

Washington Presbytery CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Approved: January 21, 2017

General Purpose Statement

Washington Presbytery seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the policies and procedures outlined in this document, our goal is to protect the children of Washington Presbytery from incidents or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

Each church within the presbytery is required to adopt its own Child Protection Policy.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the term “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “worker” includes both paid and volunteer persons who work with children.

Selection of Workers

A: persons who desire to work with children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a) **Six Month Rule**

No volunteer will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until s/he has been involved with Washington Presbytery for a minimum of six (6) months. The time of interaction between church leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children,

b) **Written Application**

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application form to be supplied by the church leadership. The application shall include but not be limited to:

- Basic contact information
- Previous experience with children and church affiliations
- Reference and employment information
- Voluntary disclosure of any prior accusations, participation in or convictions of sexual misconduct and
- Authorization for Washington Presbytery to secure necessary background checks.

The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the Washington Presbytery office.

c) **Personal Interview**

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be **scheduled** with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position. In such cases, volunteers will be interviewed by the designee of the Presbytery. The Personnel Committee and/or its designee will conduct employee interviews.

d) **Reference Checks**

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicant's references may be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from an organization where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at the Washington Presbytery office. The process will be conducted by the designee of the Presbytery.

e) **Background Clearances**

Background clearances are required for all employees (regardless of position) and for volunteers having routine interaction with children or providing direct care, supervision, or guidance or control of children. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Those who will be involved in the nursery and educational classes;
- Those who will be involved in overnight activities with children;
- Those counseling children;
- Those involved in the mentorship of children, and
- Those having occasional contact with children (such as vehicle drivers and chaperones for youth events).

Employees must obtain the following:

1. Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check,
2. Child Abuse History Clearance from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, and
3. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Criminal Background.

Volunteers must obtain the following:

1. Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Records Check,
2. Child Abuse History Clearance from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, and
3. If a volunteer meets the following requirements, s/he is *not* required to obtain an FBI clearance:
 - a. Has been a resident of Pennsylvania for the previous consecutive ten-year period and

- b. Swears or affirms in writing that s/he has not, within the past five years:
 - i. Been named as a perpetrator in the statewide child abuse database;
 - ii. Been convicted of one or more of certain offenses (see Section 6344 © attached) under PA Title 18 (relating to crimes and offenses) or an equivalent crime under Federal law or the law of another state; or
 - iii. Been convicted of a felony offense under the Controlled Substance, Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act.
4. If a volunteer cannot meet both conditions under #3, s/he must obtain an FBI clearance.

Employees shall provide completed background clearances to the Personnel Committee and volunteers shall provide the same to the Presbytery (?? Executive Presbyter – may not have time to convene the Personnel Committee). The above-mentioned clearances must be obtained and a copy provided to the Presbytery every 36 months. All documents relating to background clearances will be maintained in confidence at the Presbytery Office. If an individual fails to provide the above background clearances, s/he will not be permitted to work with children.

f) Disqualifying Offenses

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an employee from working with children will be determined by the Personnel Committee and the Executive Presbyter. This will be done on a case-by-case basis in light of all surrounding circumstances and will be in compliance with relevant state guidelines or requirements. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission, will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying factor.

g) Subsequent Arrests or Convictions

Any worker (paid or unpaid) subject to the above requirements who is arrested for, or convicted of, an offense that would constitute grounds for denying working with children (see 3(b)ii,iii above), or is named as a perpetrator in the state child abuse database, shall provide written notice within 72 hours to the Executive Presbyter.

Two Adult Rule

Two non-related adults are to be present in each room where there are children. Every effort shall be made to fulfill this rule. In the event it does not prove to be possible, it is acceptable to have one adult and/or non-related youth helper who is at least 14 years of age and is at least five

years older than the majority of children who s/he is leading. However, a youth helper should never be left alone with a child or group of children. In the event that an adult is alone with a child or a group of children in an area where few other people are around, visibility shall be maintained at all times, either through a window in a door or a door left ajar, and a second adult should be within auditory contact range. If this is not possible, the group should move into an open facility where others are present, and if none is available, then the event should be canceled. An adult should never be alone with one child for any Washington Presbytery activity unless in a counseling situation or other ministry that calls for it.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development.

Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as a beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse**- emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse**- any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- **Neglect**- depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

All workers (paid and unpaid) having direct contact with children are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children through Washington Presbytery becomes aware of suspected child abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, the individual must make an immediate and direct report of suspected child abuse to ChildLine either electronically at www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis or by calling 1-800-932-0313. A mandated reporter making an oral report of suspected child abuse shall also make a written report to ChildLine, which may be submitted electronically, within 48 hours. Additionally, the worker should immediately report the abuse to the Executive Presbyter. If the Executive Presbyter is not available or is allegedly involved, a report should be made to the Stated Clerk.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at the Washington Presbytery Center or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian will be notified.
2. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will be immediately placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation.

3. Civil authorities will be notified, and Washington Presbytery will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. Washington Presbytery will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. The Executive Presbyter of Washington Presbytery or Stated Clerk will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless s/he is alleged to be involved. We will seek the advice of legal counsel before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the presbytery. All other representatives of the presbytery should refrain from speaking to the media.
6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working/volunteering with children or youth.

Mandated Reporter Training

Employees having direct contact with children shall complete three hours of mandated reporter training once every five years. Employees will provide proof of said completion to the Personnel Committee to be kept on file at the Presbytery Center. Volunteers working with children shall complete periodic training regarding signs of and reporting abuse. The Presbytery will work to make training available and to ensure compliance.

Convicted Sex Offenders

If it becomes known that a convicted sex offender is attending/ participating in events sponsored by Washington Presbytery, the Executive Presbyter must immediately be informed. The Executive Presbyter will consult with Council and any necessary community service agencies. Information will be disclosed to the presbytery in accordance with applicable state and federal regulations. Every effort will be taken to ensure the safety of our children.

Open Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 14
- It is preferred that they be screened and obtain background checks as specified above; and

- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

Check-In/Check/Out Procedures

A security check-in/check/out procedure will be followed. A face-to-face encounter between a worker and a parent, guardian, or adult appointed by the parent/guardian will be required at both check-in and check-out.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all the children at Washington Presbytery. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up.

Medication Policy

It is the policy of Washington Presbytery not to administer either prescription or nonprescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of the Sick Child Policy. Exceptions to the medication policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions), Parents of such children should address their situation with the person in charge of the event and develop a plan of action.

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of Washington Presbytery not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents suggest or give permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the person in charge if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Transportation Policy

In cases where youth events occur at locations which will require transportation in private vehicles, the two-adult rule applies. All drivers must be licensed and insured and pick-up/drop-off will occur at either the Washington Presbytery Center or other designated area.

Off-site/Overnight Activities Policy

For events sponsored by Washington Presbytery where youth participate in an off-site or overnight activity, a consent form must be completed by a parent or guardian. The consent form will include emergency contact information, insurance information, and relevant medical information (e.g. allergies or other medical condition) as well as a statement giving consent to workers to administer or arrange for medical treatment.

Restroom Guidelines

Children five years of age and younger should be escorted to the bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The worker(s) should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. When possible the worker(s) should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the child/children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

For children over the age of five, if possible, at least one adult male should take the boys to the restroom and at least one female should take girls. The worker should check the bathroom first to be sure that the bathroom is empty, and then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child.

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.

Training

The Council, in conjunction with the Executive Presbyter, will periodically review the Policy with Staff and volunteers. Staff and volunteers will be asked to sign a statement indicating that they have read the policy and are committed to abiding by it. Additionally, opportunities for additional training classes or events will be offered on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to participate in these training events.

Appendix

Convictions of crimes under Title 18 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes or equivalent crimes in another jurisdiction will exclude persons from employment at Washington Presbytery and from working with children from Washington Presbytery as either a volunteer or employee. Convictions of the following crimes may exclude persons from other volunteer opportunities at Washington Presbytery as well, at the discretion of the supervising staff.

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| Chapter 25 | (relating to criminal homicide) |
| Section 2702 | (relating to aggravated assault) |
| Section 2709.1 | (relating to stalking) |
| Section 2901 | (relating to kidnapping) |
| Section 2902 | (relating to unlawful restraint) |
| Section 3121 | (relating to rape) |
| Section 3122.1 | (relating to statutory sexual assault) |
| Section 3123 | (relating to involuntary deviate sexual intercourse) |
| Section 3124.1 | (relating to sexual assault) |
| Section 3125 | (relating to aggravated indecent assault) |
| Section 3126 | (relating to indecent assault) |
| Section 3127 | (relating to indecent exposure) |
| Section 4302 | (relating to incest) |
| Section 4303 | (relating to concealing the death of a child) |
| Section 4304 | (relating to endangering welfare of children) |
| Section 4305 | (relating to dealing in infant children) |
| Section 5902 (b) | (relating to prostitution and related offenses) |
| Section 5903 (c) (d) | (relating to obscene and other sexual materials and performance) |
| Section 6301 | (relating to corruption of minors) |
| Section 6312 | (relating to sexual abuse of children) |

Or an equivalent crime under federal law or the law of another state.

Resources

Amendments to the PA Child Protective Services Law relevant to this Policy

1. Act 31-2014 (Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting Training)
2. Act 33-2014 (Mandated Reporters)
3. Act 153-2014 (Background Clearance Requirements, et al)

Helpful Websites

1. KeepKidsSafe.pa.gov (information on laws, clearances, training, etc.)
2. www.pa-fsa-ord (PA Family Support Alliance-information on laws and training)
3. <http://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis> (Online Child Abuse History Clearance)
4. <http://epatch.state.pa.us/Home.isp> (Pennsylvania Access to Criminal History)
5. https://www.pa.cogentid.com/index_dpw.htm (FBI clearance)

For Questions Regarding Clearances:

1. Child Abuse History and FBI: (717)783-6244 or (877)371-5422
2. Pennsylvania State Police: (717)783-9973 or (888)783-7972

Approved Course for Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting Training for Mandated and Permissive Reporters:

Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center – free online 3-hour course
www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu [contact person- Sharon England 717-795-9048]
[certificate provided upon completion of the course]