

PORT COMMUNITY CHURCH SAFE CHURCH PLAN – UPDATED (2026)

118 MAIN STREET, PORT REPUBLIC, NJ 08241

General Purpose Statement

Port Community Church provides a safe and secure environment for children and those who are vulnerable mentally, emotionally, or physically who participate in our programs and activities. We want to protect ALL from misconduct and inappropriate behavior of staff and volunteers while also protecting the staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

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001. Selection of Staff and Volunteers

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

001.a. **Six Month Rule**

No person will be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with Port Community Church for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

001.b. **Personal Resume & Interview**

An employee applicant will provide a resume. Applicants for employment and volunteers may complete a face-to-face interview to discuss his/her suitability for the position. In addition to reference checks, a review of spiritual giftedness for ministry may be offered.

001.c. Criminal Background Check

1) Requirements

All employees and volunteers who work with children and youth must undergo a Multi-state Criminal and Sex Offender background check with BACKGROUNDCHECKS.COM or similar company. The background check includes but is not limited to County Criminal, US Alias Search, and other searches as needed. Any concerning designations will be referred for further checks. Background checks are typically repeated every three years.

2) Results & Exclusions

If the background check shows that an individual has been convicted of child abuse, sexual assault, domestic violence, or the like, the individual **may not serve** on PCC staff, be a church officer, or volunteer in programs involving minors or vulnerable populations.

3) Maintenance of Records

Background check authorization forms and results will be maintained in a confidential file in the church office.

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001.d. Clearance Procedure:

- 1) Meet with pastor and/or committee coordinator
- 2) Volunteer completes verification form and reviews Safe Church Plan [APPENDIX]
- 3) Church office administrator will run required background checks
- 4) Results will be reviewed by appropriate administrators

002. General Definitions for terms used in the “Safe Church Plan.”

1. **Child Protective Services (CPS)** is New Jersey’s system of intervention for child abuse and neglect. 1-877-NJAbuse (1-877-652-2873)
2. **Grade level designations:**
Minors: Anyone under the age of 18:
Children: Infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and students in grades K-5
Youth: Students in middle or high school (grades 7-12)
3. **Church Governing Body** consists of PCC Trustees and a Church Council.
4. **Clergy or pastor** includes any person who is admitted to ministry and serves the congregation in any capacity.
5. **Eating Disorder** is an attempt to cope with overwhelming feelings and painful emotions related to food and weight issues.
6. **Emotional Abuse** is mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment of the victim’s growth, development, or psychological functioning.
7. **Mandatory reporter** is a person required by New Jersey law or by PCC to report suspected abuse to police or child welfare agencies.
8. **Neglect** is the failure to provide for a minor’s basic needs or the failure to protect a child or youth from harm.
9. **Physical abuse** is injury that is intentionally inflicted upon a minor’s body.
10. **Program leader** is an individual, whether staff or volunteer, who leads a PCC program and event for children or youth. This policy may refer to a leader as advisor, staff, or volunteer.
11. **Program director** denotes the supervising staff member of a program or ministry area.
12. **Safe Church database** is stored in the office.
13. **Safe Church Coordinator** is the person responsible for maintaining the database and coordinating the Safe Church clearance process for staff and volunteers.
14. **Safe Church Oversight Team** is the group responsible for monitoring Safe Church policy implementation.

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15. **Sexual abuse** is any nonconsensual sexual activity or any contact of a sexual nature that occurs between a minor and an adult (age 18 or older). Sexual abuse is also contact of a sexual nature between minors when it is nonconsensual, when one individual is younger than age 14, or when coercion is present (for example, when difference in age, size, or strength is used to influence the other person).
16. **Suicidal ideation** is thinking about or planning suicide, including thoughts that range from fleeting consideration to detailed plans.
17. **Self-harm or self-injury** is intentionally hurting oneself. One common method is cutting with a sharp object. There is not necessarily a correlation between self-harm and suicidal ideation.
18. **Verbal abuse** is the use of derogatory, negative language to harm another person psychologically or emotionally. Verbal abuse harbors hidden aggression and is extremely manipulative, often involving insults disguised as caring comments.
19. **Abuse can be overt or covert.**
20. **Vulnerable adults** are those aged 18 or over, who are receiving or may need to receive community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age, or illness, and who are or may be unable to take care of themselves or to protect themselves from significant harm or exploitation. (Though this policy does not directly name vulnerable adults in many sections, there are occasions in which this policy would be supportive of vulnerable adults.)

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003. Guidelines for Physical and Verbal Interactions

Staff and volunteers may not communicate with minors in a way that is or could be construed by any observer as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Staff and volunteers must not engage in sexually oriented conversations with minors unless directly related to a youth curriculum (such as a retreat on sex and sexuality) and with written permission by parents or guardians.

GUIDELINES FOR PHYSICAL INTERACTIONS	
APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL INTERACTIONS	INAPPROPRIATE PHYSICAL INTERACTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Side hugs• Shoulder-to-shoulder or “temple” hugs, when in a group context• Pats on the shoulder or back• Handshakes• High-fives, hand slapping, and fist bumps• Arms around shoulders, when in a group context• Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations)• If initiated by a preschool or younger aged child, sitting in an adult’s lap	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wrestling• Piggyback rides• Tickling• Allowing a child or youth to cling to an employee’s or volunteer’s leg• Any type of massage given by or to a youth• Touching the bottom, chest, or genital areas of any child or youth, regardless of gender• Snapping bras, giving wedgies, or similar touching of underwear, whether or not the underwear is covered by other clothing and regardless of gender• Any form of affection that is unwanted by the child or youth or the staff or volunteer

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GUIDELINES FOR VERBAL INTERACTIONS	
ACCEPTABLE	UNACCEPTABLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Positive reinforcement• Appropriate jokes• Encouragement• Praise (excluding praise about physical appearance or body development)• Conversations about the child's or youth's life (e.g., school, hobbies, interests)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Name-calling• Discussing sexual encounters• Involving children or youth in the personal problems or issues of staff or volunteers• Secrets• Cursing• Off-color or sexual jokes• Shaming or belittling• Derogatory remarks• Harsh language that may frighten, threaten, or humiliate• Derogatory remarks about the child or youth or their family• Comments or compliments that relate to physique or body development for any gender

GENERAL RULES FOR PROTECTION OF ALL

004. Two-Adult Rule

A minimum of two adult workers will be in present when minors are being supervised during programs and activities.

005. Supervision of Restrooms & Diaper Changes

When children are in our care and need to use the restroom, the door must remain open so that the child is protected from being seen and the caregiver stands at the door with one foot in and one foot outside the door.

Parents or guardians will be required to change diapers of their own children, unless otherwise directed by the parent or guardian.

006. Junior Assistants

Junior assistants (14 years or older) who work with the nursery or pre-school class must complete questionnaire, provide a letter of recommendation, and receive training. Screened adult must be present at all times when a junior assistant is working.

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007. Open Doors & Clear Windows

All church doors have windows installed for easy visibility. Open door policy is expected.

008. Registration for Children's Events

Each child must have a completed registration form to participate in any event. This registration form includes pertinent contact information, statement of medical or emotional needs, and liability exclusions.

009. Check-In and Check-Out of Children

Parents and guardians are required to drop off and pick up their children. Specific designees for pick-up are required for children's community events and photo ID's must be presented at pick-up.

010. Parental Supervision During Worship Service

All children who leave the sanctuary during the service will be accompanied by a parent or guardian given the structure of our church and security.

011. Medication Policy

It is the policy of Port Community Church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Exceptions to this policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the church office to develop a plan of action.

012. Accidental Injuries

If a child or youth is injured while under PCC's care, the following steps should be followed: For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.

For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called. Once the minor has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional. Special community events will have a nurse or EMT present.

Injuries involving children, youth, and adults require completion of an Incident Report form available at the church mailbox cart. [APPENDIX]. **FIRST AID kits are available in the kitchen and on top of the church mailbox cart.**

013. Social Media

Staff should be cognizant of social media posts and the reflection they may make on PCC.

014. Communicating with Child/Youth ⁽²⁰²⁵⁾

All communications with minors must be transparent and reviewable. All messages, emails, and communications should be minimal and saved. No messages, emails, or other electronic communications should be deleted.

015. Gift Giving to Children and Youth ⁽²⁰²⁵⁾

Molesters routinely groom children by giving gifts, thereby endearing themselves to the child. They might instruct the child to keep the gifts a secret, teaching the child or youth to keep secrets from guardians. Staff and volunteers are not permitted to give gifts to individual children or youth outside of a group or community context.

016. Classroom Management

The church does not to administer corporal punishment. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with church office and parents if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues. The Children's Ministry has specific behavioral guidelines that are clearly posted.

Youth are required to complete a "Youth Covenant Form" to participate in youth activities for a safe, encouraging environment for all youth. Those who engage in any type of bullying will be placed on disciplinary status in cooperation with parents.

017. Use of Internet Policy

Use of the Internet and computers is a privilege, not a right, which may be revoked at any time for inappropriate conduct. Misuse of internet access or computers by a staff person may result in disciplinary action up to termination of employment. Examples of inappropriate conduct include, but are not limited to: use of inappropriate, offensive or abusive language in either public or private messages; unlawful activities; defamation; infringement of copyrights; misrepresentation of oneself or the church; logging on or accessing pornographic, sexually explicit, violent, or gambling sites; and sending messages that might result in congestion or disruption of networks and systems. The pastor or a designated safe church responder (see section 019 below) should be notified if anyone observes or becomes aware of any inappropriate conduct or use of the internet and/or church computers by church staff or others.

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018. Safe Church Training

Office personnel and/or Christian Education Committee members inform volunteers working with children to complete background checks. Each volunteer will review and initial a copy of the Safe Church plan and attach it to the background check. Safe Church Plan will be available near the mailbox area and online.

Prior to special events, there will be a review of key components of the Safe Church Plan to ensure that all volunteers understand and comply with all aspects of the Safe Church Plan.

019. Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

(This policy also applies to those who are mentally or physically incapacitated regardless of age.) For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at Port Community Church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, a report should be immediately made to the pastor of the church or one of the designated Safe Church Responders (see below) for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

If an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at Port Community Church (PCC) during sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The staff member or volunteer alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. He or she will be instructed to have no contact with the victim or with witnesses.
3. All allegations of abuse or misconduct should be reported to the civil authorities, and PCC will comply with the state’s requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse. PCC will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. The insurance company will be notified, and PCC will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. A person will be designated to be a spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. Advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of PCC should refrain from speaking to the media.

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6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it. This will be for the purpose of providing pastoral support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.
7. Any person who is found guilty of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

DESIGNATED SAFE CHURCH RESPONDERS

Pastor Frank Brown (609-412-7352)

Dave Crawford, Church Council Member (609-226-8663)

Jo Kohl, Church Council Member (609-412-6271)

Rob Robinson, Council Member (609-517-0208)

Steve Frencer, Trustee (732-804-1529)

NOTE: Reviewed by Jim Schroeder, Attorney (Schroeder Law Group/Jersey Shore Law Firm)