**Safe Child Policy**

**Reformed Church of New Paltz**

**and**

**The Huguenot Street Cooperative Nursery School**

Child abuse strikes children from every social background, race and age. It often occurs in the settings where children or youth completely trust adults: homes, schools, camps, athletic programs and most sadly, church. It can happen in any church, including ours.

When a church is rocked by the exposure of child abuse, immeasurable damage has already taken place in the lives of the victim and his/her family. Members of the church family suffer shock; the witness and viability of the church's youth and children's ministries are jeopardized, and blame and guilt can run rampant. The Reformed Church of New Paltz (RCNP) has a moral and legal obligation to reduce the possibility of child abuse ever occurring in our church and to protect our staff and volunteers from false allegations. Therefore, we have established the following policy and protection requirements to help make our church a safe place. Implementation of the policy will assist us to:

Safeguard the children and youth of our church from abuse and sexual molestation.

Protect church staff and volunteer workers from potential allegation of abuse and molestation.

Limit the extent of our church's legal risk and liability in the event of abuse or molestation.

The major elements of this prevention/protection policy include:

Adoption of general protection policies for all aspects of children and youth ministries.

Teacher screening

Worker supervision

Reporting requirements

Response plans

Worker education requirements

General Protection Policies

The following are general protection policies which will apply to all ministries in which children are involved at RCNP.

*The "Two Adult Rule".* This requires that two or more adults be immediately accessible during any activity involving children or youth.

No person who has been convicted, pled, or plea bargained on charges of either child sexual or physical abuse will be allowed to serve in any church-sponsored activity or program for children or youth. We recognize that the blood of Christ was shed to forgive all sins, and repentant believers are always welcome within our fellowship. They are encouraged to serve the Lord in other capacities within our congregation.

All classroom doors will be equipped with a window or will be kept propped open.

All ministers, the director of education, and youth leaders, and teachers (Sunday School and Cooperative Nursery School) will have full background checks, sexual background check, and be trained.

All nursery workers will have a sexual background check and will be trained.

All members of the consistory will have a sexual background check and will be trained.

Anyone age 17 and under will not be required to have a background check but will be trained.

Screening

All RCNP’s teachers and helpers, full or part-time, compensated or volunteer, including clergy, will be screened. This screening process will include some or all of the following: the completion of a questionnaire, a personal interview, reference checks, a sexual background check, and/or a criminal background check. However, there is no criminal background check of minors. All applicants must sign an agreement statement which binds them to follow the prevention/protection policies of RCNP.

RCNP will use an independent contractor specializing in background checks (Protect My Ministry). The information received will only indicate if there is a red flag concerning working with children. Specifics will not be shared with anyone at RCNP.

Classroom and Bathroom Supervision

The *"Two Caregiver Rule"* says that two caregivers, with a minimum of one screened caregiver 18 years of age or over, should be immediately accessible during any activity involving children and youth.

All children must be accompanied to the restrooms by an adult or by using the "buddy system". The adult will offer assistance, as required in relation to the age of the child, due to a physical disability, or if the child asks for help. The restroom door and the stall door must be left open if an adult is providing assistance.

Diapers are to be changed in open view of others and on the appropriate changing table in the nursery.

Classrooms will have windows or an "open door" policy so that persons passing by can observe inside.

Youth Ministry

Due to the nature of relational youth ministry, there will be one-on-one times between adult staff and students. We expect that ~~a~~ the majority of this contact will be in public places; however, in the one-on-one times, we expect these precautions to be taken:

A parent or another adult is aware of the time, place, and details of contact. If a staff is asked to give a ride to a student, the staff person must call the parent before the ride begins and then greet the parent upon arrival. This eliminates any question about duration of time.

If a student asks for a confidential meeting (unknown to parents), another church staff member must be notified prior to the meeting.

At no time shall staff and students be alone together in a non-visible area (such as a closed office, classroom, home, or vehicle).

Reporting Requirements

All reports of suspected inappropriate behavior must be taken seriously. They must be handled forthrightly with respect for people's privacy and confidentiality and adequate care shown for the well­being of the victims.

All of New York State’s reporting requirements will be followed. New York Law regarding actions that warrant a report and how to make the report is located at <https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/publications/Pub1159.pdf> and will be posted in our education building.

What must reported?

"Child abuse" means harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare that occurs through non-accidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or maltreatment, by a parent, a legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare or by a teacher, a teacher's aide, or a member of the clergy.

How to report?

... any member of the clergy or regulated childcare provider who has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect shall report immediately, by telephone or other verbal means the suspected child abuse or neglect to the department. Within 72 hours after making the verbal report, the reporting person shall file a written report as required in this act.

The written report

The written report shall contain the name of the child and a description of the abuse or neglect. If possible, the report shall contain the names and addresses of the child's parent(s), the child's guardian(s), the person(s) with whom the child resides, and the child's age. The report shall contain other information available to the reporting person that might establish the cause of the abuse or neglect, and the manner in which the abuse or neglect occurred.

\*A form is available from the Director of Children’s Ministry or the Pastors.

Worker Education Requirements

All applicants, adults and minors, are welcome to apply to serve in the RCNP Children's Ministry and the Huguenot Street Cooperative Nursery School.

The Director of the Children's Ministry is responsible for development, implementation, and documentation of all worker education and training requirements.

In-service training of all workers involved with children and youth is required both as initial orientation and as an ongoing facet of risk reduction and prevention.

Requirements for Ongoing Education

At the start of each academic year, all new applicants and returning workers will re-read this policy and sign the FORM 3: CERTIFICATION OF TRAINING AND COMPLIANCE. (Forms 1 and 2 only need to be completed one time.)

Frequency of Criminal and Sexual Background Checks

As long as a returning volunteer or staff has been a consistent participant in the life of the church, a repeated background check is not required. If a returning volunteer has been absent from the life of the church for a period of more than nine months, they will be asked to meet with the board of elders and repeat the background check before starting to work with children.

**Reformed Church of New Paltz (RCNP)**

**FORM 1: PERMISSION FOR A REFERENCE CHECK AND BACKGROUND SCREENING**

I give permission to Reformed Church of New Paltz to contact the references I provide, and I give permission for the church to do a background check that includes a check of a Sexual Offenders Registry and/or a check of a National Criminal File and Social Security Verification. It does not include a credit check report. I certify that the information I provide below is true and complete. I understand that this information, and information that others may give about me, will not be photocopied. Neither will it be electronically entered into the church’s records. It will be used by Reformed Church of New Paltz only in accordance with the church’s Safe Sanctuary Policy. It will be kept confidential and secure.

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Signature Date

1. Name (please print First, M.I., Last):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Any other name used:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. SSN: This will be encrypted online, only one person at Protect My Ministry will see it.

3. Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. Current Address:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Former address if you have lived at your current address less than five years:

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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5. Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

6. a. Attending Reformed Church of New Paltz \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_months/years

 b. List any other congregations you regularly attended in last five years:

7. If you have worked with children or youth before, please tell us when and in what capacity.

 Dates Organization Responsibilities

a.

b.

c.

8. Names of three adults that are not related to you that we may email a reference form. Please include name, email address and phone number.

a.

b.

c.

9. Background Check Information:

Have you ever been convicted of a crime? YES ⬜ NO ⬜

If yes, please state when, where, and describe the circumstances including DUI/DWI.

**REFORMED CHURCH OF NEW PALTZ**

**FORM 2: REFERENCE CHECK**

Who are you submitting a reference for? (First and Last Name):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Your Name(First and Last Name):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Your phone number should we have further questions:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for taking the time to complete this reference. Your thoughts and experiences related to the applicant are very important to us. All references are held in confidence.

\* \* \* \* \* \* \*

1. How long have you know this person, and in what capacity?

2. Have you ever observed this person interact with children? If yes, please describe.

3. How do you describe this person as a role model for children/youth?

4. Can you recommend that this person be in a position of caring for children or youth, or being in proximity to children or youth, without any concern, reservations, or hesitation?

5. Is there any additional information that you think it is important for our church to know about this person?

**REFORMED CHURCH of NEW PALTZ**

**FORM 3: CERTIFICATION OF TRAINING AND COMPLIANCE**

I certify that I have a copy of the Safe Sanctuary Policy, that I have read it, that I have been trained about its contents, and that I will comply with its provisions.

Date of Training:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Leader of the Training:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name(First and Last)

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Signature Date