



WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CHILD/YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

We affirm that all children are a gift of God, created by God and created good;

- We believe that all children depend upon adults for safety and security in a world that does not always value children;
- 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;
- Jesus welcomed children and encouraged us to welcome them in his name, and 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.

POLICY PURPOSE

- To protect children/youth under 18 in our care from child abuse, neglect, and/or sexual misconduct.
- To protect our staff and volunteers from false accusations of child abuse, neglect, and/or sexual misconduct.
- To safeguard the ministry of the church and to spare it from the devastation that may result from false accusations and litigation.

DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT

“Abuse” or “abused child” means that a person causes or inflicts sexual abuse on a child under the age of 18; or, has care, custody or control of a child under the age of 18, and causes or inflicts: (a) physical injury through unjustified force (force that is not reasonable or moderate and does not meet the other criteria in 11 *Del. Code Sec. 468*); (b) emotional abuse; (c) torture; (d) exploitation; or (e) maltreatment or mistreatment. See additional definitions in 10 *Del. Code Sec. 901*.

“Neglect” or “neglected child” means that a person is responsible for the care, custody and/or control of the child and has the ability and financial means to provide for the care of the child and: (a) fails to provide necessary care for food, clothing, shelter, education, health and medical or other care; or (b) chronically and severely abuses alcohol or a controlled substance; or (c) fails to provide necessary supervision appropriate for a child.

Sexual abuse of a child is criminal behavior that involves a child in sexual behavior (both touching and non-touching) for which the child is not personally, socially, or developmentally ready. See full definitions and criminal offenses in 11 *Del. Code Sec. 761 to 778A*.

PRECAUTIONS AND DUE DILIGENCE

Although our Christian concern for children/youth is heightened when any form of child abuse takes place anywhere, Westminster’s focus is to prevent abuse of a child/youth from occurring within any of Westminster’s programs or ministries through the establishment of a sound child/youth protection policy and the training of our staff and volunteers in the policy. This policy is intended to help our congregation as much as possible to make Westminster a safe and caring place for our children and youth.

Recognizing that Westminster has limited staff and relies upon volunteers for assisting in Christian Education and other programs and ministries, there may be times when an unforeseen or emergency situation beyond Westminster’s control (e.g., sickness or other unavailability of a member of staff or volunteer) results in an inability to follow the stated policy in some respect. In such circumstances, Westminster will use its best efforts to meet the requirements of the policy as far as practicable.

In an effort to create a safe environment within our church, each member of staff and volunteer who works with the church's children/youth programs both regularly and occasionally, on or beyond church property, will be screened and trained in this child/youth protection policy.

One-year Rule: No adult shall be permitted to serve as a volunteer with our children/youth unless he or she has been a member of Westminster for at least one year or is recommended by two church members who each have been members for at least one year. The Christian Education Committee of Session shall submit names of volunteers to Session for prior approval.

Helpers (volunteer assistants under age 18) who are children of a Westminster member or who are known to a church member may serve as a volunteer under the direct supervision of a member of staff or an adult volunteer.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE POLICY

The Session shall be responsible for the administration of this policy. The Session has assigned oversight of this policy to the Personnel and Christian Education Committees of Session.

PREVENTION

Westminster has established the following policies and practices to lessen the likelihood of child abuse and neglect occurring.

SCREENING

Staff and adult volunteers that regularly have contact with children/youth under the age of 18 through Westminster's programs and ministries will be required to have a background check pursuant to 11 *Del. Code* Sec. 8561 (see attached form) and to execute a Volunteer Covenant (see attached form). The information provided for and obtained from the background check will be confidential and kept in a secure place. Only those authorized to conduct the screening process, Head of Staff, the Church Administrator, and the Convener of the Personnel Committee, will be privy to this information. In the event of an allegation of child/youth abuse or neglect the information may be divulged to other church leaders on a "need-to-know" basis. Re-screening of staff and adult volunteers will occur on a periodic basis as determined by the Personnel Committee of the Session.

Staff and adult volunteers serving Westminster's child/youth programs and ministries shall be required to acknowledge that they have read, understand and agree to abide by this policy.

SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN/YOUTH

Open door policy: Parents, volunteers, or staff of the church may visit and observe child or youth programs at any time.

Security procedures for dropping off and picking up children: Westminster has established procedures for checking in and picking up children by a responsible adult from Sunday morning classes/programs to ensure the security of children in our care. Attached to this policy are the current procedures for all 9:00 a.m. and 10:10 a.m. Sunday classes/programs for children up through the 5th Grade and for Sunday evening youth programs. Changes to these procedures may occur from time to time and will result in updates to the attached procedures.

Bathroom Procedure for Children through second grade: A member of staff, adult volunteer or helper shall accompany a child to the bathroom, wait at the door until the child exits, and then accompany the child back to the classroom. The adult or helper may enter the bathroom, but only if the child needs assistance or supervision. The adult or helper shall not enter the stall with a child unless the child asks for or clearly needs assistance, or there is an emergency, and under such circumstances, the stall door shall remain open.

The outside bathroom door must be kept ajar when the adult or helper is inside with a child. When more than one child is escorted to the bathroom, and the adult or helper is inside the bathroom, the children shall be kept inside until everyone has used the facilities, and then all should leave as a group.

Two-person Preference: For classes through eighth grade, two members of staff or volunteers should be present in any classroom. Where feasible, small windows should be installed in room and office doors to allow easy viewing of all activities.

Rule of Three: When there are children/youth and adults present in the same room, there should be a minimum of three persons present (two adults and one child/youth or one adult and two children/youth).

A corollary of this rule is that at any time that an adult is having a private conversation with a child/youth (e.g., during a confirmation retreat where a pastor is discussing a youth's spiritual journey), it should only take place in an area with other adults/youth/children nearby. If this is not feasible, then the door to the room shall remain open to allow easy viewing.

Parental Permission Rule: Children/youth must have written permission from their parent/legal guardian for involvement in church-sponsored programs and activities away from Westminster property.

Trips and Retreats: There shall be at least two adults present for all trips, retreats, and other times that children/youth gather at or away from the church property. (At least three 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. Parents shall be made aware of the housing accommodations in advance.

In situations where two adults are not available per room where children/youth are staying overnight, no adult of a different gender shall stay alone in a room with the children/youth. In those circumstances where adults are not staying in the rooms with children/youth, special measures should be taken to assure the safety and supervision of children/youth, such as adult hall monitors and periodic room checks by two adults of the same gender as those being checked out. The person in charge of each trip and/or retreat shall carry completed permission slips, including permission for emergency medical care and information how to contact a parent/legal guardian in an emergency.

Transportation: The following rules apply when transportation by a member of staff or an adult volunteer is being provided for children/youth for designated church activities from the church to a church-sponsored event and back:

- The designated leader of the event must know the driver.

- The designated leader of the _____ event shall not permit any adult to drive who appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- The driver must be at least 21 years of age.
- The driver must have a valid driver's license for the vehicle being operated.
- The driver must have proof of insurance.
- The driver must be accompanied by at least two children/youth in the vehicle.
- The driver shall comply with all motor vehicle laws.
- The driver shall not operate the vehicle while using a telephone or other device to speak or text to another person.
- The driver shall have read and acknowledged that he or she has read, understands and agrees to abide by the child/youth protection policy of Westminster.
- A copy of the valid driver's license and proof of insurance must be filed with the Church Administrator before a driver is approved to drive on church-sponsored activities.
- All drivers shall be advised that in the event of an accident, by insurance rules and their agreement to drive on a church-sponsored activity, the driver's insurance coverage is considered primary and that Westminster's coverage is secondary.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF PERSONS WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN/YOUTH

Westminster shall provide periodic training to members of staff and adult volunteers on this policy and any other current issues related to the protection of children/youth. Attendance at such training sessions is required for those who have direct contact with children/youth in Westminster's ministry.

PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING ABUSE/NEGLECT OF CHILDREN/YOUTH

When abuse/neglect is suspected by a person outside Westminster:

- The care and safety of the victim and family is our first priority.
- A member of staff or a volunteer is encouraged to discuss areas of concern about possible abuse/neglect of a child/youth with pastoral staff at anytime. The pastoral staff should be shown any physical signs of abuse/neglect of a child/youth within 24 hours, if possible. If there is a strong suspicion of abuse/neglect of a child/youth, it shall be reported to the Head of Staff, the Church Educator, or the Convener of the Personnel Committee immediately.
- An immediate oral report shall be made to the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (“DSCYF”) by telephone (1-800-292-9582) or otherwise. (16 *Del. Code* Sec. 904). A written report, if requested, shall be made in accordance with the rules and regulations of DSCYF. Westminster shall not attempt to do an investigation after reporting to DSCYF. This will be done by DSCYF and other professionals who are familiar with the required procedures.

The parent(s) or legal guardian of the victim shall be notified by a member of the pastoral staff (preferably by Head of Staff) and steps shall be taken to assure the safety of the child/youth until the parent(s) or legal guardian arrives. It is important to emphasize that DSCYF must be notified even if the parent(s) or legal guardian does not want the incident to be reported. If one or both parents is the alleged abuser, DSCYF shall be contacted and questioned whether or when the parent(s) should be notified, and Westminster should follow DSCYF’s advice.

When abuse/neglect is suspected by a member of staff or a volunteer:

- The care and safety of the victim and family is our first priority.
- Anyone who suspects abuse/neglect by a member of staff or a volunteer must report such information to a member of the pastoral staff. If possible, the member of the pastoral staff should be shown the physical signs of abuse/neglect within 24 hours. If there is a strong suspicion of abuse/neglect, it must be reported to the Head of Staff, the Church Educator, or the Convener of the Personnel Committee immediately.

- An immediate oral report shall be made to the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (“DSCYF”) by telephone (1-800-292-9582) or otherwise. (16 *Del. Code Sec. 904*). A written report, if requested, shall be made in accordance with the rules and regulations of DSCYF. Westminster shall not attempt to do an investigation after reporting to DSCYF. This will be done by DSCYF and other professionals who are familiar with the required procedures.
- The parent(s) or legal guardian of the victim shall be notified by a member of the pastoral staff (preferably Head of Staff) and steps shall be taken to assure the safety of the child/youth until the parent(s) or legal guardian arrives. It is important to emphasize that DSCYF must be notified even if the parent(s) or legal guardian does not want the incident to be reported.
- As soon after the parent(s) or legal guardian has been notified, the Head of Staff shall inform the accused abuser that a report has been made. The accused member of staff or volunteer shall be temporarily relieved of his/her duties pending investigation of the charges. If a member of staff has been accused, a decision will be made to either maintain or suspend his/her salary and benefits until the allegations are cleared or substantiated. Westminster will cooperate fully with all legal requirements under the law. Any contact with the media should only be handled by a pre-determined spokesperson. These matters are confidential and care shall be taken to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved. The media spokesperson generally should report that the matter is under investigation and until concluded, no comment is appropriate.
- Westminster’s insurance company shall be notified immediately to protect and preserve coverage under the insurance policy.
- A report of the abuse/neglect should be documented in writing and provided to the Head of Staff, the Church Educator, and the Convener of the personnel Committee.

Failure to Report

Under Delaware law, failure to report suspected child/youth abuse/neglect (see definitions on the first page of this policy) shall result in a civil penalty not to exceed \$10,000 for a first violation. (16 *Del. Code Sec. 914*) A family or professional relationship will not relieve a person of the obligation to report suspected child/youth abuse/neglect. (16 *Del. Code Sec. 903*)

Protection of Persons Making a Report

Further, under Delaware law, anyone participating in good faith in the making of a report of actual or suspected child/youth abuse/neglect shall have immunity from civil or criminal liability. (16 *Del. Code* Sec. 903).

DISCIPLINE

No Violation

If an investigation of a report of child/youth abuse/neglect reveals that no abuse/neglect occurred, the accused member of staff or volunteer and the complaining party will be informed that a thorough investigation has been conducted and that there is no basis to substantiate the report. The member of staff shall be reinstated in good standing including restoration of salary and benefits if suspended during the investigation.

Violation

If an investigation of a report of child/youth abuse/neglect results in a finding of abuse/neglect by a member of staff, that person will be subject to immediate termination. The member of staff may appeal such action to the Personnel Committee. After review, the decision of the Personnel Committee is binding.

If an investigation of a report of child/youth abuse/neglect results in a finding of abuse/neglect by a volunteer, that volunteer shall be prohibited from working directly with children/youth in any of Westminster's ministries and will be subject to other appropriate sanctions, including removal from the church membership rolls.

Westminster Presbyterian Church

Procedures for Sunday morning check-in and dismissal:
Children up through 5th Grade

Cribbery (8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.) –

Parents fill out a yellow security label available in the cribbery, put it on child's back, and keep the stub. When the parent or responsible adult returns to pick up the child, they must present the matching stub to the Cribbery caregiver.

9:00 a.m. –

Godly Care, Godly Play, Hebrew Scouts, and Treasure Seekers: Parents, sitting in the sanctuary, fill out a yellow security label available in the pew pockets, put it on child's back, and keep the stub. After Time with Our Children, adult teachers will escort the children down the center aisle and into the main hallway. There all teachers for children's 9:00 programming will divide the children and escort them to the applicable program. At the end of the hour, adult teachers escort the children back to Classroom C in Under Six.

- Parents of Godly Care children present their stub to the teacher in Classroom A (children in this age group who are going to stay for a second hour will be moved to classroom D by the teacher).
- Parents of the older children line up to present their stub to the Under Six Coordinator at the door of Classroom C. The Coordinator goes into the room (Miss Bea is in there also) to get the child.

Yellow Security Labels are available in the sanctuary pew pockets, Cribbery, and Under Six.

10:TEN –

Under Six Sunday School: If a child has a label from 9:00 and is staying for the 10:TEN hour, the teacher will escort that child to Classroom D.

If a child comes for 10:TEN, the Coordinator asks the parent to fill out a label, put it on the child's back and keep the stub.

Sunshine Choir – Downstairs in Classroom 7:

Sign in – An adult greets the child and parent at the check-in table. The parent signs the check-in page with child's name, parent's name, and cell phone number. After class, children are dismissed directly to parent.

D.R.U.M. – Downstairs in Youth Music Room:

Sign in – An adult greets the child and parent at the check-in table in the hall. The parent signs the check-in page with child's name, parent's name, and cell phone number. After class, children are dismissed directly to parent

Even when the choirs meet in a different room or in the sanctuary for rehearsal, parents must still sign in, and children are still released directly to the parent. They are never allowed to leave and go find their parent.

11:15 –

Children in Kindergarten and older are encouraged to stay in worship with their families. Younger children may leave after Time with Our Children, and must be escorted by a parent or family member to childcare in Under Six. After the worship service, children are released directly to the parent.

Safe Sanctuary Procedures
Sundays: Youth Choir and 180° Dinner and Fellowship
Revised August 2011

Youth Choir:

1. An adult will greet Youth Choir members at the 1502 doors, between 3:50 and 4:10 p.m.
2. Parents are not to drop off their teen before 3:50 p.m. Parents must make sure their teen is safely inside before driving away.
3. The 1502 doors will be relocked at 4:10 p.m. If a teen is running late to choir, they need to ring the bell to be admitted. A parent or responsible adult must wait with their young person until they are safely inside the building.
4. Youth who need to leave following choir need to let an adult know they are leaving.

180° Dinner and Fellowship:

1. The 1506 (Blue) doors will open at 4:50 p.m. and relock at 5:10 p.m.
2. Parents are not to drop off their teen before 4:50 p.m. Parents must make sure their teen is safely inside before driving away.
3. Youth who arrive after 5:10 and find the doors locked will need to contact a Youth Ministry Team Member by cell phone to gain entry:
 - Mary Beth Davis ~ 484-614-7268
 - Mike Gnade ~ 302-379-9906
 - Susan Moseley ~ 302-373-6757
4. For Sr. Highs who drive to church: an adult will watch them walk to their car at the end of the evening.
5. If the teen desires an escort, they need to ask one of the adults to walk with them.
6. All youth who are picked up by a parent or carpool **MUST** remain inside the church until the parent/carpool arrives.
7. 180° will have a group closing (7:25 in the fall, 6:25 in the spring) and everyone will be dismissed at the same time.
8. All youth will exit through the 1506 doors.



WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH VOLUNTEER COVENANT

A VISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN THE CHURCH'S CARE*
Adapted from "A Vision for Children and the Church" written and published by
Congregational Ministries *Division, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*
and adopted by 205th General Assembly of PCUSA).

We affirm that all children are a gift of God, created by God and created good;

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

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;

Jesus welcomed children and encouraged us to welcome them in his name, and 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.

As a Westminster Presbyterian Church (WPC) volunteer who works with children and youth, I covenant to honor this vision at all times and in all places. Specifically:

I will:

- Treat everyone with respect, patience, courtesy, dignity, and consideration.
- Be knowledgeable of and adhere to WPC's Child/Youth Protection Policy.
- Report suspected abuse or neglect to a pastor, the Church Educator, or Convener of the Personnel Committee and the Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families (DSCYF). I understand that under Delaware law failure to report suspected abuse or neglect to DSCYF may result in a civil penalty of up to \$10,000.

I will not:

- Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of children/youth.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol at any time while volunteering.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.
- Touch a child/youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Use physical discipline for behavior management or any discipline that humiliates or demeans children/youth.

I understand that as a volunteer working with children/youth, I am subject to a thorough background check. I understand that any action inconsistent with this vision and our Child/Youth Protection Policy will result in my removal as a volunteer with children/youth at Westminster Presbyterian Church.

Signed: _____

Date _____

Please print name

