1. Purpose
2. Poplar Springs Church, a Christian Church of faith, desires to have a Safe Sanctuary Program by providing this Policy to demonstrate our strong and unwavering commitment to the physical, emotional and spiritual safety of all our Vulnerable Individuals (Children, Youth and Special Need Adults) as well as all of our personnel and volunteers.
3. Poplar Springs Church will:
4. Follow reasonable safety measures when selecting and recruiting personnel.
5. Implement appropriate operational procedures in all areas of programming and care.
6. Provide training to our personnel that works with Vulnerable Individual.
7. Have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse consistent with State law.

Table of Contents Page

[A. Purpose 1](#_Toc142855120)

[B. Scope 2](#_Toc142855121)

[C. Approved Adult Screening 3](#_Toc142855122)

[D. Training and Ongoing Background Checks 5](#_Toc142855123)

[E. Operation 6](#_Toc142855124)

[F. Safe Sanctuary Incident 8](#_Toc142855125)

[G. Definitions 10](#_Toc142855126)

1. Scope
2. The Pastor, the PPR Committee, and the Sunday School Superintendent will have primary responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented properly.
3. This policy concerns physical and mental abuse of Vulnerable Individual. Includes physical, neglect, sexual, and emotional abuse that include as a minimum the following:
4. Inappropriate physical contact including but not limited to physical contact of a sexual nature.
5. Sharing inappropriate written or digital material to a minor, including material of a sexual nature or any material which belittles or mocks others.
6. Participating in inappropriate language, such as sharing jokes or innuendoes of a sexual nature or indecent language.
7. Physical bullying.
8. Verbal abuse and bullying.
9. Sharing any controlled substance such as drugs, alcohol or cigarettes.
10. Not intervening whenever it is known that any of the above circumstances exist.
11. Addresses only Safe Activities (when Vulnerable Individuals are under the supervision of Approved Adults at Poplar Springs Church).
These include, but are not limited to:
	* 1. Sunday school
		2. Nursery, toddler room, and Junior Church
		3. Organized events during any of the church’s worship services
		4. Special church events such as Vacation Bible School, Morningstar Day Camp, and Living Nativity
		5. Any other situation, both on and off church premises where adults are in a position to be responsible for Vulnerable Individuals.
12. Not Covered:

For community events (Weddings, celebrations, festivals, etc.), it is with the expectation that the Vulnerable Individuals are there with the permission of, and under the direct guidance of a parent or guardian who takes responsibility for their welfare. The church’s adult leaders are not in a position to supervise Vulnerable Individuals during community events.
13. Approved Adult Screening
14. These guidelines are for Applicants (volunteers or paid) applying for an Approved Adult position that will be working with Vulnerable Individuals.
15. Approval will be documented on an Approved Adult Approval Form.
16. Applicant will need to be part of the congregation for at least SIX months before working with Vulnerable Individuals.
17. Applicant will be minimum of 21 years of age.
18. Applicant must:
19. Complete an Approved Adult Application form.
20. Complete an Approved Adult Covenant form indicating their understanding and agreement to abide by this policy.
21. Have Character Reference Interviews performed:
22. At least two Character Reference Interviews will be performed for each Applicant
23. Applicant will provide names along with contact information of at least two people that will be willing to be interviewed by a Poplar Springs Church representative about the applicant.
(people who are not related by blood or marriage, and not your current pastor)
24. Church representative will ensure at least two of the persons identified are interviewed using the Character Reference Form.
25. Have a Criminal Background Check performed:
26. Will be made on all Applicants to the extent permitted by law, prior to starting, to determine current or historic child abuse or sexual misconduct, criminal records, violent or pedophiliac behavior.
27. Should the background check reveal information that precludes a person from being a volunteer or personnel member, then appropriate persons should be made aware of such.
28. Prior Convictions:

Individuals who have been convicted of physical or sexual abuse or neglect may not work in any Safe Activity.
29. Have a Personal Interview that:
30. Will ensure the applicant is suitable to work with Vulnerable Individuals.
31. Is normally be conducted by the Pastor, a PPR Committee member, or Sunday School Superintendent.
But, can be performed by person(s) designated by the Pastor, PPR Committee, or Sunday School Superintendent.
32. Will include discussing Church policy and guidelines.
	1. New Approved Adults are subject to a 90-day orientation period in which:
33. Performance, punctuality and attendance will be evaluated.
34. During this time period, the Pastor, PPR Committee, or Sunday School Superintendent may determine that the position is not a good fit for personnel.
35. Poplar Springs Church will:
36. Keep confidential all information received in the Applicant Screening Process.
37. Mark all Selection Information confidential and store it in a locked location.
38. Share only on a need to know basis.
39. Destroy, if desired by the Board of Trustees, the Selection Information of an individual after that individual has left Poplar Springs Church.
40. Training and Ongoing Background Checks
41. This policy will be made available to everyone associated a Safe Activity to include parents and legal guardians.
42. Approved Adults will be evaluated every five years to determine if a new Criminal Background Check required.
43. Initial and annually Safe Sanctuaries Policy training will be required of and provided for everyone working with Vulnerable Individuals.
44. Initial training will include as minimum, knowing the following:
45. This Safe Sanctuary Policy.
46. How to recognize the signs and symptoms of abuse.
47. The nature and indicators of Vulnerable Individuals abuse.
48. The appropriate boundaries, behaviors and practices to reduce the risk of abuse.
49. How to report concerns, suspicions, allegations, and disclosures of abuse.
50. How to respond to a Safe Sanctuary Incident.
51. The chain of accountability for the Safe Sanctuary Program.
This will include as a minimum, the following:
* Their specific ministry/program leader.
* Safe Sanctuary Policy Implementers; Pastor, PPR Committee Members, and Sunday School Superintendent.
* Safe Sanctuary Policy Oversite; Board of Trustees
1. Annual training will be determined if needed and recorded on the Annual Training Form each year by the Pastor, and/or PPR Committee, and/or Sunday School Superintendent.
2. Training may include dissemination of materials produced by outside sources (such as insurance companies) which deal with Safe Sanctuary issues.
3. Basic CPR and First Aid training will be made available to all church personnel
4. Operation:
5. Everyone who works with Vulnerable Individuals will refrain from:
6. In-appropriate crossing physical and emotional boundaries.
7. Conduct that includes profane or abusive speech.
8. Threatening or inflicting physical injury.
9. Solicitation or completion of sexual conduct or contact.
10. Sexually orientated or demeaning humor, photos or comments.
11. Use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs or firearms.
12. Any other behavior that is prohibited by law.
13. Vulnerable Individuals will not be left unsupervised at any time.
14. Each room or space where Vulnerable Individuals are being cared for shall have one of the following:
15. Eye-level window(s)
16. Peep hole in the door
17. Door shall be left open.
18. Electronic Surveillance Camera in the classroom and being monitored
19. Minimum supervisory standards (TWO adult Rule):
20. At least TWO Approved Adults that are not married required in a classroom where Vulnerable Individuals are present.
21. Alternative - TWO married Approved Adults in a classroom with Pastor, PPR Committee, and/or Sunday School Superintendent approval.
22. Alternative - ONE Approved Adult in a classroom with a Roamer checking on the classroom throughout the class time.
23. Alternative - ONE Approved Adult in a classroom with an operating electronic surveillance (camera) system in the classroom and being monitored.
24. All activities between adults, including Approved Adult, and Vulnerable Individuals shall be out in the open. There is never a reason for an activity between an adult leader and a Vulnerable Individuals to occur in strict privacy.
25. Counseling of a Vulnerable Individual or family member:
26. Shall be performed by the Pastor or someone designated by the Pastor.
27. Open-Door Counseling and/or in sight of others is required.
28. One-on-one counseling will take place where other Approved Adults are immediately available.
29. Any parent or guardian of any Vulnerable Individual may attend and observe events at any time, unannounced.
30. Helper:
31. Does not count toward the 2 Adult Rule.
32. Must be under direct strict supervision of an Approved Adult.
33. Will have no independent supervisory responsibility of others.
34. Will NOT be left alone with Vulnerable Individuals.
35. The church does not condone Vulnerable Individuals on church property when there are no scheduled events or in the church buildings when no one is there.
36. Vulnerable Individuals should not be on church premises unless properly supervised.
37. During these times the parents or guardians will assume responsibility for their Vulnerable Individual(s).
38. Registration materials for activities in which Vulnerable Individual are outside of the direct supervision of their parents/guardians shall require written permission forms that include general health and emergency contact information in order to participate. All information will be kept confidential.
39. All Church groups meeting at Poplar Springs Church will be asked to sign for acknowledging intent to comply with the Poplar Springs Church Safe Sanctuary Policy.
40. Gift giving and receiving between adult leaders and Vulnerable Individuals is acceptable as long as it fits the occasion. It is not acceptable for any gift giving or receiving to occur in private or be inappropriate gifts.
41. Devices such as smart phones, tablets, etc. are wonderful to keep older youth informed of activities, and to help keep the youth connected to parents and guardians. It is not the policy of Poplar Springs Church to disallow these devices during activities as long as proper rules regarding their use are followed. In no situation should an adult leader maintain secretive conversations with youth, either by text, social media, written letters, etc. Proper rules for the use of these devices will be set by the Approved Adult in charge of the event.
42. Parents or guardians must give approval before any Vulnerable Individual may leave church premises and given the details of what the activity involves.
43. In general, taking pictures of Vulnerable Individuals during public events and posting them to the church’s website is permitted as long as the parents are informed and give consent. The name of the Vulnerable Individual in the picture should never be posted.
44. For children under the age of 6:
45. The parent should give permission for the Approved Adult to change a diaper or to assist in the bathroom if required.
46. Children of this age will only be dismissed to adults who are identified as having authority to take the child out of the classroom or nursery.
47. Shall be escorted to the bathroom if it is outside of the classroom and should never be left to wander the halls alone.
48. Once at a youth event, youth are not permitted to drive to an off-premise continuation of the event.
49. An adult leader must drive the vehicle and there must be more than 1 youth in the car.
50. Youth shall be separated by gender for sleeping arrangements.
If only one room is available for both genders, then males shall be on one side and females on the other.
51. Adult leaders shall not sleep in the same room with youth. If only one sleeping space is available then adult leaders and minors will stay in separate areas.
52. There will be separate shower times for youth and adults.
53. Building use strategy:
54. All classrooms will have windows to allow visibility inside the classroom.
55. Minors should not be on church premises unless properly supervised. The church does not condone youth on church property when there are no scheduled events or in the building when no one is there. During these times there are no adult supervisors and the parents or guardians will assume responsibility for their child’s welfare.
56. Any outside organization which serves minors and which has been given permission to regularly meet on church property must have an adequate policy to protect youth from abuse, similar to this policy.
57. Safe Sanctuary Incident
58. If anybody observes, suspects or receives a report of a violation of the Safe Sanctuary policy, following steps must be taken immediately.
59. Address any needs of the Alleged Victim, medical or otherwise.
60. Ensure all Vulnerable Individuals including the Alleged Victim are safe.
61. Report the incident immediately to the person in charge of the ministry/activity.
62. Report concerns to Poplar Springs Church leaders.
63. Ensure that appropriate actions are being taken including a Safe Sanctuary Incident Report being completed.
64. Following the report of an incident, the responsible person in charge shall immediately:
65. Speak with the Alleged Victim, being careful to use open-ended questions.
66. Notify parent(s) and/or legal guardians(s) of the incident.
67. Complete a Safe Sanctuary Incident Report.
68. Present the report in a timely manner to the Pastor, the PPR Committee, and/or the Sunday School Superintendent. If necessary, report can be given to a Trustee.
69. Safe Sanctuary Incident Report will include as a minimum the following:
70. Date, time and location of event.
71. Alleged Victim’s name, age, and name of parents/guardians.
72. Name of the person observing the Safe Sanctuary Incident and any comments.
73. Name of Alleged Suspect, the date, time and place of any conversation and record any explanation made by the Alleged Suspect.
74. Names and comments by any additional people who may also have witnessed the incident or has information concerning the incident.
75. Careful and confidential documentation is essential.
76. Evaluation of a Safe Sanctuary Incident Report will:
77. Be performed in a timely manner by the Pastor, the PPR Committee, and/or the Sunday School Superintendent.
78. If necessary (if none of the above are available), incident can be evaluated by the Board of Trustees.
79. Determine which of the following severity level applies:
80. Major Safe Sanctuary Policy violation and is associated with actual abuse

Intentional violation of the Safe Sanctuary Policy has been performed and a Vulnerable Individual has possibly been abused
81. Major Safe Sanctuary Policy violation with NO abuse involved

Intentional violation of the Safe Sanctuary Policy has been performed, but a Vulnerable Individual has NOT been abused.
82. Minor Safe Sanctuary Policy violation (no abuse involved)

Un-intentional violation of the Safe Sanctuary Policy has been performed without any danger to a Vulnerable Individual occurring.
83. Actions required for a Safe Sanctuary Incident as a minimum are:
84. For a Major Safe Sanctuary Policy violation (includes both with abuse and with NO abuse):
85. Alleged Suspect shall, for the safety and wellbeing of the children or youth, be removed from further contact with Vulnerable Individuals until an appropriate investigation has taken place.
86. Alleged Suspect will be notified of the Safe Sanctuary Incident Report, the Evaluation Determination and of their removal from further contact with Vulnerable Individuals.
87. Initiate appropriate actions/ investigation to resolved the Safe Sanctuary Policy violation.
88. For a Minor Safe Sanctuary Policy violation:

The Alleged Suspect’s disciplinary action will be determined and implemented by the Pastor, the PPR Committee, and/or the Sunday School Superintendent.
89. Report alleged/suspected abuse to local law enforcement and state reporting agencies, as needed.
90. The obligation to report arises when there is “reasonable cause to believe that Vulnerable Individual abuse has occurred.” “Reasonable cause” means you have an objective, factual basis to believe that the Vulnerable Individual may have been abused. This does not mean you that are sure beyond a reasonable doubt that the Vulnerable Individual has been abused. It means that your belief is based on more than a hunch.
91. Date and time of call to law enforcement agency and name of officer spoken to.
92. Notify parent(s) and/or legal guardians(s) of the Incident Report, Evaluation and Actions taken.
93. After appropriate investigation and actions have resolved the Safe Sanctuary Policy violation:
94. The Pastor, the PPR Committee, and/or the Sunday School Superintendent will complete a narrative of the finalization on the Incident Report.
95. The Board of Trustees will Review the Incident Report and bring a report to the Church Conference that the incident has been resolved.
96. The matter shall remain confidential.
97. Confirmed reports of proven incidents of abuse shall be retained in a confidential file for future screening purposes
98. Definitions:
99. Vulnerable Individual:--Includes Children, Youth, who have not reached the age of 18 or Special Need Adults who are 18 or older but are still under the supervision of an adult.
100. Approved Adult:--Refers to an adult (Volunteer or paid staff) who has completed a screening process including an application, reference and background checks, and who has been approved as required by this policy to work with Vulnerable Individuals at Poplar Springs Church.
101. Child or Children:--Any person from infancy to 4th grade.
102. Youth:--Any person from 5th-12th grades.
103. Special Need Adult:-- Any person who is at least eighteen years of age and deemed to have mental illness, intellectual disability, dementia, excessive substance abuse, or other physical or mental incapacity of managing their own resources or self-care and who is therefore at risk for neglect, physical abuse, or exploitation of resources.
104. Safe Activity: any ministry, event or program in which Vulnerable Individual are under the supervision of Approved Adults.
105. Applicant:--person applying for an Approved Adult position.
106. Parent:--a mother, a father, or other legal custodian of the child.
107. Responsible Adult: the adult given responsibility or permission (parental or legal) to make decisions regarding a Vulnerable Individual participation and communication with Poplar Springs Church.
108. Roamer: Approved Adult who will roam the area and make frequent, unannounced visits with a room/location in which there is only one Approved Adult present with Vulnerable Individuals.
109. Helper:--a person assisting an Approved Adult with a Safe Activity.
110. Safe Sanctuary Incident—Any violation of the Safe Sanctuary Policy.
111. Alleged Victim—Any Vulnerable Individual that may have been physically and/or mentally abused.
112. Alleged Suspect—Any person that appears to have violated the Safe Sanctuary Policy.
113. Sex Offender: a person who has identified as a Sex Offender as defined by Georgia Law which includes persons convicted of one or more of an extensive list of offenses including possession of child pornography, sexual misconduct with a minor, solicitation of a minor, sexual battery, rape and incest.