



COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

It is the goal of Covenant Presbyterian Church (the Church) that all youth participating in Church-related activities will be safe, secure, and free from abuse and neglect. The Church recognizes the importance of establishing reasonable practices and procedures in an effort to prevent youth abuse and to keep the Church and its activities safe for youth. Those who are selected as workers in the youth activities of the Church have important responsibilities to keep our youth safe, to nurture and protect them, and to lead them by example. The Church also recognizes that a policy for the prevention and reporting of youth abuse is necessary to protect youth, Church employees, volunteers, ministers, members, and the Church family as a whole.

POLICY APPLICABILITY AND DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this policy, a "youth" is any person under age eighteen.

For purposes of this policy, a youth worker is any individual, whether paid or volunteer, who works or provides services for any youth activity or ministry of the Church.

For purposes of this Policy, "youth or youth activity" includes, but is not limited to, any activity for or attended by a youth on the premises of the Church and any Church-related youth activity wherever it may occur. For example, this policy shall apply to all Church School and Pre-school classes and activities, any Church nursery session, Mission Trips, and any other Church-related youth activities, irrespective of location.

For purposes of this policy the term parent also refers to a guardian, whether legal or designated by the youth's family.

PROHIBITED ACTS AND OMISSIONS

The following acts and omissions constitute youth abuse and/or neglect, which are prohibited and will not be tolerated either on the Church premises or during any Church related activity or program or at any other location:

- Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any person and a youth.
- Any sexual activity in the presence of, or in association with, a youth.
- Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, or threat of abuse toward a youth.

- Infliction of physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a youth.
- Physical neglect of a youth, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of the Church.
- Mental or emotional injury to a youth caused or exacerbated by a worker.
- The presence or possession of obscene or pornographic materials at any function of the Church.
- The presence or possession of any illegal or illicit drugs while leading or participating in a function for or with youths.
- The consumption or being under the influence of any illegal or illicit drugs, alcohol, tobacco products, or the misuse of any substances while leading or participating in a function for or with youths.
- Any other act or omission inappropriate in relation to working with youth.

LAWS APPLICABLE TO YOUTH

The youth activities of the Church, irrespective of location, shall be conducted by its youth workers in accordance with these sections of Chapter 5104 (found under Title LI-Public Welfare Chapter 5104 at <http://www.onlinedocs.andersonpublishing.com>), as amended from time to time, and such other provisions of the Ohio Revised Code as are applicable to such activities.

MANDATORY REPORTING

Any person who reasonably believes that a youth has been, or is, the victim of any act or omission referenced in this Policy, either on Church property or during any Church- related youth activity or program at any other location shall promptly report the basis for such belief to the Pastor/Head of Staff (unless the Pastor/Head of Staff is the one who is being accused) and to the Chairperson of the Personnel Commission. If these persons are not immediately available at the location, the report should be made initially to the group leader or responsible adult in charge, who will convey it to the Pastor/Head of Staff and to the Chairperson of the Personnel Commission. If the person receiving the report is not the Pastor/Head of Staff and the Pastor/Head of Staff is not the accused, the Pastor/Head of Staff shall be promptly notified and thereafter the Pastor/Head of Staff and Personnel Commission shall make a timely investigation of the report and take such further steps as are required. The State of Ohio requires that the Pastor/Head of Staff or his/her designee report any incident of suspected youth abuse or neglect; failure to do so may result in criminal charges. The parent or guardian of the youth shall be promptly notified unless that person is the accused.

When reporting suspected abuse, the reporter should be prepared to give pertinent information on the youth, including the youth and the parents' names and addresses, the youth's age, and the details of the suspected abuse situation. The reporting individual will not be anonymous.

If any Church member or youth worker learns of any report of an act prohibited herein, he/she shall promptly notify the Pastor/Head of Staff and/or the Chairperson of the Personnel Commission. This reporting requirement is in addition to and not in place of any reporting requirements imposed by state law.

When an allegation of youth abuse or neglect is made against any Church youth worker, that individual shall be informed of the accusation by the Pastor/Head of Staff and/or the Chairperson

of the Personnel Commission. That individual shall be suspended, with pay if applicable, from any further activity with youth (without any assumption of guilt), until such time as the matter is resolved. If the accused is not a worker, but attends the Church, the person shall be directed by the Pastor/Head of Staff or his/her designee to refrain from attending or participating in any youth activity until the matter is resolved.

No person accused of youth abuse or neglect shall be presumed to be guilty until found guilty by a court of law, but reasonable steps shall be taken to protect youth from contact with the accused until the matter is resolved.

YOUTH WORKER SELECTION

Service as a youth worker, whether on a paid or volunteer basis, shall be subject to:

1. Covenant's receipt of a completed, signed and satisfactory Youth Worker Application Form, including a Youth Worker Information Form,
2. Applicant's consent to, and satisfactory results from, background checks of the applicant from any law enforcement agency selected by the Church, and
3. Receipt of, and satisfactory results from, such character references as are required by the Church. Such references are to include the writer's opinion as to the applicant's integrity, moral character, sense of responsibility, suitability for work with youth and information, if any, as to whether the applicant has been convicted of any criminal offense.

No person may serve as a youth worker who has a conviction on his/her record of either a felony or a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude including, but not limited to, any of the following:

- Criminal homicide;
- Aggravated assault;
- Crimes related to the possession, use, or sale of drugs or controlled substances;
- Sexual abuse;
- Sexual assault;
- Injury to a youth;
- Incest;
- Indecency with a youth;
- Inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance of a youth;
- Possession or promotion of child pornography;
- The sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a minor;
- Employment harmful to youth;
- Abandonment or endangerment of a youth;
- Kidnapping or unlawful restraint;
- Public lewdness or indecent exposure; and
- Enticement of a youth.

WORKER TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

Each person who is selected and charged to become a youth worker at the Church, whether paid or volunteer, shall attend at least one training session on the prevention and reporting of youth abuse within the first year of service. The Personnel Commission of the Church may require additional training from time to time. Failure to participate in the initial training session and any subsequent required training may result in the worker being terminated from further youth activities or service until such initial or subsequent training has been completed.

At least two adult youth workers, whether paid or volunteer, shall be present at all activities for youth twelve and under, except those held in public places. A parent attending a youth activity may be considered the second adult worker. A youth of age 12 or above may assist one or more adult workers, but no one under age 18 shall be substituted for the adult workers. The following are the only exceptions to this two-adult rule:

1. A program staff member providing confidential counseling services may meet in private with a youth.
2. A regularly scheduled Church school class or nursery session on Sunday mornings may be conducted by one worker, provided the room where the class or nursery is held has an unobstructed window or other opening, permitting those outside the room to see inside or the door to the room remains open during the class in session.

SINGLE EVENT ASSISTANCE BY NON-APPROVED PERSONNEL

A parent of a youth attending a youth event or a known church member may, with prior permission of the Youth Worker in charge of the event, assist the Youth Worker for that event if all of the following conditions are met:

(1) Permission is limited to only the single event. For example, permission may be given for the specific event when the unexpected absence of an approved Youth Worker gives rise to “last minute” replacement assistance required to provide the level of protection specified by this Policy. Such “ad hoc” permission may not be used on a recurring basis so as to avoid the Youth Worker approval process of this Policy.

(2) The Youth Worker giving the “last minute” permission must, in good faith, reasonably believe that the replacement assistant has the sense of responsibility, integrity and qualifications to provide the protection contemplated by this Policy.

(3) The replacement assistant has read this Policy and has signed the signature page of agreement for the Policy, thus acknowledging that he/she will conduct himself/herself in connection with the single youth event in compliance with the principles of this Policy.

(4) At least one Youth Worker must be at each event.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS

The Personnel Commission shall maintain all youth worker applications, results of background checks, and related information in confidential, secured files. Access will be restricted to the Pastor/Head of Staff, Clerk of Session, or Personnel Commission, and then only on an approved, need-to-know basis.

PARENTAL PARTICIPATION AND PERMISSION

Parents of a youth who is attending an activity at, or sponsored or organized by, the Church are always welcome to attend with their youth. Parental permission may be required before youth may participate in certain activities of the Church (including but not limited to those taking place off Church premises), and the Church reserves the right to exclude any youth where the required parental permission has not been received.

DISCIPLINE

The goal of discipline is to help youth learn responsible behavior and to encourage positive social interactions.

1. Appropriate behavior should be modeled and good behavior should be praised.
2. Alternatives to inappropriate behavior should be suggested.
3. Youth should always be treated with respect.
4. If unacceptable behavior persists, the youth's parent may be contacted to assist in bringing about a resolution.
5. A youth shall never be physically punished.
6. **For youth 10 & under:** If a time-out action is given to a youth, the time shall not exceed one minute per age of the youth. At the end of the time-out, the youth shall be welcomed back to the activity.

SUPERVISION OF YOUTH TEN AND YOUNGER

Youth ten and younger shall be supervised while on Covenant property. Covenant reserves the right to deny room usage requests if a concern arises regarding the safety and/or adequate supervision of youth. If youth are found unattended in the church, they should immediately be returned to the parent.

Release of a youth to a parent may not be restricted unless signed court papers are produced, verifying custodial and visitation arrangements. The Church shall not hold these Court documents. Individual ministries shall determine safe practices for the release of youth into a non-parental adult's care once a ministry event/activity has concluded.

ON/OFF CAMPUS COVENANT SLEEPOVER GUIDELINES

1. The goal is to have an adult/student ratio of no less than one adult to ten youth, and two adults must be present at all such functions.
2. Signed parent permission slips (including emergency numbers, release of liability, medical emergency authorization) must be secured for a sleepover activity.
3. As long as any youth are awake, one adult should also be awake.
4. Separate sleeping quarters should be designated for males and females and should be properly supervised with same-gender adults.
5. Adults should use good judgment regarding movies. No R-rated movies shall be permitted without parental permission.

PRIVATE TRANSPORTATION

Drivers who may drive youth to and from church-sponsored events may be asked to certify that: (1) the driver has liability insurance, (2) the car is mechanically safe, (3) the driver has a valid driver's license, and (4) the driver has not been convicted of driving offenses stated in the certification form.

SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN BY NON-COVENANT MINISTRY PROGRAMS

Organizations that are not Covenant programs, but who are permitted use of facilities on Covenant property, are responsible for the reasonable assurance of safety for youth involved with that organization.

SIGNATURE OF AGREEMENT FORM

I have read the Covenant Youth Protection Policy and hereby acknowledge that I will conduct myself in connection with any Covenant youth event in compliance with the principles of this Policy.

Name

Date

3/2015