ If yes, please explain. _____

Please list the (Name of church) ministries in which you are currently involved.

APPLICANT'S RECOMMITMENT STATEMENT

The information in this Recommitment Form is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I acknowledge that I have read the FPCH Child and Youth Protection Policy and have received a copy for my personal use. I agree to

follow the Child and Youth Protection Policy and to refrain from inappropriate conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church. I understand that any violation of the Code of Conduct or misrepresentation of information that I have provided may result in termination of employment or volunteer service with children/youth.

Applicant's Signature _____ **Date** _____

**First Presbyterian Church, Haddonfield
Agreement for Non-Affiliated Groups Utilizing Church Facilities**

As a supervising member/leaders of (name of group), I am responsible for the activities of the members of (name of group) while using the facilities of or being present on the grounds of First Presbyterian Church of Haddonfield (FPCH). I have received and read a copy of the FPCH Child and Youth Protection Policy (the "Policy"). I agree to abide by policies and procedures set forth in the Policy. I understand, however, that FPCH will not perform background checks, personal and professional reference checks, or provide training to the leaders, supervisors, or representatives of (name of group). I further understand that failure to abide by the Policy may result in termination of (name of group) use of FPCH facilities on a temporary or permanent basis.

Signature of Leader/Supervisor

Date

Appendix C – Information on Reporting to the State of New Jersey

Reporting: here is information from www.preventchildabuse.nj.org

Report Abuse

Who is responsible for reporting suspected child abuse in New Jersey?

In New Jersey, ANY person having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused or neglected has a legal responsibility to report it to the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS). A concerned caller does not need proof to report an allegation of child abuse and can make the report anonymously. Any person who knowingly fails to report suspected abuse or neglect according to the law or to comply with the provisions of the law is a disorderly person and subject to a fine of up to \$1,000 or up to six months imprisonment, or both.

How do I report child abuse in New Jersey?

Call New Jersey's Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline at **1-877-NJ ABUSE (652-2873)** (TTY/TDD use **1-800-835-5510**)

They are available and will respond 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If a child is in immediate danger, you should call 911.

Do callers have immunity from civil or criminal liability?

Any person who, in good faith, makes a report of child abuse or neglect or testifies in a child abuse hearing resulting from such a report is immune from any criminal or civil liability as a result of such action. Calls can be placed to the hotline anonymously.

What happens when I call the Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline?

The hotline is answered by trained caseworkers who know how to respond to reports of child abuse/neglect. This caseworker may ask you about:

- **Who:** The child and parent/caregiver's name, age and address and the name of the alleged perpetrator and that person's relationship to the child.
- **What:** Type and frequency of alleged abuse/neglect, current or previous injuries to the child and what caused you to become concerned.
- **When:** When the alleged abuse/neglect occurred and when you learned of it.
- **Where:** Where the incident occurred, where the child is now and whether the alleged perpetrator has access to the child.
- **How:** How urgent the need is for intervention and whether there is a likelihood of imminent danger for the child.

What happens after I make the call?

When a report indicates that a child may be at risk, the Division of Youth and Family Services will promptly investigate the allegations of child abuse and neglect within 24 hours of receipt of the report.

What if I tell Prevent Child Abuse-New Jersey about my concerns?

While Prevent Child Abuse-New Jersey values the health and safety of children — we, like all NJ citizens, are legally required to forward concerns about suspected abuse to the Division of Youth and Family Services. They are the only investigative and protective bodies of the State of NJ responsible for handling them.

We all care about children. We urge you to report any concern about the welfare of a child to DYFS, the legal authorities responsible for investigating suspected situations of abuse. You should call **1-877-NJ-ABUSE** and let them know the details of your concern. They will take the matter seriously and gather information that is in the best interest of the child.