

Presbytery of St. Augustine
Policy on Background Checks and Boundary Training

For Approval by Presbytery October 1, 2024

AWARENESS / TRAINING / BACKGROUND CHECKS

Scripture calls us to lead a life worthy of the calling to which we have been selected. We take this calling seriously therefore, in seeking to prevent sexual misconduct from occurring, the presbytery places emphasis on educating presbytery representatives concerning appropriate ethical conduct and boundary awareness.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All incoming and current minister members in active service, commissioned pastors (CPs/CREs), certified Christian educators (CCEs), persons under care (Inquirers and Candidates or I&Cs) and presbytery staff enrolled or employed by the Presbytery shall receive this policy and sign a document stating that they have read and understood this policy. A signed copy of the acknowledgement page shall be returned to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery by December 15, 2024. The Stated Clerk will report to the Call Commission on receipt of acknowledgements from all ministers, CCEs, CPs/CREs and I&Cs at the January, 2025 meeting of the Call Commission.

The process shall occur annually. The Presbytery shall include a copy of this policy in the materials distributed for the Fall Presbytery meeting. Signed acknowledgments will be reported to the Stated Clerk by December 15 to be processed as stated in the previous paragraph.

Exempt from this policy are those retired from active ministry and who remain inactive.

BOUNDARY TRAINING

All incoming and current ministers, CPs/CREs, CCEs, I&Cs and presbytery staff shall complete a course on maintaining appropriate boundaries, including abuse prevention. For incoming ministers, CPs/CREs, CCEs, I&Cs and presbytery staff, this shall be completed prior to serving a congregation/position within the bounds of the Presbytery. Upon adoption of this policy, all current active minister members, CPs/CREs, CCEs and I&Cs enrolled by the Presbytery and presbytery staff shall complete a course on maintaining appropriate boundaries, including abuse prevention, within the first three months of the adoption of this policy and every three years thereafter.

The Presbytery Communication and Training Team will be responsible for providing the boundary training when required by this policy. Boundary training will normally be offered at a Presbytery meeting, at another Presbytery-wide event and as additionally necessary as determined by the Communication and Training Team. The Communication and Training Team may offer training by in-person meetings, electronic meetings and/or recorded trainings as they may determine.

The Call Commission will provide to the Communication and Training Team the list of current active ministers, CPs/CREs CCEs and I&Cs upon adoption of this policy. The Call Commission will then inform the Communication and Training Team when an incoming minister, CP, CCE or I&C seeks to engage in ministry within the Presbytery. The Lead Presbyter will provide to the Communication and Training Team the list of current

Presbytery staff upon the adoption of this policy, and will then inform the Communication and Training Team when presbytery seeks incoming staff.

The Stated Clerk will report to the Call Commission annually on completion of boundary training by all ministers, CPs/CREs, CCEs and I&Cs. The Stated Clerk shall notify the Lead Presbyter regarding completion by presbytery staff.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Upon adoption of this policy, all current active ministers, CPs/CREs, CCEs, I&Cs and Presbytery staff will be subject to a national criminal level 2 background check which shall include but is not limited to a check of the sexual offender registry. The Presbytery will cover the cost of the initial background check for a current active minister, CP, CCE, I&C or Presbytery staff. A national criminal level 2 background check will then be conducted every 5 years thereafter. The costs of the reoccurring background checks will be equally split between the Presbytery and the church/ministry/employer.

The Presbytery will cover the costs of the criminal background checks for all incoming ministers, CPs/CREs, CCEs, I&Cs and staff directly employed by the Presbytery. These checks shall be run before employment or service commences. In the event of an incoming minister, CP, CCE or I&C, the Call Commission will complete the background check prior to examining the minister, CP, CCE or I&C for Presbytery enrollment.

Those employed as camp staff and those that volunteer for special events (such as mission trips, disaster assistance, youth events, etc.) shall also be subject to background checks as outlined above.

If anyone subject to this policy has previously obtained a level 2 background check valid under the terms of this policy, then a release of that level 2 background check may be signed in lieu of obtaining a new level 2 background check.

PROCEDURES

The Presbytery Office will organize the background checks by providing disclaimer forms for signature and providing instructions on accessing the background check vendor used by the Presbytery. Returned background checks will be submitted to the Stated Clerk. Any background check that contains an item of concern will then be submitted by the Stated Clerk to the Lead Presbyter, Call Commission Moderator, Presbytery Moderator and Coordinating Council Moderator for further review.

Additional steps that may be taken for failure to complete boundary training and/or for critical items of concern discovered by the background check may include administrative leave, dissolution of the call/contract and any other relief deemed appropriate under the circumstances.