



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Do Justice · Love Kindness · Walk Humbly

Westminster Presbyterian Church Child and Youth Protection Policy for Preventing Sexual Abuse

Revised and Approved by Session 8/18/19

A Vision for Children and the Church

Adopted by the 205th General Assembly

Because we affirm that all children are a gift of God, created by God and created good;
all children are a gift to the whole of the human community;
all children have a real faith, and gifts for ministry;
all children have the right to be children;
and all children are not just tomorrow, they are today.

Because we believe that all children depend upon adults for safety and security in a world that does not always value children;

all children are affected first and most deeply by those things that work against health and wholeness: where there is disease, children sicken and die; where there is homelessness, children sleep on the streets and in other dangerous places; where there is war, children are frightened and without a safe place; where the air and water are polluted, children feel the effect in their bodies and in their futures; where there is shame, children's spirits are wounded.

Therefore we hope for a world where all children can find a safe place; where all ages, races, genders, creeds, and abilities are recognized, valued, and celebrated; where all adults hear the voices of children and speak with as well as for them; where all children have "first call" on the world's resources and first place in the minds and hearts of the world's adults.

Because Jesus welcomed children and encouraged us to welcome them in his name; Jesus lifted up a child as an example of what the realm of God is like;

Therefore we hope for a church where we take seriously our baptismal vow to nurture all children committed to our care; where we bring good news to all those places where children are in need; where adults and children alike share in ministry.

We covenant to act so that this vision may be made real for all children, now and in times to come.

A. Statement of Purpose

Westminster Presbyterian Church seeks to provide a welcoming environment for every child and young person that is free from sexual abuse. We are committed not only to maintaining a community, but also to building it, and not only to maintaining trust, but also to enriching the atmosphere of trust in our community. As the Gospel witness makes abundantly clear, "From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded." (Luke 12:48)

In receiving the Sacrament of Baptism, we enter into a sacred covenant with God and are adopted into the covenant family of the Church (W-2.3004, Genesis 17:714, 2 Corinthians 1:21-22). As the Church and the body of Christ we are united with all the people of God in every place and every time (W-2.3005, 1 Corinthians

12:1213, Ephesians 4:4-6). We are bound to serve and to respect the dignity of every human being (G-1.0200, W2.3004, Micah 6:8). When, therefore, this solemn trust is broken through some form of misconduct, particularly sexual, not only is someone's dignity diminished and her or his well-being seriously harmed, but harm is done to the community of faith.

In today's environment, a proactive sexual abuse prevention policy is important for any institution entrusted with the care of Children and Youth. In response, Westminster has established this Policy. The Policy applies, under the direct authority of the Session, to all those who work with Children and Youth through Westminster programs both on and off campus, including full-time staff, part-time staff, and volunteers.

B. Statement of Policy

It is the goal of Westminster Presbyterian Church to provide an environment in which Children and Youth are nurtured and instructed in the faith. Westminster Presbyterian Church does not condone Sexual Abuse of Children or Youth. Similarly, this Policy recognizes that many of the programs, activities and outreach ministries of our Church are possible only because we have volunteers willing to share their time and talent. Therefore, this Policy also seeks to honor these volunteers, give them general guidance and not create additional liability or burdens for them as they share their time and resources with the Children and Youth of our church.

C. General Definitions

- i. **Adult** means any person who is 18 years or older, and is at least (5) years older than the oldest child or youth in the group.
- ii. **Youth** means anyone between the age of 11 and 18.
- iii. **Child (or Children)** means anyone under age 11.
- iv. **Teaching Elder** means any staff member ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacraments.
- v. **Nursery Staff** means individuals hired to provide childcare for Westminster Presbyterian Church.
- vi. **Head of Staff** means the supervising Teaching Elder.
- vii. **Pastoral and Program Staff** means all Teaching Elders, the Minister of Music and the Director of Christian Education.
- viii. **Campus** means the property of Westminster Presbyterian Church.
- ix. **Sexual Abuse** means any contact or interaction between a Child or Youth and an Adult when the Child or Youth is being used for the sexual stimulation of the Adult or a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a Child or Youth and an Adult is always considered forced whether or not consented to by the Child or Youth. As per the PC(USA) definition, this applies to a Child or Youth under the age of 18. (From PC(USA) Sexual Misconduct Policy and its Procedures. Adopted by New Hope Presbytery, February 19, 2011)

D. Components to implementing the policy include:

- SCREENING
 - TRAINING
 - SUPERVISING
 - RESPONDING
 - MONITORING
1. **SCREENING.** The Associate Pastor for Youth Ministry and the Director of Christian Education along with the Youth Council and Christian Education Committee are responsible for the recruitment of volunteers. The screening of all adult volunteers includes the completion of the Volunteer Application and Background Check Consent Form (Part 1). The Business Manager shall review all background checks. Risks to Children or Youth identified in the screening process shall be referred by the Business Manager to the Head of Staff and a determination shall be made as to whether contact with Children or Youth is advisable under the circumstances.

The standard practice for new volunteers in the areas of Children's or Youth ministry requires that the person be an active member of the church for at least six months. In order to create an atmosphere of hospitality, while simultaneously seeking to protect Children and Youth, the volunteer applicant who has been an active member of Westminster Presbyterian Church less than six months will be partnered to serve with a veteran volunteer. This means that the new member will work with Children or Youth during this period only when the veteran volunteer is present. Non-members must have been active in the life of the church for at least one year prior to volunteering with Children and/or Youth and be recommended for volunteering by a member of the Pastoral and Program Staff. Exceptions may be made to the length of this waiting period in the discretion of the Pastoral and Program Staff.

The personnel committee sets policy on the screening and training of all paid, non-pastoral church staff. Pastoral staff are governed by the training and screening policies of New Hope Presbytery.

Levels of volunteer status are defined as below and lists of volunteers' designations are kept by the church office:

- **Primary Volunteer:** Volunteers having a high level of contact with Children and/or Youth (trips, overnights, retreats, and drivers). All Primary Volunteers will receive periodic training that includes this policy and undergo a criminal background check conducted by the Office Manager periodically. Primary Volunteers include, but are not limited to, Youth Advisors, chaperones for off-campus or overnight trips, and drivers for any Youth or Children's off-Campus activities.
 - **Secondary Volunteer:** Volunteers working with Children and/or Youth on-Campus. All Secondary Volunteers will receive periodic training that includes this policy. Background checks for Secondary Volunteers may be performed upon the recommendation of the Pastoral and Program Staff. Secondary Volunteers include, but are not limited to, nursery volunteers, church school teachers, and volunteers for programs or activities on the WPC Campus.
 - **Youth Volunteer:** Youth Volunteers may serve in the Nursery when at least two unrelated Adults are also present. Youth Volunteers must be at least 5 years older than the youngest Child with whom they are serving. Youth Volunteers must annually complete the Youth Volunteer Application and Covenant, (Appendices, page 3, 4), attend a training session and attest to having read and agree to follow this Policy.
1. **TRAINING** Volunteers will participate in initial training on this Policy. Additional follow up training will be as recommended by the Pastoral and Program Staff and approved by the Session. This training may include an online training options or such other training options as may be approved from time to time by the Associate Pastor for Youth Ministry and the Director of Christian Education.

In addition to completion of approved on-line training, volunteers must (1) attest to having read this Policy and (2) agree to follow its terms. If a volunteer chooses to participate in an online course, a completion certificate must be submitted to the Associate Pastor for Youth Ministry prior to volunteering.

1. **SUPERVISING**

Supervision of Children and Youth will include the Two-Adult Rule, wherein two or more unrelated Adults are to be present at any activity or event involving Children and/or Youth. See details under Section E below "Guidelines for All People Working with Children and/or Youth".

1. **RESPONDING**

The following procedures are to be followed in the event of an incident or allegation of Child or Youth Sexual Abuse:

- A. Report. Any person learning of an incident of suspected Child or Youth Sexual Abuse is to immediately report the incident verbally to the Pastoral and Program Staff member supervising the activity who shall then notify the Head of Staff and the Clerk of Session. If the alleged incident involves a member of the Pastoral or Program Staff, it should be reported directly to the Head of Staff and Clerk of Session. If the alleged incident involves the Head of Staff, the Pastoral and Program Staff member is to notify the Personnel Committee Chair and the Clerk of Session.
- B. Notify parent/guardian. Upon receiving the relevant facts, the Head of Staff will notify the parent/guardian of the Child or Youth as soon as possible under the circumstances. If the alleged incident involves the Head of Staff, upon receiving the relevant facts, a member of the Pastoral and Program Staff or the Clerk of Session will notify the parent/guardian of the Child or Youth as soon as possible under the circumstances. The wishes of the parent/guardian will be considered in terms of making any decision about reporting the incident to authorities outside the Church or other action to be taken. However, the Head of Staff or other member of the Pastoral and Program Staff communicating with the parent/guardian must make it clear that the Church must report all good faith allegations of Sexual Abuse to the appropriate authorities as required by law.
- C. Notify appropriate authorities. When an incident is reported that involves good faith allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Child or Youth, after contacting the parent/guardian of the Child and/or Youth involved, the Head of Staff or his or her designee will notify (1) law enforcement and (2) the Stated Clerk of New Hope Presbytery. If the incident involves the Head of Staff, the Clerk of Session will make the notification. If the incident involves a Pastoral and Program Staff member, the Stated Clerk of New Hope Presbytery will ensure that the Presbytery responds according to the procedures set forth in the Rules of Discipline of the Book of Order, by policy or bylaws of the Presbytery.
- D. Ministering to all concerned. The Head of Staff, or a Pastoral and Program Staff member will minister, as is possible under the circumstances, to individuals who in good faith make reports of actual or reasonably suspected cases of Child or Youth Sexual Abuse, to those who are alleged to have been abused and their families and to those identified in an allegation of Child or Youth Sexual Abuse and their families.
- E. Report to Insurer. The Head of Staff or the Office Manager, will make the appropriate report to the liability insurer for the church.
- F. Treatment of accused. Any person(s) against whom allegations are made will be treated with dignity and support. Purely as a precautionary measure and without judging the validity or invalidity of any allegations, the person(s) against whom such allegations are made will be immediately relieved of further responsibilities involving Children or Youth until the investigation is completed.
- G. Confidentiality. To the extent practicable under the circumstances, the Head of Staff and members of the Pastoral and Program Staff will seek to maintain the confidentiality of all involved pending completion of any investigation.

1. MONITORING.

The Director of Christian Education and the Associate Pastor for Youth Ministry will submit this Policy to the Christian Education Committee and the Youth Council for review on an annual basis. Any changes to the Policy will be subject to approval by the Session.

E. Guidelines for All People Working with Children and/or Youth

These guidelines apply to all individuals who work with Children or Youth.

1. Visibility. All events involving Children or Youth are to be conducted in such a manner that parents, guardians, other volunteers or church staff can visit and observe the activity at any time.
2. Two Adult Rule. To promote the safety and security of our Children and Youth, and to protect volunteers, Nursery staff, and the church as a whole from potential accusations of Child or Youth Sexual Abuse, at least two unrelated Adults should be present during events, activities or gatherings of Children or Youth. A Youth Volunteer must serve with at least two Adults, in which case only one Adult can be related to the Youth Volunteer.

Our goal and expectation is that at least two of the Adults present will be unrelated. However, if circumstances arise in which only one Adult (or two related Adults) are available for a group of Children and/or Youth, the following steps will be observed:

- i. The Pastoral and Program Staff member(s) supervising the activity or event will be informed. If this occurs in the church nursery, the Nursery Staff Supervisor will be notified.
- ii. The classroom doors must remain open and all windows into the classroom be unobstructed.
- iii. The Pastoral and Program Staff member present or Nursery Staff Supervisor supervising the activity will attempt to identify a second unrelated Adult to monitor the classroom by periodically walking by or stopping in the classroom.
- iv. Absent exigent circumstances, an Adult should seek to avoid placing themselves in situations where they are alone with one Child or Youth out of sight from others Adults. However, we understand that circumstances may arise where this is not feasible (e.g. one adult goes to get help when an accident or injury occurs). In such instances, those adults involved should seek to limit the duration of such circumstances and to comply as much as feasible under the circumstances with this Policy.

3. Diapering and Restrooms

i. Diapering is to be done by the paid Nursery Staff unless the parent of the Child is present, in which case that parent is to change the diaper.

ii. Diapering is to be done only in plain view of other Adults.

iii. Only paid Nursery Staff workers are to accompany a Child to the bathroom, unless the parent of the Child is present, in which case the parent is to accompany that Child. When accompanying a Child to the bathroom, the door of the bathroom is to remain open if the Child requires assistance. If the Child does not require assistance, the Nursery Staff is to wait outside of the bathroom stall. If a Child or Youth is sick and requires assistance, the Nursery Staff is to call for help from another Adult.

1. Overnights trips.

At least two unrelated Adults should accompany Children/Youth on trips, retreats, and other times that Children/Youth gather at or away from the church property. At least four Adults are preferable so that in the event of an emergency, there will be adequate supervision.

There shall be at least one Adult of each gender present at co-ed overnight events. At single gender overnight events, at least one of the two or more Adults present shall be of the same gender as the Children/Youth.

The Pastoral and Program Staff member supervising an overnight, off-campus event or activity shall ensure that every participant provides a completed and signed permission slip, including permission for emergency medical care and information and phone numbers to contact a parent/legal guardian in case of an emergency. These signed permission slips will be taken by the member of the Pastoral and Program Staff on the trip. If no Pastoral and Program Staff member is on the trip, they will be given to another Adult volunteer on the trip so that they are available in case of emergency.

1. Transportation.

The following rules apply when transportation of Children and/or Youth is being provided by Pastoral and Program Staff members or volunteers for any designated church activity.

- i. All drivers must be established as Primary Volunteers .
- ii. When transporting Children, the driver must be accompanied by at least one additional unrelated Adult.
- iii. When transporting Youth, the driver should be accompanied by at least one additional unrelated Adult. If not enough unrelated Adults are present, no fewer than three people, of any combination of Adults and Youth, shall be together in a vehicle. For example: two unrelated Adults + one or more Youth; a married couple plus one additional Adult + one or more Youth; one Adult + two or more Youth.
- iv. If a situation arises where it becomes necessary for one Adult to transport one Youth, the Pastoral and Program Staff Member supervising the activity shall attempt to contact the parent or guardian of the Youth and inform them of the transportation situation. As soon as the Youth has been dropped off, the Pastoral and Program staff member supervising the event shall attempt to contact the parent or guardian to inform them that the Youth is safely at the final destination.
- v. High school Youth who are old enough to drive themselves are not to drive out of the county for any church sponsored event or program.

Approved by Session of Westminster Presbyterian Church on _____

Changes and amendments to the Policy approved by the Session of Westminster Presbyterian Church on 8-14-19

**Westminster Presbyterian Church
Child and Youth Protection Policy for Preventing Sexual Abuse**

Application and Background Check Consent Form

Thank you for volunteering for activities and events at Westminster! It is only through our dedicated volunteers and staff that many of the activities involving Youth and Children are possible. To help protect the safety of all involved, please complete and sign the following form:

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

Home phone _____ Work phone _____

Email _____

Driver's license number: _____ State _____

Social Security Number: _____ (required for background check)

Date of birth ____ - ____ - ____

Occupation _____ Employer _____

Are you a member of Westminster Presbyterian Church? _____ If so, year joined _____

If not, or if you have been a member for less than six months, please list previous church membership:

Church name _____ City _____ State _____

Pastor's name: _____ How long were you a member there? _____

As a volunteer in Children and/or Youth ministries at Westminster Presbyterian Church (WPC); or as a staff person who works with Children and/or Youth, I affirm my commitment to support WPC as a welcoming environment for Children and Youth. I recognize that WPC has adopted the above Policy. I have read and understand the Policy, support it, and agree to abide by it. I affirm that I will do my part in providing a nurturing Christian environment in which our Children and Youth can develop in faith and in trust.

I certify by my initials that :

_____ I have never been the subject of any investigation, complaint, civil claim or legal or church-related action involving a reported instance of sexual, emotional, or physical abuse of Children or Youth, and I have never been refused, resigned from or been asked to resign from a position for reasons related to such sexual, emotional, or physical abuse.

_____ I have never been convicted of a criminal offense involving the possession, use, manufacture, or sale of drugs, or involving a sexually related crime.

_____ I have never been convicted of a criminal offense (other than minor traffic citations)

_____ I have never been denied an opportunity to supervise Children/Youth activities for any reason.

_____ I have read, understand, and agree to abide by the Westminster Presbyterian Church Protecting Children and Youth from Sexual Abuse Policy and have received a copy for my personal reference. I will refrain from any inappropriate conduct in the performance of my service on behalf of Westminster Presbyterian Church. I understand that any violation of this Policy or misrepresentation of information that I have provided may result in termination of volunteer or employment opportunities with Children or Youth.

_____ I have participated in the required training for **Protecting Children and Youth from Sexual Abuse**.

_____ I authorize a background check to verify the information I have provided and I understand that a record of information obtained will be kept in a confidential file by the church. I authorize any person, firm, institution, or agency contacted to furnish the aforementioned information and I release all parties involved from any liability and responsibility for doing so.

_____ I sign this release as my own free act in exchange for the opportunity to serve as a Westminster Presbyterian Church volunteer or staff member. This authorization shall be valid in original, faxed, electronic, or copied form.

If you cannot make one or more of the above certifications, please provide a separate written description (in a form acceptable to the church) of any such investigation, complaint, conviction or other legal action.

Signature

Date

**Youth Volunteer Covenant
For 6th- 12th Grade Youth**

I understand that, in my serving role, I am representing Westminster Presbyterian Church.

I agree to conduct myself in a manner reflecting the mission of our church.

I understand that as a young volunteer, I am a vital part of a ministry team, and that therefore, the Adult leaders must be able to count on me.

I understand the importance of contacting the church staff member or volunteer coordinator who recruited me if I will not be able to serve. I understand that leaders need to know two days prior to my serving time that I will be absent unless my absence is due to illness or unexpected event; then I will make this contact as soon as possible.

I understand that as I serve, I am expected to treat others as I would wish to be treated myself. This includes leaders, parents, Children, and other Youth volunteers. When new or difficult circumstances arise, I will ask myself, "How would I want to be treated in this situation?" I understand that the Adults present are there to assist me if I need help in discerning the appropriate way to proceed. I am committed to seeking their assistance.

I understand that if at any time my conduct becomes less than what is expected of me, I may be given a verbal warning with instruction on how to conduct myself, written warning, parental notification and/or, if necessary, dismissal from the activity.

I have read and understand the Protecting Children and Youth from Sexual Abuse. Policy. I understand the expectations listed above and am committed to doing my best to fulfill all of these expectations.

Volunteer Signature

Print Name

Today's Date

Birth Date

Phone Number

Email

I understand the commitment detailed above, which Westminster Presbyterian Church expects of my son/daughter. I accept the responsibility of helping to keep him/her accountable in fulfilling these expectations.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date