

Child and Youth Safety Policy

Western Presbyterian Church

Washington, D.C.

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

Western Presbyterian Church is a spiritual community that takes seriously its responsibility to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children and youth who participate in our ministries. This policy statement covers the obligations of church employees and volunteers who work with children and/or youth. All employees and volunteers of Western Presbyterian Church must comply with all parts of the “Child and Youth Safety Policy,” and obtain clearance to work with children at Western Presbyterian upon completing the application and background check forms in Part 3. To the extent that employees are required to undergo a background check pursuant to the WPC Sexual Misconduct Policy, such background check will also satisfy the requirements of this Child and Youth Safety Policy. All are encouraged to participate fully in the lives and ministry of children and youth. However, the church has an overriding obligation to safeguard all children and youth under its care from abuse and neglect.

The following, (1) “Requirements of Employees and Volunteers in the Children and Youth Ministries,” (2) “Child and Youth Safety Guidelines and Procedures,” and (3) “The Child and Youth Ministry Application Form(s),” reflect the commitment of Western Presbyterian Church to provide a safe environment for all children, youth, employees, and volunteers who participate in any church-sponsored activity or ministry. These three (3) parts and the Introduction constitute the Child and Youth Safety Policy.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy, “volunteers” are defined as those people who of their own free will offer to help lead or provide child care for the children and youth who come under the care of Western Presbyterian Church. The term “volunteers” shall include but is not limited to all teachers, assistants, drivers, chaperones, childcare providers, hall monitors, and youth leaders who work with children and youth. For the purpose of this policy, childcare providers who are not regular paid employees of the church but are monetarily reimbursed for their occasional service shall be included in the term “volunteers.”

"Youth Apprentices" are Western volunteers under 18 years old. Youth apprentices must be at least five years older than the children they supervise. These apprentices must serve under the supervision of an adult (preferably other than their parent) at all times who will ensure that the rules embodied herein are strictly complied with.

“Children and youth” are all persons under age 18 who attend, participate in, observe, or are otherwise present during any activities or programs at Western Presbyterian Church, or whose participation is organized and supervised by employees or volunteers of Western Presbyterian Church.

PROHIBITED ACTS

The following acts are prohibited during any congregational activity for children and youth. This list is not intended to be exhaustive. However, the following are explicitly prohibited:

1. Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct toward a child or youth.
2. Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any adult and a child or youth.
3. Infliction of physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a child or youth.
4. Physical neglect of a child or youth, including failure to provide adequate supervision a reasonable person would provide in the same or similar situation.
5. Causing mental or emotional injury to a child or youth.
6. Possessing or accessing obscene or pornographic materials at any congregational activity or using any church-owned devices such as computers or cellular phones.
7. Possessing illegal drugs or being under the influence of any illegal drugs.
8. Consuming or being under the influence of alcohol while participating in any congregational activity designed for children and youth.
9. Any kind of verbal remarks with sexual connotations, overtones, or innuendo directed to or about a youth or child.
10. Carrying any type of weapon.

Church staff and volunteers should not ask children for hugs or any physical affection, but should receive appropriate physical affection such as side hugs, joyfully when it is given. Children need the opportunity to decline affection, and children older than age three should be asked for permission before they are picked up or given a side-hug. Tickling or wrestling is not appropriate physical touching.

REQUIREMENTS /PROCEDURES

In order to provide a safe community for children, youth, and adults, the church requires all employees and volunteers to comply with the “Requirements of Employees and Volunteers in the Child and Youth Ministries” (Part 1) and the “Child and Youth Safety Guidelines and Procedures” (Part 2) adopted by the Session of this church. All employees and volunteers will review the attached “Guidelines and Procedures” at an orientation session or meet with the appropriate staff person to review the documents. All employees and volunteers will be under the supervision of the respective professional staff persons.

Employees and volunteers will be asked to complete an application (see Part 3) and submit a valid Background Check form (see Part 3), which will be processed in a timely and discreet manner by the church staff and must result in a clear record from any violent crime or crime of moral turpitude in order to be permitted to work or volunteer in any church-sponsored activity or program involving children or youth. Background forms and re-checks must be performed every three years.

Any person who is currently under investigation for, suspected/accused of, or has been convicted of (1) criminal sexual conduct, (2) neglect of a child, or (3) physical abuse of a child will not be permitted to work or volunteer in any church sponsored activity or program involving children or youth. All volunteers must be notified in writing that they have been cleared to work with children or youth by one of the following: Director of Christian Education or Pastor.

There may be emergency situations when a volunteer is needed and there is not time to perform the required checks before the volunteer serves in ministry. In such a case, the ministry leader must receive approval for the volunteer to serve, in that instance only, from either a Pastor or the Director of Christian Education. Under no circumstance would failure to plan constitute an emergency.

REVIEW

The Children's Education Committee shall review the Child and Youth Safety Policy and its implementation annually and report to Session.

PART 1

REQUIREMENTS OF EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS IN THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRIES:

A. At no time shall one employee or volunteer be allowed to be alone with a child or a youth. The two exceptions to this policy would be: 1) in a situation in which the contact occurs in a public place and other Western members are in and out of the area where the employee or volunteer is working with the child or youth; or 2) in situations of one-on-one pastoral counseling during which the minor specifically demands that the door be closed.

B. All employees and children and youth volunteers must read the "Child and Youth Safety Policy" of this church; agree to it by completing and signing the appropriate application form, take the free online training on abuse sponsored by the DC government as detailed below in Section E, and attend an orientation session or meet with the appropriate staff person to review the "Guidelines and Procedures," which are noted in Part 2 below.

C. All Western employees and volunteers who are engaged officially in our Children's ministry, are also required to take a free online training on how to spot abuse/neglect and report it in DC, as per: <http://dc.mandatedreporter.org/>

D. Employees and volunteers are required to report immediately to both the District of Columbia Child and Family Services Agency at (202) 671-SAFE (7233) and to their supervisors any (1) criminal sexual conduct, (2) neglect of a child or youth, or (3) physical abuse of a child or youth. Employees and volunteers are strongly encouraged to maintain discretion for the privacy of both the victim and suspect. However, while every effort will be made to keep the reporter's identity anonymous pending investigation, complete confidentiality regarding the allegation is not guaranteed given that upon any report of suspicious or inappropriate behavior, the suspected employee or volunteer will not be permitted to engage

in any activity that involves continued contact with children and youth, until an investigation is completed.

PART 2 CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

I. On-site procedures

A. At no time shall one employee or volunteer be allowed to be alone with a child or a youth. There are two exceptions to this policy:

1. One exception to this policy is a situation in which the one-on-one interaction occurs in a public place and other church members and other persons are in and out of the area where the employee or volunteer is working with the child or youth. An on-site “public place” does not include areas outside of the church which are considered open to the general public but not easily visible to church members or a responsible supervisor. For example, nursery workers may not take a crying baby for a walk around the block.
2. The second exception is limited to one-on-one pastoral counseling sessions with one of Western’s Pastors. Pastors are prohibited from being behind closed doors with a minor unless the minor specifically demands that the door be closed during such one-on-one pastoral counseling. This is the same policy that Western’s pastors have with adults.

B. A responsible supervisor must randomly monitor all Sunday School and nursery activities. Supervisors should make frequent, unannounced visits.

C. Restroom use:

1. In the Nursery, it is preferred that diapers be changed by the parent/guardian or cleared nursery worker. Diapers are to be changed only in designated areas and in the presence of other caregivers.
2. Pre-school through kindergarten age children will be accompanied to the restroom by an adult employee or volunteer, who will wait at the door for the children. Ideally, children should be escorted two at a time (i.e. two boys or two girls). The adult employee or volunteer will make sure that the restroom is clear before allowing a child to enter alone. The adult employee or volunteer will also ask adults who are beginning to enter the restroom to please wait until the children are finished.
3. If a pre-school through kindergarten age child needs assistance in the restroom, the adult employee or volunteer shall provide the assistance necessary, first encouraging the child to handle as much of the process as he/she can.
4. First through sixth graders may go to the restroom in pairs (i.e. two boys or two girls) without adult accompaniment. If there are not two or more same-sex children who can go to the restroom together, an adult employee or volunteer must accompany the child, and stand at the door, as described in paragraph 2, above.
5. Youth apprentices should not accompany children to the restroom

D. During Sunday School hours, all nursery and classrooms shall have doors open or windows on doors with views unobstructed of the interior of the class.

E. If a situation unexpectedly does not meet the criteria of this policy, then alternatives must be put into place so that the event is in compliance. The following examples are meant as illustration only and are not to be perceived as the only possible solutions.

Example: If only one teacher and one child/youth show up for a Sunday school class then the supervisor could recommend these solutions:

- a. the teacher and child/youth could join another class for the morning
- b. the supervisor could join the teacher and child/youth
- c. the teacher and child/youth could attend church

F. Adult Visitor Guidelines

Adult visitors are persons who are not cleared to volunteer to work with children and youth.

Adult visitors can only observe children and youth activities under the supervision of a cleared adult employee or volunteer. Adult visitors can not have supervisory responsibility over children and youth or be left alone with children and youth. Examples of adult visitors: parents visiting Sunday School classes and youth events; church members and parents joining children's activities.

G. Class Ratio

The ratio of one volunteer for three babies (infant to age three) and one volunteer for five children (ages four and five) should be maintained. WPC does not have a strict volunteer/child or volunteer/youth ratio for children older than age five.

II. Off-site procedures when the children and youth are part of the Western Presbyterian Church community

A. At no time shall one employee or volunteer be allowed to be alone with a child or a youth. The only exception to this policy would be in a situation in which the contact occurs in a public place and other persons, whether or not associated with WPC, are in and out of the area where the employee or volunteer is working with the child or youth.

B. As each facility will be different it will be the responsibility of the group leader to determine how best to use the facility and comply with the church policy.

C. Overnights: Males and females shall be segregated during sleeping time. If it is deemed necessary for adults to share sleeping accommodations with the children/youth, a minimum of two adults, the same sex as the children/youth to be chaperoned, shall sleep in each area.

D. All drivers and chaperones on children/youth off-site trips shall be included in all parts of the Child and Youth Safety Policy.

E. Permission slips and medical authorization are required for all off campus church sponsored children and youth events.

III. Off-site procedures when the employees or volunteers are representing Western Presbyterian Church but the children and youth are not a part of the Western Presbyterian Church community (e.g. Spring Break trips, mission trips)

A. At no time shall one employee or volunteer be allowed to be alone with a child or a youth. The only exception to this policy would be in a situation in which the contact occurs in a public place and other persons, whether or not affiliated with WPC, are in and out of the area where the employee or volunteer is working with the child or youth.

B. As each facility will be different, it will be the responsibility of the Director of Christian Education and the Chair of the Christian Education Committee to determine how best to use the facility and comply with the church policy.

C. Overnights: Males and females shall be segregated during sleeping time. If it is deemed necessary for adults to share sleeping accommodations with the children/youth, a minimum of two adults, the same sex as the children/youth to be chaperoned, shall sleep in each area.

D. All drivers and chaperones on children/youth off-site trips shall be included in all parts of the Child and Youth Safety Policy.

IV. Non-church sponsored use of the church facility procedures

A. Anyone who uses the Western Presbyterian facility for non-church sponsored activities with children or youth will be required to comply with the church policy, which states: At no time shall one employee or volunteer be allowed to be alone with a child or a youth. The only exception to this policy would be in a situation in which the contact occurs in a public place, within or outside of the church, and other persons are in and out of the area where the employee or volunteer is working with the child or youth.

B. At the time a contract is made with a non-church group or person to use the church facility, it shall be the duty of the Church Administrator to obtain written confirmation from the users of their need to comply with the above.

V. Christian Education Committee procedures

A. It shall be the responsibility of the church Christian Education Committee to give each newly hired employee a copy of the Child and Youth Safety Policy. A copy of the policy will be included in the Personnel Manual under "Exhibits."

B. Every employee of WPC who has responsibility for supervising employees or volunteers who lead children or youth shall have an obligation to enforce this policy.

C. Ministerial and Program staff members, along with other employees who work with children or youth, will review the implementation of the "Child and Youth Safety Policy" each September.

VI. Initial reporting of suspicious or inappropriate activity

A. Criminal behavior, neglect of a child, or abuse of a child brought to the attention of an employee or volunteer must be reported to the Head of Staff or Director of Christian Education, and the Clerk of Session. The Head of Staff, Director of Christian Education, or Clerk of Session will report the activity/incident immediately (within 24 hours) to the D.C. Child and Family Services hotline. If the Head of Staff, Director of Christian Education or Clerk of Session is the individual engaging in criminal behavior, neglect of a child or abuse of a child, the person witnessing the behavior or receiving a report shall report the incident or behavior directly to the D.C. Child and Family Services hotline.

Any incident or accident taking place during congregational activities or on church campus involving an injury requiring medical treatment, emotional trauma, death, fire, explosion, vandalism, traffic violation, suspected crime (call police first), or suspected abuse must also be reported to the Head of Staff as soon as possible (within 24 hours). If the Head of Staff is unavailable within the specified time frame, the report should be made to the Clerk of Session. The “Prohibited Acts” listed in the Introduction are meant to be used as a guideline in determining whether, taken together, a reasonable suspicion exists to trigger mandatory reporting of possible criminal behavior, child neglect, or child abuse.

B. The person receiving the report of prohibited activity shall document the date, time and circumstances of the alleged incident in an Incident/Accident Report form immediately but not more than 24 hours after receiving the report, and must deliver the report to the Head of Staff, or if the Head of Staff is unavailable, to the Clerk of Session, within that same time period.

C. The Head of Staff (or Clerk of Session) will inform the Session, the Presbytery, the church legal counsel and the church insurer of the incident/behavior and the notification to D.C. Child and Family Services, within 24 hours of the call to the CFSA hotline. Contact information for the Presbytery’s Sexual Misconduct Response Coordinating Team is: **Leslianne Braunstein**, Co-chair, 202.329.7800, or Scott Winnette, Co-chair, 301.356-2850.

D. All allegations shall be regarded as serious, and due consideration shall be given to the rights, confidentiality, and privacy of both the alleged victim and the person being accused.

E. The person who is being accused will be required to refrain from participating in all child and youth activities until an investigation is completed and it is determined if further action shall be taken. Extreme care shall be taken to handle the investigation in a discreet manner, with respect for the rights of the accused and the victim.

F. If church volunteers have any concerns regarding the safety of a child or youth, or have a reasonable suspicion that criminal behavior, child neglect, or child abuse has occurred, the volunteers can make a report directly to authorities via the DC Child and Family Services abuse hotline, or can report the behavior/incident to the Head of Staff, Director of Christian Education, or Clerk of Session. The volunteer should not try to self-police other volunteers or employees of WPC. Although volunteers may not be legally mandated to report the abuse, everyone who has reasonable grounds to believe a child or youth has been or is being abused or neglected can report the possible abuse.

VII. Staff response to allegations of abuse or neglect

A. Following any reporting to the D.C. Child and Family Services abuse hotline, the following steps will be taken:

1. A Response Team will be assigned to take further action. The Response Team will consist of: (1) the Pastor/Head of Staff, (2) at least two members of Session appointed by the Pastor/Head of Staff, (3) legal counsel, and (4) others as deemed appropriate (e.g. a mental health professional).

2. The Response Team will promptly:

a. Ensure appropriate contact and cooperation with local and state civil and criminal authorities as required by law, and consistent with the Book of Order. If appropriate under the law, under the guidance of police and civil legal authorities, the church legal counsel and insurance carrier, the Response Team may also:

b. Interview all appropriate persons.

c. If it will not put the child in jeopardy, contact the alleged victim's parents.

d. Maintain documents of all efforts to handle the situation.

e. Appoint a spokesperson, who will present a clear position statement of the church regarding child abuse and include policies and established safeguards. This person will be the only person communicating to the press and authorities. The spokesperson will also give information to the congregation as appropriate.

B. The ministerial staff will provide appropriate counseling for the victim and the accused.

VIII. Staff Care of Documents

A. Only the pastors and direct support staff will review forms filled out by volunteers.

B. All information will be treated in a confidential manner. Except in the case of a response to a report of suspicious activity, only the appropriate professional staff shall have access to the information on these documents. In the case of a report of criminal activity, child abuse, or child neglect, the Response Team and the appropriate legal authorities will have access to the information.

C. The documents will be kept in secure storage.

D. References will be contacted by the appropriate staff persons before the individual begins service.

E. Volunteers will be required to complete a Child and Youth Volunteer Application form once every three (3) years. In the interim years volunteers will be required to complete a "Child and Youth Volunteer Short Form," verifying that the information provided in their application is still accurate and truthful.

**PART 3: Western Presbyterian Church
CHILD AND YOUTH VOLUNTEER APPLICATION
Confidential**

Please answer each question in full. Your responses will be kept confidential.

Full Name with Middle Initial _____

Address and Phone:

Social Security Number _____

Driver's License Number (and State) _____

Birth Date _____

1. Are you a member of Western Presbyterian Church? ___yes ___no

If no, how long have you attended? _____

2. Please list any past experience you have working with children and youth.
Include name and place of the institution(s) or organization(s) (if any).

3. Please provide names and contact information for two non-relatives who are familiar with your character as it relates to working with children and youth. References will be checked.

Name (1) _____

Address _____

Phone number _____

Name (2) _____

Address _____

Phone number _____

4. Are you currently under investigation for a crime involving children or youth?

_____yes _____no

5. Have you ever been convicted of, or pled guilty or no contest to any crime after having been accused of any incident involving children and youth?

_____yes _____no

6. Have you ever been found responsible or guilty in any court for neglect or abuse of a child?

_____yes _____no

NOTE: A “no” response to any of the following questions would preclude an applicant from volunteering with children or youth.

7. As a church volunteer, do you agree to observe all church policies regarding work with children or youth?_____Yes _____No

8. Have you read, and do you understand and agree to abide by, the “Child and Youth Safety Policy?” _____yes_____ no

9. Do you consent to a criminal background check? _____yes _____no

10. Do you consent to reference checks by Western Presbyterian Church to persons named by you and any other person, or to verify any information supplied by you?_____yes _____no

Volunteer Name (Print): _____

Signature: _____Date: _____

Parent Signature: _____Date: _____

(Required for volunteers under the age of 18)

Note: If you have any concerns about the requested information, please feel free to speak to any member of the program or ministry staff.

**Western Presbyterian Church
Authorization Statement for Criminal History Record Check**

I hereby authorize Western Presbyterian Church and/or its agents to obtain information pertaining to any charges and/or convictions I may have had for violation of municipal, state, or federal laws. This information will include, but may not be limited to, allegations regarding, and convictions for, crimes committed upon minors. I understand that this information will be gathered from any law enforcement agency of the city or federal government, or from third-party providers of information originally obtained from law enforcement or court records. As an applicant for a volunteer position, I hereby attest to the truthfulness of the representations I have made. Except as I have disclosed, I have not been found guilty of, or entered a plea of nolo contendere or guilty to any offense.

I release Western Presbyterian Church and/or its agents from any and all liabilities, claims or law suits in regards to the information obtained from any and all of the above referenced sources used.

I understand that I must be truthful and, if any statement I have made is found to be false, I will be denied the position for which I am making application or, if already accepted, terminated from my position.

Applicant Name

Applicant Signature

Date

Social Security Number

Date of Birth

Street address, City, State, Zip code

CHILD AND YOUTH VOLUNTEER APPLICATION - SHORT FORM

Western Presbyterian Church

To be completed by Volunteers if they have signed a Child and Youth Volunteer Application form within the last 3 years.

I have read the Child and Youth Safety Policy. Yes _____ No _____

I verify that the information that I provided on the Child and Youth Volunteer

Application is still correct and truthful. Yes _____ No _____

Volunteer Name (Print) _____

Volunteer signature

Date

**Western Presbyterian Church
Incident Report Form**

Person Completing Report:

Date of Report:

Reporter Contact Information (address, telephone, email)

Incident reported (also describe any injury/extent of injury):

Date of incident:

Location of incident:

Names of all persons involved – accused, victim, witnesses (with contact info if available):

Call to DC Child and Family Services Abuse Hotline: ____ Yes ____ No

If call to abuse hotline:

Date and time of call

Person making call

Person receiving call

Was first aid administered? If so, describe first aid treatment and name of provider:

Were any of the following contacted:

_____ Parent/Guardian (Name/Contact Info: _____)

_____ Police (Name/Badge Number/Contact Info: _____)

_____ Ambulance