

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH YOUTH SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY



Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes a child... welcomes me." Mathew 18:5

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Yearly Review Required
Yearly training for all working with Youth Required

Westminster Presbyterian Church

Dubuque, Iowa

Youth Safe Sanctuary Policy

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes a child... welcomes me." Mathew 18:5

Westminster Presbyterian Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for any child who participates in our youth programs and activities. This policy is written for the protection of any minor, which is defined as any child under the age of eighteen (18).

Guidelines for Staff and Volunteers (Paid and Unpaid persons who are working with youth during Church Youth Events such as: Youth Outings, Sunday school, Youth Groups...)

- Volunteers must be actively engaged in the life of the church and/or known by its members. Adult volunteers or paid staff must complete and pass a background check. (**Note:** The Youth Faith Formation Team will make final decisions regarding who may work as volunteer helpers.)

- Background checks will be done every four (4) years and reviewed yearly in July. Before minors may work as volunteers they must have their parent complete a minor volunteer form, and be accepted by the Youth Faith Formation Team. These teens must be under the supervision of an approved adult while serving as a teen volunteer.

- Pictures of individuals chosen to serve on the Youth Faith Formation Team will be posted near the classroom for parents to see.
- Minor volunteers in the nursery must successfully complete an approved babysitting course. These minor volunteers must have their parent complete a minor volunteer form, and be accepted by the Youth Faith Formation Team. Minors serving as baby sitters must be under the supervision of an approved designated adult while serving.

Safety Policies for all Youth Ministries

- Children who participate in church sponsored events must have on file a registration and child release form signed by their parent.
- During Sunday School each classroom, fifth grade and under, must have at least two (2) approved workers present; at least one (1) of these approved workers must be an adult.
- For groups numbering up to and including **nine (9)** youths there must be **three (3)** approved adult chaperones during offsite activities. An additional adult is required for each group of **three (3)** youths added to the group.
- For rooms that are not observable from the hall, the doors must remain open while youth activities are proceeding.
- When using the restroom under normal circumstances, youth in 3rd grade and up need to ask for permission to use the facilities. Youth in 2nd grade or below may use the facilities in the Preschool Room or the facilities at the end of the hall. The adult supervisor, for this age, would stand at the open door while youth are using the facilities. In emergency situations, however, the adult supervisor may be needed to enter and assist.
- In the nursery diapers are to be changed only in designated areas and in the presence of other caregivers. (Workers should practice good hygienic procedures.)
- At the end of each class children will only be released to their parent unless otherwise noted on the Family Care Card.
- Workers/ Volunteers will follow the discipline guidelines.

Discipline Guidelines

- When a child is disruptive (i.e. inappropriate language or inappropriate interaction with other children) the adult leader will attempt to redirect the behavior by positive incentives, talking to the child, etc.
- If redirecting the behavior is not effective, the child may be asked to go to time out.

- If disruptive behavior is not resolved by the preceding interventions, the worker/volunteer should send for the parent to intervene. The parent may need to remove the child from the room for a period of time.
- The Faith Formation Leader needs to be informed.
- No worker / volunteer is permitted to use any type of corporal punishment to correct or discipline a child. As a general guideline, workers should only touch children on parts of the body that would not be covered by a bathing suit. If non-corporal methods such as positive incentive, talking to the child or time-outs are ineffective in changing disruptive behavior, teachers or volunteers should bring the child to the parent and inform the Faith Formation Leader.

How to Report Abuse

1. All Volunteers are to read the following definitions of abuse that are listed below.
2. If a caregiver suspects that a child has been abused, the following steps are to be followed:
 - Report the suspected abuse to the Teaching Elder and Faith Formation Leader.
 - Do not interview the child regarding the suspected abuse. Trained personnel will handle the interview process.
 - Do not discuss the suspected abuse. It is important that all information about the suspected child abuse (alleged victim and abuser) be kept confidential.
3. Caregivers reporting suspected child abuse will be asked to complete the Suspicion/ Allegation of Abuse Report provided by the Faith Formation Leader. Confidentiality will be maintained where possible. This report must be completed within 24 hours of reporting the suspected abuse.
4. Once a suspected child abuse case has been reported by a caregiver to a supervisor, it will be reported to the designated reporting agency.
5. Whenever possible, in cases where the suspected abuser is the victim's parent that parent will be encouraged to report themselves to the Department of Social Services. This should be done in the presence of the Teaching Elder and/or the Faith Formation Leader to whom the abuse was originally reported. Both abuser and victim will also be referred to other local social services specializing in family counseling and abuse prevention.

Defining Child Abuse

The following is an abbreviated list of what constitutes child abuse. For the full report of definitions of abuse in the State of Iowa, see *"State of Iowa: Child Abuse: A Guide for Mandatory Reporters."* A copy is on file in the WPC office.

Physical Abuse: non-accidental physical injury, or injury which is at variance with the history given of it, suffered by a child as the result of the acts or omissions of a person responsible for the care of the child

Mental Injury: harm to a child's ability to think, reason, or have feelings. This may be shown by impairment in the child's ability to function within the age-appropriate range of performance and behavior.

Sexual Abuse: includes the use, persuasion, or coercion of any child to engage in any sexually explicit conduct (or any simulation of such conduct). See Iowa Code, Chapter 709, Iowa Code section 726.2, or Iowa Code section 728.12, subsection 1.

Denial of Critical Care: failure on the part of a person responsible for the care of a child to provide for the adequate food, shelter, clothing or other care necessary for the child's health and welfare when financially able to do so or when offered financial or other reasonable means to do so.

Recognizing abuse

The following physical and behavioral indicators are listed signs of possible child abuse for you to consider (it is not all-inclusive). The indicators need to be evaluated in the context of the child's environment. The presence of one or more of these symptoms does not necessarily prove abuse. *Resource: "State of Iowa: Child Abuse: A Guide for Mandatory Reporters"*

Physical Indicators

- Unusual or unexplained burns, bruises or fractures
- Irritation, pain, or injury to the genital area
- Venereal disease
- Consistent hunger, poor hygiene, inappropriate dress
- Substance abuse
- Discomfort when sitting

Emergency Evacuation Procedures

(See Last Page)

Fire

Nursery:

In the event of a fire the Nursery Attendant will escort the children out of the building by:

- Exiting out the Narthex doors that lead to the upper parking lot
- Walk through the upper parking lot to Alta Pl Street
- Wait for parents on Alta Pl Street

A rope has been provided for the children to hold onto as the Nursery Attendant is at the front of the rope and a volunteer is at the back of the rope. Or the Nursery Attendant may place the children in the crib and roll them out of the church.

Classrooms:

In the event of a fire while students are in the downstairs classrooms Teachers and Shepherds will escort the students out of the building by:

- Up the stairwell leading to the Narthex
- Out the Narthex doors that lead to the upper parking lot
- Through the parking lot
- Wait for parents on Alta Pl Street

Or

- Up the stairwell leading to the back parking lot
- Down the ally
- Wait for parents on Alta Pl Street

A rope has been provided for the children to hold onto as the teacher is at the front of the rope and the Shepherd is at the back of the rope.

Inclement Weather

Nursery:

In the event of inclement weather the Nursery Attendant will escort the children from the nursery down the Narthex steps and into the Choir Room/Tunnel.

Classrooms:

In the event of inclement weather all students will be lead down the hall and into the Choir Room/Tunnel.

A rope has been provided for children to hold onto as they reach their destination.



Inclement Weather Location



Emergency Evacuation Location