

Wayside Child Protection Policy

I. THE PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE GUIDELINES

It is the desire of the Session that every person, particularly children, who participates in any service or activity of the ministry of Wayside Presbyterian Church (PCA) will know and experience the love of Christ. Particularly, we want to do our part in bringing children to the Savior and to help parents train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. As Christian workers, we must all remember that we lead not only by what we say but also, and often more forcefully, by what we do.

The following guidelines address situations where church workers may be involved with adults, young people and children. Christ Himself, while conducting His ministry here on earth had a special place for little ones and issued a severe warning to those that would harm them and turn them away. These guidelines are intended to guard against dishonoring God, offending anyone and particularly injuring children. No person, congregation or denomination is immune from the possibility that trusted adults might misuse their positions and abuse others. As a result we must endeavor to take all reasonable precautions to prevent abuse from occurring and act properly and responsibly in the event that it occurs. We want our church workers to enjoy their ministry and we trust that the guidelines will help to that end.

The policy is intended to cover church-sponsored functions that involve infants through teenagers. These functions include but are not limited to:

1. Nursery
2. Sunday School
3. Kid's Praise Hour
4. Small Group
5. Activities providing childcare
6. All meetings and activities of the various youth, young people, and young adult groups (on and off church property).
7. Counseling

In summary, the following guidelines are designed to assist church workers in our Christian duty to do all things decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40) and to do all things to God's glory (1 Corinthians 10:31). While the main function of these policies is to set forth procedures that the Session has adopted to facilitate the functioning of the church in a manner pleasing to the Lord, the same guidelines can be useful to all of our church family in helping to develop and maintain purity in the Christian's life at home, at work, and at church.

II. THE BASIS OF THE GUIDELINES

Christ is the head of His church and the individuals that make up the church. He laid down His life to redeem His people. As the Head of the church He has given us His Word to direct us in our behavior before Him and toward each other. Therefore, the basis for these guidelines must be the Bible. It is our goal to make the readers of these guidelines aware of some of the verses in Scripture that teach and warn concerning the Christian life and to then, via the guidelines, give some practical application. Scriptures teach:

1. That the natural heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked and therefore we must keep our hearts with all diligence (Jeremiah 17:9; Proverbs 4:23).
2. That sin is real and temptation to sin must be resisted. (Romans 6:12-14; 1 Thessalonians 5:22). It is important to realize that the very best of people can sin (1 Corinthians 10:12).
3. Satan is a real adversary, ever seeking to destroy Christians and the church (1 Peter 5:8).
4. As Christians we have solemn obligations firstly to God and secondly to others. (1 Peter 1:15,16; 2:13-15; Galatians 6:1, 2).
5. That our attitude and behavior should be in accordance with the Word of God. (1 John 2:15, 16).
6. There is a need for every Christian to take heed. Many times in the Old Testament, God instructs his people to "take heed." Likewise, in our local church we should "take heed" lest the very place where we minister becomes the place where we struggle with sin (1 Corinthians 10:12; 1 Peter 5:8).

III. GUIDELINES FOR ALL WORKERS

A. Leader/Child Care Provider

In order to become a Leader/Child Care Provider, **all** individuals must:

1. Be a member of Wayside Presbyterian Church in good standing (Leaders); be a member of Evangelical Church (Child Care Provider).
2. Submit to background check (unless under 18 years of age).
3. Complete application and/or submit to any interviews deemed appropriate by Children's Ministry Coordinator (CMC) and/or the Session of the church.
4. Read these Guidelines and acknowledge, by written affirmation, that they have read and understand these Guidelines and will abide by them.
5. Be willing to comply with instructions given by CMC and the Session.
6. Be willing for ongoing training in child protection, which may include CPR certification.

B. Volunteer

In order to become a Volunteer, **all** individuals must:

1. Submit to background check (unless under 18years of age).
2. Complete application and/or submit to any interviews as deemed appropriate by the CMC and/or the Session of the church.
3. Read these Guidelines and acknowledge, by written affirmation, that they have read and understand these Guidelines and will abide by them.
4. Be willing to comply with instructions given by the CMC, Leader and/or Session.

C. Spiritual Expectations of all Workers:

As a servant of Christ, the Christian worker should always:

1. Strive to maintain a close personal walk with God, looking unto Christ the Author and Finisher of his/her faith.
2. Ask God for wisdom, discernment and understanding when dealing with others.
3. Endeavor to set Christ before others by word and deed.
4. Pray for and with the children.
5. Be a good role model and set a good example in all areas of life.
6. Be consistent and work together as a team.
7. Be courteous, tender-hearted and gracious at all times.

IV. ABUSE/HARASSMENT

A. Definitions:

There is some terminology with which workers must be acquainted. Understanding what is being addressed is critical to understanding the need for some of the guidelines and the usefulness of the guidelines. "**Abuse**" is a term which is used with great frequency in this day and age. It is a general term that addresses a lot of problems. Abuse may occur at the hands of anyone (family, friend, teacher, helper, or stranger) at any place (home, play, church, places of activity, etc.). Abuse may take different forms, including the following:

Neglect: Persistent or significant neglect or the failure to protect a child from exposure to any kind of danger, including cold, starvation, or persistent failure to carry out important aspects of care, resulting in the significant impairment of the child's health or development - physical, mental and emotional.

Physical Abuse: Deliberate physical injury to a child, or willful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child.

Emotional Abuse/Harassment: Emotional ill-treatment or rejection resulting in adverse effects on the emotional, physical and/or behavioral development of a child. All abuse involves some emotional ill-treatment. However, reference to

“emotional abuse/harassment” is where it is the main or only form of abuse such as persistent sarcasm, condescension, humiliation, social isolation, intimidation, yelling or the use of foul language directed at a child.

Sexual Abuse/Harassment: Any sexual contact or sexual interaction between a child (under the age of eighteen years) and an adult; any use of a child for the sexual stimulation of an adult, a third person, or the child; any risqué jokes, innuendo, unacceptable visual contact, unwelcome casual touch, unwelcome and/or inappropriate hugs and kisses, or any sexually suggestive pictures or language between an adult and a child, as deemed inappropriate by any reasonable adult. Even if a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, out of ignorance, innocence, or fear does not resist, it is still abuse.

B. Rules of Conduct to which all Workers subscribe by signing the attached Acknowledgement Form:

1. I Will:

- Record and report as directed in this policy any allegations made by an adult or child of child neglect, abuse, or harassment.
- Cooperate fully and confidentially in any investigation of alleged abuse of a child during a church-sponsored activity.
- Use physical restraint only in situations necessary to protect the child or others from harm.
- Make a reasonable effort to provide proper supervision of at least two non-related workers per room or nearby during church-sponsored activities.
- Exercise sound judgment in providing a safe environment at all times.
- Release children only to the authorized parent, guardian, or other individual authorized by the parent or guardian. Grades 2 and above may be released without an accompanying parent/guardian so long as written consent of parent(s)/guardian has been received. NOTE: Once a child is properly released, the child becomes the responsibility of the parent/guardian, even if they remain on church property.
- Call on a church worker who may be available to assist with nursery restroom supervision as needed.
- Properly supervise when children are using offsite restrooms to ensure their safety.
- Take all due precaution to drive legally and safely when driving for any church-sponsored activity.

2. I Will Not:

- Neglect children.
- Physically, emotionally, or sexually abuse/harass children.
- Discipline children by use of physical punishment.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language, bullying, or abusive conduct unchallenged.
- Engage in excessively rough, physical, or sexually provocative games.

- Take a child offsite without the knowledge and written consent of the child's parent(s)/guardian and the responsible church leader.
- Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of children.
- Use, possess or be under the influence of alcohol at any time while working/volunteering for Wayside Presbyterian Church.
- Use, possess or be under the influence of any illegal drugs at any time.

V. REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

A. The principles for reporting

1. Wayside Presbyterian Church has a spiritual duty to report.
2. Wayside Presbyterian Church has a legal duty to report.

B. The procedures for reporting/responding

1. **Reporting to Authorities**

Tennessee state law mandates that anyone who has knowledge of or suspects abuse or neglect of a child must report it. The law makes no distinction between professionals and non-professionals on the issue of reporting. Employees/Volunteers involved in Wayside Presbyterian Church ministries to minors must be aware of their individual responsibilities to report any good faith suspicion or belief that a minor is being or has been physically or sexually abused, physically or emotionally neglected, exposed to any form of violence or threat, exposed to any form of sexual exploitation including the possession, manufacture, or distribution of child pornography, online solicitation, enticement or showing of obscene material.

Nothing in this policy negates the right or responsibility of Wayside Presbyterian Church employees/volunteers (Reporter) to report suspicions of abuse to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) or the appropriate local law enforcement agency.

A Reporter must report to an immediate supervisor or the Associate Pastor or Senior Pastor and allow the supervisor to make the appropriate report to DCS or a law enforcement agency. The supervisor who receives the initial allegation from a worker will promptly inform church leadership of the suspected child abuse and promptly report the allegation to the Tennessee Department of Children Services Child Abuse Hotline.

The Reporter should confirm that the supervisor has reported the matter to DCS or law enforcement and do so him- or herself should he or she have any doubt as to whether the matter has been reported.

Contact Information:

- TN Department of Children's Services (DCS) Child Abuse Hotline: 1-877-542-2873. Someone is available 24/7. Resources regarding reporting information: <http://www.state.tn.us/youth/dcsguide/policies/chap14/14.1.pdf>
- The Hamilton County Sherriff Department (423) 209-7000

2. Reporting to Church Leadership

An employee/volunteer (Reporter) is required to promptly report an incident to his/her immediate supervisor, and the supervisor will promptly notify the Associate Pastor or the Senior Pastor. The Reporter will be asked to fill out a Wayside Report of Child Abuse form.

No employee/volunteer shall attempt to conduct a detailed investigation either through examination or interview of the child, the accused person or a witness. It is acceptable for the church staff supervisor receiving the report to obtain a reasonable amount of information about the incident to have cause to believe a child has been abused or neglected. In-depth interviews of the child, the accused or a witness shall be conducted only by authorized officials of DCS or the local law enforcement agency to whom the suspected crime has been reported or, when appropriate, by the church's legal counsel.

Any supervisory staff receiving an initial report of suspected prohibited behavior shall promptly report it to a member of the Session or to the Associate Pastor or Senior Pastor.

3. Response Plan

In the event that an incident of child abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred on the premises of Wayside Presbyterian Church or during a sponsored program or activity, the following procedure shall be implemented:

1. The Supervisor who receives the report will notify the Associate Pastor or Senior Pastor. A Response Team consisting of two current officers and one female member at large will be formed.
2. The Supervisor who receives the report and Associate Pastor or Senior Pastor in consultation with the Response Team will designate a person to notify the parent or guardian of the minor unless the parent or guardian is the person responsible for the abuse or neglect.

3. Suspension of Duties

If the person against whom an allegation has been made is an employee/volunteer (Respondent), then the Respondent will immediately be placed on 'administrative leave' pending an investigation. For Employees, the outcome of the investigation will determine whether the leave is paid or unpaid. Removal from duty should occur in such a way that the accused

person is not immediately deemed guilty. If the allegation is determined to be unsubstantiated, the employee/volunteer can be returned to their prior position.

4. The Response Team will keep the Personnel Committee informed of the DCS investigation so that the Personnel Committee can make decisions regarding continuation of employment and compensation.
5. Wayside Presbyterian Church will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists.
6. Wayside Presbyterian Church's attorney and insurance company will be notified.
7. If the alleged abuse involves an ordained pastor at Wayside Presbyterian Church, the Tennessee Valley Presbytery will be notified and the Stated Clerk's office made aware of the situation.
8. Wayside Presbyterian Church will cooperate fully with any investigation of the incident by DCS or local authorities.
9. All reports of child abuse or neglect shall be held in absolute confidence. No person shall communicate any information concerning the alleged event to any person except as necessary to cooperate with an official investigation. Any breach of this confidentiality by a Wayside Presbyterian employee/volunteer may be cause for immediate dismissal. The Associate Pastor, Senior Pastor or the Response Team, in consultation with the state or local agency official conducting the investigation, may authorize limited additional disclosure if necessary to protect other minors from harm in the near future, particularly where the person responsible for the abuse cannot be identified. But in no case shall the identity of the victim or the accused person be disclosed except as required by law. Any person who is found guilty of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position with minors.
10. The church staff shall encourage and assist the child and the parents in securing appropriate counseling, care and support. In the event the abuse or neglect involves a member or employee of the church, the staff shall encourage and assist the individual to secure appropriate care and support including third-party counseling.

VI. MAINTAINING RECORDS

Accident Reports: Reports of injuries must be completed and will be retained.

Incident Reports: Reports of suspected child abuse must be completed and will be securely retained.

