

PENNSYLVANIA SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
**Statement of Policy for Protecting Youth**

*Prohibition of Sexual Exploitation and Harassment*

The United Church of Christ (UCC) and the Pennsylvania SE Conference (PSEC) is committed to creating and maintaining a worship and work community in which members, friends, staff and volunteers can worship and work together in an atmosphere free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation. Specifically, all persons associated with the UCC and the PSEC should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to sexual exploitation and harassment, and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy. It is the intention and the responsibility of the church to take whatever action may be needed to prevent and correct behavior which is contrary to this policy, and if necessary, discipline those persons who violate this policy.

*Care-Givers Conduct Policy*

Ministers, adult advisors, and other employees or volunteers engaged in the ministries of the church are responsible for knowing the possible impact of their words and actions in caring for the emotional, mental and spiritual needs of persons who come to them for help or over whom they have any kind of authority. Sexual harassment or sexual exploitation of a participant or other individual, with whom a minister, advisor, employee or volunteer engaged in the ministries of the church has a care-giving relationship, is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated during this event. Because ministers, adult advisors and other church employees or volunteers engaged in the ministries of the church often deal with individual who are emotionally and psychologically fragile or otherwise personally vulnerable, it is imperative that the care-givers be healthy psychologically, emotionally and spiritually, and that the care-givers have adequate preparation and education for helping those individuals under their care. It is the policy of the UCC and the PSEC to encourage its ministers, staff and volunteers to nurture safety within care-giving relationships by being attentive to self-care, education and the importance of referring those in need. It is also expected that ministers, adult advisors and other employees or volunteers engaged in providing ministry will complete and submit the disclosure document as included in the registration packet.

*Youth Protection Policy*

The UCC and the PSEC are 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, we expect that all people applying to be volunteers who work with minors will have been members for at least six months or friends for at least one year of the UCC. It is the policy of the UCC to provide adequate supervision for all youth activities. We also expect **ALL** ministers, advisors, employees or volunteers who work with minors to complete and submit the disclosure document.

**Definitions**

Sexual exploitation is sexual activity or contact (not limited to intercourse) in which a minister, advisor, or other church employee or volunteer engaged in the work of the church takes advantage of the vulnerability of a participant or allowing the participant to engage in any sexual behavior with the church worker/volunteer. Sexual harassment includes repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It also includes behavior directed at another person's sexuality or sexual orientation with the intent of intimidating, humiliating or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or circumstance of instruction, employment or participation in this or any other church activity or;
- submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making personnel or church-related decisions affecting an individual or;
- such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance of participation in church activities, or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work or church environment.

Prohibited sexual harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones. This includes:

- written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, invitations;
- verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits or sexual orientation, sexual propositions;
- physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse, and;
- visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters or magazines.

Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome, and using sexual behavior to control, influence or affect the career, salary, work, learning or worship environment of another. It is impermissible to suggest, threaten or imply that failure to accept a request for a date or sexual intimacy will affect a person's job prospects, church leadership or their comfortable participation in the life of the church. For example, it is forbidden to either imply or actually withhold support for an appointment, promotion, or change of assignment, or suggest that a poor performance report will be given because a person has declined a personal proposition. Also, offering benefits, such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendations or reclassifications in exchange for sexual favors is forbidden.

### **A Word about Background Checks**

- It is strongly suggested that all adults who will be providing leadership with children and/or youth submit necessary information for the church to perform a criminal background check. This includes all adults, whether volunteers, friends, or paid staff. Adult leaders who participate in overnight events with children or youth in the PSEC should submit to a background check and it will be the responsibility of each local church to provide the necessary information to perform a check.

Suggested sites to perform such a check:

<http://www.oxforddoc.com/>

<https://epatch.state.pa.us/Home.jsp>

<http://www.intellicorp.net/?CampaignId=ZETA>

<http://www.nationalbackground.com/>

\*A report is not a guarantee of a minor's safety. It is contingent upon the local church community to clearly express Safe Church Policy expectations to all individuals engaged in ministry with children and youth.

If you have further questions or concerns, please contact Rev. Josh Blakesley, PSEC Minister of Youth & Young Adult Discipling [blakesley@psec.org] , or Mary Sicher, Minister of Christian Education [mary@psec.org].

Pennsylvania SE Conference, United Church of Christ, [www.psec.org](http://www.psec.org) or [www.yaya-spirit.org](http://www.yaya-spirit.org)  
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