

Child Protection Program

Westminster Presbyterian Church

Sumter, SC

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Philosophy of Children's Ministry at WPC

For God's glory, the Children's Ministry at Westminster Presbyterian Church exists to assist parents in the nurture of their children to a knowledge of God, a love of Jesus Christ and a deep reliance on the Holy Spirit and the gospel of grace leading to lives that glorify God through joyful worship, spiritual growth, service, community, and witness.

Recognizing that parents have the God-ordained role to teach and model the gospel as the first place for training up the next generation, we desire to 1) partner with parents in educating their children, and 2) help equip parents to love, train, and encourage their children, that they might know God and grow to become faithful disciples of Christ.

We will accomplish this by:

- 1) Providing a safe and nurturing environment in which to learn
- 2) Equipping and encouraging parents to teach God's Word diligently to their children while applying it to every area of their lives
- 3) Training teachers, staff and volunteers to teach and model the gospel so as to make disciples
- 4) Enabling children to grow in grace by teaching them to know and memorize God's Word, Biblical truths and the catechisms
- 5) Providing opportunities for our children to develop and use their talents and gifts through acts of love and service to our church body and the community
- 6) Knowing, praying for and regularly communicating with the parents and children of our church family.

Child Protection Policy

Westminster Presbyterian Church – Sumter, SC

Child abuse (sexual, physical or emotional) or neglect is not tolerated at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Sumter, SC (WPC).

1. In order to prevent child abuse, WPC addresses child safety through appropriate screening, training and supervision of all activities involving children (birth-5th grade) and youth (6th -12th grade).
2. All adult volunteers working with children or youth in a teaching position are required to be members in good standing of WPC. Non-teaching positions may be filled by parents or non-member temporary volunteers approved by the age appropriate ministry director.
3. Screening procedures, including a personal interview and criminal records check, will be used for all adult employees and volunteers.
4. Anyone who is known or determined to have committed abuse of a child under the age of 18 or of a mentally or emotionally handicapped person at any time during his/her adult life is not eligible for service either as an employee or volunteer to work with children or youth. WPC will not knowingly allow anyone who has been convicted of child abuse to participate in any children's or youth ministry, either as an employee or volunteer.
5. Anyone who committed child abuse or neglect before the age of 18 will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, taking into account such factors as age, seriousness of the offense, acknowledgement of responsibility, and effective treatment.
6. Any employee or volunteer whose dependent children have been determined to have committed child abuse will be asked to follow through with an action plan put in place to resolve the cause and effects of the abuse. Failure to follow the action plan will lead to the termination of their service to WPC.

7. Adult volunteers or employees, as much as reasonably possible, will not be alone with children or youth without another adult present. When this standard is not possible, employees and volunteers will obtain consent from the parent or guardian and take appropriate steps to reduce isolation.
8. If WPC is asked for a reference for anyone whose service or membership is terminated due to a violation of our Code of Conduct, WPC will generally disclose the reasons for the termination.
9. Failure to follow the Child Protection Policy or Code of Conduct by an employee will be addressed and may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. If by a member volunteer, such failure will be addressed and may result in the exercise of church discipline by the session and according to the Book of Church Order.
10. WPC employees and volunteers will comply with all South Carolina Mandated Reporting laws. Staff and volunteers are required to follow the WPC Abuse Reporting Protocol.
11. Once an Incident Report has been filed, according to our Reporting Protocol, a report must be made to the SC Department of Social Services within 48 hours of the original disclosure or suspicion of abuse.
12. No portion of this policy can be amended by any individual, nor can any individual grant permission to deviate from this policy. Any change or exception to this policy must be granted only by a vote of the session and no one else.

Adopted by the Session of WPC 07/18/2017.

WPC – Child Protection Definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following definitions apply:

Child – Any minor from age birth to 18

Children – Minors from birth through 5th grade

Youth – Minors from 6th grade through age 17

Adult – Persons 18 years of age and older

Child Abuse – The ill treatment of an individual under the age of 18 that involves sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse or neglect

Sexual Abuse – The involvement of a child in an inappropriate sexually suggestive activity whether verbal, visual or physical *

* If both the victim and the alleged offender are under the age of 18, investigators consider additional factors – age difference, development, awareness, coercion, threats,..... - to determine if abuse has occurred.

Physical Abuse – behavior that results in non-accidental physical injury

Emotional Abuse – patterns of behavior over time, whether by omission (the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate and supportive environment) or by commission (acts that have a high probably of causing harm to the child’s health or mental, social, moral or spiritual development) of non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment

Neglect – can be similar to emotional abuse in the failure to provide for the development of the child, and includes failure to provide safe conditions in the context of resources reasonably available and failure to properly supervise and protect children from harm as much as feasible

Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children

Westminster Presbyterian Church – Sumter, SC

Westminster Presbyterian Church of Sumter, SC (WPC) is committed to the protection of the physical and emotional well-being of children, particularly in ministries under the supervision of WPC ministry personnel. WPC works to foster a culture wherein children are nurtured and protected, thus working to prevent sexual, emotional or physical abuse.

The primary goal of any policy is the protection of the child, as well as the spiritual development of a nurturing covenant community. Child abuse (sexual, physical, or emotional) or neglect is not in keeping with the gospel, and therefore is not tolerated by WPC.

WPC employees and volunteers will adhere to the following code of conduct.

Using Visibility to Protect Children and Youth

WPC leadership teams will plan all ministry involving children and youth in a way that minimizes the risk to the physical and emotional endangerment to all persons involved. Minimizing risk includes ensuring the activities of adult employees and volunteers are visible to other adults. Planning events in areas where other adults are present and at a time when other activities are occurring enhances visibility.

When possible, WPC should ensure classroom doors have windows to improve visibility. If the door does not have a window, employees and volunteers should leave the door open.

Overcoming Isolation to Protect Children

At least two unrelated adults should be present when working with children and youth (“two-person rule”). When this standard is not possible, employees and volunteers will reduce isolation by 1) having a minimum of two children/youth present, 2) informing the parents of the children/youth about the meeting, or 3) conducting the meeting during a time and/or in a location where interaction with the children/youth is visible to others.

Accountability

Ordinarily, ministry to a child at WPC should not involve one-on-one contact. In the rare case that it does, the following procedures shall be followed, as applicable:

- WPC employees and volunteers shall always be accountable to other adults regarding interactions with children/youth.
- Counseling or other necessarily confidential meetings with children shall be done in common areas with open doors (if inside) and visible, well-lit areas if outside and only when another adult is 1) in close vicinity, 2) aware that the meeting is occurring, and 3) willing to stay in the vicinity until the meeting is completed.
- In an emergency situation, (call 911 if possible) WPC leaders shall attempt to find someone to accompany him/her when transporting the child/youth to a medical facility. If another person is not readily available, the leader shall notify a church officer or ministry leader of the situation.

Parental Involvement

WPC will keep an “open door policy” for parents of WPC attendees. Ministry leaders will make themselves available to parents during WPC activities to answer any questions or concerns that may arise. In emergency situations, the WPC ministry team leaders will communicate with parents the nature of the emergency. By fostering a culture of parental awareness, the risk of abuse at WPC is reduced.

Supervision

The supervision of ministry personnel also reduces risk. Leaders shall periodically and randomly check work areas, activity areas and any other areas where children/youth and adults are together.

Discipline According to Scripture, parents possess the primary responsibility and authority to discipline their children. In a ministry situation, WPC leaders possess a derived and limited authority to discipline in a way that teaches (when the issue is ignorance or inexperience) and corrects (when the issue is willful misbehavior) the child. Biblical discipline involves development, not punishment. Therefore, discipline in a ministry context shall not include slapping, hitting, shaming, yelling at, or belittling a child.

Touch

Healthy, caring touch can edify and encourage a child; yet, unhealthy touch causes distress and is abusive. Employees and volunteers shall observe the following guidelines:

- Touch should always be open and public rather than secretive. A hug given in the context of a group is very different than a hug given behind closed doors.
- Touch should be in response to the need of the child, and not the need of the adult.
- Touch should be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the adult.
- Touch should be with the child's permission. If the child resists, the employee or volunteer shall respect the child's response and stop touching him/her.
- Touch should always communicate respect for the child. Adults should avoid doing things of a personal nature for a child that he/she is able to do for himself, including dressing, bathing, etc.
- Touch should not include violent behavior. Adults and other youth or children should not hit, slap, pinch, push, hold* a child against his/her will, or in any way assault a child.

*Holding a child against his/her will is permissible only if the child's behavior poses a risk to the child or to another person.

The following signs of affection are generally appropriate within specific contexts:

- verbal praise; side hugs; shoulder to shoulder hugs; pats on the shoulder, back, or head (when culturally appropriate).
- for smaller children, touching hands, faces, shoulders, and arms; placing your arm around the child's shoulders; hugging or holding the child when others are present.

The following behaviors are inappropriate or may be perceived as inappropriate; therefore, employees and volunteers shall refrain from:

- touching a child's buttocks, chest, genital area, or thighs; (except infants or toddlers needing help with hygiene and only then by an adult female employee or volunteer);
- showing affection in isolated areas or when alone with a child;
- sleeping in bed with a child;
- making inappropriate comments that relate to physique or body development;
- making flirtatious or seductive looks (even in a joking way);
- showing any form of affection that is unwanted by the child;
- playing sexually suggestive music, showing sexually-suggestive videos or playing sexually-suggestive games with a child;

- engaging in any behavior that could be interpreted as sexual in nature;
- making or participating in jokes that are sexual, degrade other people groups, or cut down fellow WPC attendees.

Adult employees and volunteers shall monitor each other regarding physical contact with children or with others and hold each other accountable by pointing out anything that could be misinterpreted. It is always better to confront gently someone whom you believe is behaving in a way that could be interpreted as inappropriate. The goal is to create a culture where children are safe and adult workers strive to remain above reproach regarding interaction with children/youth or with one another.

Verbal Interaction

Words can do much to support and encourage a child, especially words of praise, positive reinforcement, and appropriate jokes. Inappropriate verbal interaction, whether by an adult or another child, can harm a child and includes language that is shaming, belittling, humiliating, or threatening. Name calling, cursing, harsh rebuking, bullying, or making derogatory remarks about the child is prohibited.

Adults shall avoid favoring or showing differential treatment to particular children/youth to the exclusion of others (e.g., "You are my favorite student.").

Inappropriate verbal interaction also includes telling off-color or sexual jokes, making sexually suggestive comments, telling personal secrets, or inappropriately discussing sexual encounters or desires with children/youth.

Reporting of Abuse

If a WPC employee or volunteer witnesses inappropriate or abusive behavior, he/she must take action to ensure the safety and well-being of the child/youth. Inaction and indifference are not in keeping with the work of the Holy Spirit among God's people.

- When anyone has reason to suspect or has knowledge of child abuse within the scope of the ministry of WPC, he/she must report it immediately to the ministry leader present or to a member of the session.
- The individual witnessing the inappropriate or abusive behavior should report it expeditiously, without taking any other action or doing any preliminary investigation.
- The individual reporting the abuse or suspected abuse must remember that the safety of the children is the primary goal. Reporting inappropriate behavior is not equivalent to making an accusation of child abuse; rather, it demonstrates a necessary commitment to a culture where children and youth are protected.

- The WPC ministry leader or session member will report the incident to the Abuse Review Board of the session
- It is preferred that the initial report be made either through face-to-face personal communication or telephone conversation.

Reporting Protocol

South Carolina established a system for the reporting and investigation of child abuse and neglect with the primary purpose of safeguarding the welfare and safety of children/youth. South Carolina law requires that certain professionals report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. Mandatory reporters include clergy (subject to the laws governing privileged communications). Though church childcare workers and volunteers are not Mandatory Reporters listed in Section 63-7-310 of the Child Protection Act, all paid staff and adult volunteers at WPC are required to use the protocols outlined below to report any abuse or reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect.

A decision to report must be based on a reasonable belief that a child has been or may be abused or neglected. Thus, reporters need not have conclusive proof that a child has been abused or neglected prior to reporting abuse or neglect.

What to Report

There are three ways you can learn about abuse:

- 1) A child discloses abuse
- 2) You observe abuse
- 3) You have reasonable suspicion of abuse

When a child discloses abuse or you observe abuse, you should report the abuse by following the reporting protocol below.

Reasonable suspicion is harder to determine than receiving a disclosure or observing abuse. Westminster Presbyterian Church has a Code of Conduct that describes the boundaries adults are to maintain when interacting with children. Every adult who works with children must sign the Code of Conduct acknowledging to abide by it and giving any adult who observes any inappropriate or questionable behavior permission to speak to him or her about what has been observed.

When an adult observes another adult violating our Code of Conduct, the adult who observed the inappropriate behavior is expected to intervene on behalf of the child and at an appropriate time and in a timely manner speak to either the adult, the ministry director or member of the session about the violation that occurred.

If there is reason to believe the child is at risk or the response of the adult when addressed about their action causes concern, a formal Incident Report, described

below, must be completed by either the ministry director or member of the Abuse Review Board of the session.

Making a report to the SC Department of Social Services (DSS) does not constitute an accusation of abuse. Making a report is requesting the DSS to professionally determine if a child is at risk or if abuse has occurred.

Protocols for Reporting Abuse

It is recommended that the following protocols be followed by all volunteers and staff at WPC. But as noted in Section 63-7-310 of the SC Child Protection Act, “any person who has reason to believe that a child’s physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse and neglect may report” directly to DSS or SC law enforcement.

Protocol for adult paid staff and volunteers

If you have received a disclosure of abuse, you have observed abuse, or you have a reasonable suspicion of abuse, you must report it immediately to the ministry director, a member of the session or to the individual in charge of the event.

Protocol for Ministry Directors, Event Leaders and Members of the Session

If the child is in immediate danger, call law enforcement at 911.

If you have received a disclosure of abuse, you have observed abuse, or you have a reasonable suspicion of abuse, you must report it immediately to the Abuse Review Board of the session.

The Abuse Review Board, when the abuse has been disclosed or observed or, when after discussing the suspicion of abuse with the reporter reasonable suspicion exists, shall, within 48 hours of the original disclosure or suspicion of abuse, file an Incident Report as follows:

When the alleged perpetrator of abuse or neglect is a parent, guardian or person responsible for the child’s welfare, the report should be made to the Sumter DSS.

When the alleged perpetrator of abuse or neglect is not the parent, guardian or other person responsible for the child’s welfare, the report should be made to law enforcement.

Incident Report

Name of the Abused

Age of Abused

Address

Present Location

Name(s)/ Age(s) of Siblings

Parents Names and Addresses

Reason for Concern (describe disclosure, observation or suspicion as well as names of all involved in suspected abuse and disclosure)

Name and Position of Reporter

Signature of Reporter

Code of Conduct - Acknowledgement Form

I acknowledge that I have received, read, understand and agree to the Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct of WPC. Further, I understand and agree to the procedures for reporting inappropriate behavior and suspected abuse.

I agree that it is my responsibility to read and comply with any future updates of the Child Protection Policy, the Code of Conduct, or the reporting procedures.

I understand the procedures for reporting reasonable suspicion of and/or allegations of misconduct and agree to pursue a culture that protects children and youth.

I confirm that to the best of my knowledge I have not been accused of, been investigated for, or prosecuted for instances involving any form of abuse or inappropriate behavior with a child.

I agree not to engage in behavior that is abusive to a child.

I further agree that as an individual who serves in a position of trust in ministry to children/youth, I will not tolerate the physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or neglect of a child/youth.

I agree to immediately report any reasonable suspicion of, or disclosure of, inappropriate behavior between adults and minors, or between an older youth and a younger child, to the appropriate leadership immediately and cooperate in assisting the children and youth of our community to remain safe.

Name

Date

Signature

Addendum 1

Nursery Volunteer Information

General Information

Identification of Nursery Rooms

- Infant 0-1st birthday
- Toddler 1-2nd birthday
- Preschool 2 and 3 year olds (will move up the fall after they turn 4)

Scheduling Responsibilities

- Schedules will be on a standard rotation.
- Please try to switch or find a replacement on your own if you're unable to serve on a Sunday you've been assigned.
- Notify the children's ministry director if you are unable to find a replacement. Please be mindful that it's helpful to make the changes as soon as possible rather than waiting until the last minute.

Sign In and Sign Out Process

- Two items to complete for the Sign in /Sign out process
 - 1) Child Information form-fill out one time. Parents please update information as it changes
 - 2) Child Safety Sticker-Fill out weekly
- All children need a completed initial Child Information form. These will be kept in a binder in the toddler room (1-2 year old room). You will refer to this if you need any information.
- Parents/guardians will fill out a Child Safety sticker appropriately: first and last name, allergies, if appropriate, and cell number.
- The bottom half of the Child Safety sticker goes on the child's back.
- The top portion of the Child Safety sticker stays with the parent or guardian
- Parents/guardians will need to return their half of the Child Safety sticker when they pick up the child
- Children must not be released to siblings who are under the age of 12
- Parents/guardians who cannot present a sticker must be verified by two nursery volunteers

Volunteer Responsibilities

Preparation:

- Please arrive 15 minutes before the church service/Sunday school class time starts to prepare the room.
- Spend a few minutes in prayer as a team before the children arrive.
- Ensure you have two clipboards--each with at least 10 Child Safety stickers, 10 Child Information forms and a pen. Place on the shelf of the half door.
- Ensure you have enough cups, napkins and appropriate amounts of snacks and water for each child.
- Please be mindful that the standard is to have two unrelated staff members or volunteers present with the children at all times.

Welcoming Children

- For the first 15 minutes of children arriving one volunteer should stand at the door to assist with check in as much as possible, while the other volunteer can engage the children who are already checked in.
- Remind the parent to fill out the Child Safety sticker with at least the child's full name at a minimum. These should also be kept on the clipboard.
- Remind parent/guardian we will text them if we need them during the service. You'll find parent/guardian phone numbers on the Child Information form in the binder that is kept in the toddler room.
- Please inform parents as necessary that children may be allowed outside play time, weather permitting.
- Feel free to ask parents to remind you of the child's bathroom needs (i.e. diaper, toilet assist, toilet independent).
- Direct any questions you're unable to answer to the Children's Ministry Director.

Class Time

- Change diapers and/or assist with restroom as appropriate
 - wash hands before and after diaper changes
 - assist as little as appropriate with toilet training toddlers (check with parents for guidance on this)
 - never be in a restroom alone with a child-crack the door if necessary to

maintain as much privacy for the child as possible without the child being alone with the volunteer or staff member

- Children should return to the classroom (if you choose to go to the playground during class time) 10 minutes before the estimated service end time.
- Utilize the last ten minutes to start picking up toys-encourage the children to help.
- Diapers should be checked and changed if necessary during the final 10 minutes of class.

Clean Up

- Clean all toys with approved disinfectant spray
note-any toy that has been placed in a child's mouth should be removed ASAP - place the toy in the sink for cleaning at the end of the class
- wipe tables with approved disinfectant
- clean/sweep/vacuum

Addendum 2

Procedures for Working in Children's Ministries

"All church leaders should become informed and take an active stance toward preventing child sexual abuse in the church by screening staff and volunteers, training them in child protection, and actively maintaining child protection policies pertaining to our obligations to love our children and protect their rightful interests as God's image-bearers from the devastating actions of abusers. (Matthew 18:5-6)" --- Overture 6 PCA

In order to provide a safe, loving environment, employees and volunteers must comply with the following procedures when working with the children newborn through 5th grade:

Two Person Goal

At least two unrelated adults should be present when working with children ("two-person goal"). When this standard is not possible, employees and volunteers will reduce isolation by 1) having a minimum of two children present, 2) informing the parents of the children about the meeting, or 3) conducting the meeting during a time and/or in a location where interaction with the children is visible to others. No adult should ever be alone with a child behind closed doors. Youth ages 12 through 17 working with the children should be supervised by two approved adults.

Windows of rooms should stay clear (not covered) so that outside views are not blocked.

Bathroom Policy

- For children younger than 1st grade: Children using the bathroom in the nursery must be accompanied by an adult. The door should be left ajar and the adult should wait outside the door. Adults should only enter if the child asks for, or the parent has requested, assistance. Children using the bathroom in the main hallway must be accompanied by an adult who stays in the hallway or with the child in the bathroom, but not in the stall. If an adult must assist a child in the stall, when possible, notify another adult.
- For children 1st through 5th grade: Children should use the "buddy system" so that as one child needs to use the bathroom, another child of the same gender accompanies him or her to the hallway bathrooms.

Nursery Safety:

- No one other than employees or approved and scheduled volunteers (and parents helping to settle their child) may enter the nurseries.
- Parents or caregivers should check their child in at the check-in station, printing identification and pickup badges for each child upon arrival.
- Identification stickers must be checked and matched before a child is released to an adult at pickup. Unless prearranged with the teacher, siblings under 18 are not allowed to pick up children.

Early Childhood Safety (three-year-olds through Kindergarten):

- No one other than approved and scheduled volunteers (and parents helping to settle their child) should enter the classroom.
- Parents or caregivers should check in their child(ren) at the check-in station, printing identification badges for each child and caregiver upon arrival.
- Identification stickers must be checked and matched before a child is released to an adult at pickup. Unless prearranged with the teacher, siblings under 18 are not allowed to pick up children.
- Children should remain with their class at all times other than when they are picked up by their caregivers, or they need to use the bathroom.*

** Children with special needs, who have a "special buddy," may at times be removed from the classroom by their special buddy for their benefit and the benefit of the other children, and with permission of their parents or guardians.*

Off-Site Activities must be approved in advance by the Director of Children's Ministries or the Pastor.

Discipline:

- Hands should never be placed on another person's child in discipline (examples: spanking, grabbing arm or chin, etc.).
- Words should be used to communicate love and grace, as well as for correction. However, children should never feel belittled or verbally assaulted by any volunteer.
- If difficulties arise in the area of discipline, the Director of Children's Ministries should be contacted as soon as possible to discuss appropriate methods of behavior management.
- Reporting of any suspicious behavior should be made to the Director of Children's Ministries or a member of the session.

Addendum3

Guiding Children's Behavior

*"Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flows the springs of life."
Proverbs 4:23*

*"Behavior is not the basic issue. The basic issue is always what is going on in the heart. Remember, the heart is the control center of life."
Shepherding a Child's Heart, Tedd Tripp*

Part of shepherding the children God has placed in our midst is discipline. Inevitably, there will be situations that arise when a child needs to be disciplined. The following guidelines have been adopted to direct children through this process.

Appropriate interactions and expectations will reduce the incidence of behavior problems. Check the environment, are children being "set up" to misbehave? Sometimes, simple changes such as a change in the room structure can help steer the children towards appropriate behavior. *Example:* If a child continues to play with the toys on a shelf during story, turn the shelves around so they face the wall.

Make sure children know expectations for behavior. Expectations need to be stated clearly and simply. *Example:* "Right now, we are listening to the story. You need to sit right here and look this way."

If inappropriate behavior occurs, state expectations and consequences. *Example:* "Blocks are for building, not throwing. If you throw the blocks again, you will not be allowed to use them."

Follow through with consequences. Children will learn quickly they need to obey when you follow through every time.

Observe the child's behavior. What is causing the behavior? Are the child's needs being met? If so, is there a sin that needs to be addressed? *Example:* During story time, a child continues to talk even though you have directed him to sit quietly. Is it an issue of disobedience or has the story been extended beyond a practical amount of time?

If inappropriate behavior persists, you may need to separate the child from the group or situation for a quick time-out. Time-outs should be one minute long for each year of the child's age (i.e. 4 minutes for a 4-year-old). A chair for a time-out should be placed in an unused area of the room, away from other children.

Communicate with the parents when they pick up their child if it was necessary to use a time-out or other discipline.

Bring them back to the gospel! Why are they doing what they are doing? We are all sinners in need of the saving grace of God! Take this opportunity to share with the child (at their level) the fact that they are sinners in need of that grace. Then pray with them for forgiveness and a changed heart.

If the child's behavior does not change, have an adult find the parent. The parent should take the child from the room for appropriate discipline. It is the discretion of the teacher whether the child may return to the class.

Remember to extend grace to the child. It can be easy to let previous behaviors affect the current situation. Aren't we glad God doesn't do that with us? This is a great opportunity to example the love and forgiveness of our Lord.

Addendum 4

Procedures for Working in Youth Ministries

In order to provide a safe, loving environment, volunteers must comply with the following procedures when working with the youth 6th grade through 17 years of age.

Two Person Goal

At least two unrelated adults should be present when working with youth. When this standard is not possible, employees and volunteers will reduce isolation by 1) having a minimum of two youth present, 2) informing the parents of the youth about the meeting, or 3) conducting the meeting during a time and/or in a location where interaction with the youth is visible to others. No adult should ever be alone with a youth behind closed doors.

Windows of rooms should stay clear (not covered) so that outside views are not blocked.

Never be alone with a youth of the opposite sex.

Providing Transportation

- When driving, all traffic laws and seatbelt rules are to be obeyed.
- Parental permission must be obtained prior to transporting a youth to any location.
- Transportation will be directly to the destination.
- Youth will not be allowed to drive a volunteer's car.
- Youth are not to provide transportation for other youth without prior permission from both sets of parents.
- Volunteers are never to be alone in a car with a youth of the opposite sex.
- Volunteers may not provide transportation after midnight, unless it is a youth special event with prior approval.

One-on-One Time with Youth

Adult employees and volunteers are encouraged to make an effort to develop healthy one-on-one relationships with kids of the same gender as the employee or volunteer in the youth group. This must be done with great care and caution, and ALWAYS with permission of a parent. When seeking to spend time one-on-one with a youth, volunteers must:

- alert the Director of Youth Ministries of the plans,

- drive directly to the destination, and
- meet in a public location.

Overnight Retreats and Events

- Volunteers will speak with the Director of Youth Ministries to gain permission to plan an overnight event.
- Volunteers will provide the Director of Youth Ministries with written details including the purpose of the overnight event, and when and where the event will take place, a list of approved leaders, and a list of participants.
- Volunteers will provide details to parents.
- Volunteers will obtain permission from parents (permission forms may be written with the assistance of the Director of Youth Ministries).
- Volunteers will not be traveling after midnight.

Movies and Entertainment

- Volunteers will use discernment when viewing movies with youth and will obtain approval from the Director of Youth Ministries.
- Parents will be informed of any movie which will be viewed by youth.
- Words, thoughts, and actions need to reflect Christ. Youth workers must be careful concerning the activities in which they partake, and about which they discuss- including movies, social media, CD's, books, video games, language, and posters.

Humor

Humor is an important tool in youth ministry, and should be seen as a means of making connections, engaging the minds of youth, and building relationship. Avoid all humor which is degrading for someone else, sexual in nature, or involves the use of harsh sarcasm. None of this is helpful for creating an environment of transparency and encouragement.

Counseling

When in a counseling role with a youth, always protect confidentiality except in areas which demand parental involvement (such as sexual immorality, addictions, harm to self or others, eating disorders, etc.). When in doubt, consult the Director of Youth Ministries or a member of the pastoral staff.

Reporting Behavior Any suspicious behavior or concerns regarding either a leader's behavior or a child's well-being should be reported to the Director of Youth Ministries or a member of the session.