



# COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## Child Protection Policies and Procedures

### Protecting the Name of Christ and His Bride

#### What is our purpose for having Child Protection Policies?

We, at Covenant Presbyterian Church (CPC), have been called to care for our children and to honor the name of Christ. To this end, these policies have been developed to ensure a safe, loving environment where the Lord Jesus Christ is glorified and enjoyed by all His people. While we rely ultimately on the sovereign protection of our Lord, we also recognize that He has called us to exercise wisdom and prudence in our care for His children. It is our privilege to serve our King in this way.

Child protection policies apply to any activity that is formally sponsored by CPC in which adults and youth are working directly with children ages newborn through 18. This includes Nursery, Children's Church, Sunday School, Youth Group, Vacation Bible School, After School Program, and any other events in which child care and activities for children are provided by the church.

#### Who may serve in Children's and Youth Ministries?

**Members** of Covenant Presbyterian Church are invited and encouraged to work with the Children's and Youth Ministries after being approved through the following screening process:

- Be a member of Covenant Presbyterian Church who has been attending for at least six months
- Submit a "Children's Ministries Volunteer Application" or "Application for Youth Group Leader" (both include reference checks)
- Complete and sign the Disclosure Statement (provided by CPC)
- Complete a national criminal records check (provided by CPC)

**Nonmembers** may not serve, but are encouraged to become members (see Exception).

*\*\*\* Exception:* Persons who are not members of Covenant Presbyterian Church but are members of a gospel-believing church and don't anticipate establishing a permanent residence in the area (i.e., college students and missionaries), who have been known in the church for at least six months, and who are regularly attending worship services at CPC, may serve after being approved through the following screening process.

- Submit a "Children's Ministries Volunteer Application" or "Application for Youth Group Leader" (both include reference checks)
- Interview with the Director of Children's Ministries and/or a designated officer of the church or interview with the Youth Pastor
- Complete and sign the Disclosure Statement (provided by CPC)
- Complete a national criminal records check (provided by CPC)

*\*\*\* Further exceptions may be made on an individual basis for those who do not fall into the above categories. Contact the church office for more information.*

**Children of members of Covenant Presbyterian Church** who are between the ages of 12 and 17 years may serve with the Children's Ministries after being approved through the following screening process.

- Submit a "Children's Ministries Volunteer Application" (includes reference checks)
- Fifteen-to seventeen-year-olds complete and sign the Disclosure Statement (provided by CPC)

Upon turning 18, the child of a member will be considered a nonmember and is encouraged to join the church and complete the screening process as required for adult members.

**Children of members of Covenant Presbyterian Church** who are under the age of 12 years may serve alongside their parents as appropriate.

## Who may not serve with the Children's and Youth Ministries?

Any person having any pending accusation or conviction of a crime against a minor, or anyone deemed "ineligible" by the session, may not serve with the Children's or Youth Ministries.

## Are there any provisions for special events?

Special events that occur in the church for a single occasion must abide by the following guidelines.



- Two adults who have been approved through the screening process must be present and have direct oversight of the children and youth. Other volunteers who have not yet been through the screening process may assist with the children and youth. This does not include any person who the Session has deemed "ineligible" by the screening process.
- Volunteers who have not been through the screening process may not have positions of authority or responsibility over the children and youth apart from the direct supervision of the approved volunteers. They should never remove any child or youth from the presence of the approved volunteers.
- All volunteers must follow the procedural guidelines set forth in the Children's Ministries policies and Youth Group policies.
- Parents of children attending special events may participate in those events. Parents that are not approved volunteers may not have any authority over or responsibility for children other than their own.

## Definitions

**Approved Volunteer** - Person whom the Session has approved to work with children and youth based on the information obtained in the screening process\*

**National Criminal Records Check** - Procedure used to check the background of volunteers for criminal activity

**Disclosure Statement** - Form on which the volunteer responds to questions about prior convictions and pending accusations of crimes, as well as previous complaints filed against them for child abuse or neglect

**Ineligible Volunteer** - Person who, based on the information obtained in the screening process, has been determined by the Session to not be qualified to work with children and youth

**Member** - A person who has taken the Welcome to Covenant Class, been interviewed and approved for membership by members of the Session, and who has taken vows before God to support the church in its worship and work

**Sexual Abuse** - Any contact or interaction (visual, verbal, or psychological) between a child/adolescent and an adult when the child/adolescent is being used for the sexual arousal, molestation, or gratification of the perpetrator or any other person (Allender, The Wounded Heart, NavPress, 1993)



\*If an approved volunteer leaves the area of the church for a period of six months or more, the screening process will be repeated before the person is eligible to work with the children again.

# Procedures for Working with Children

In order to provide the safe, loving environment we are striving for, volunteers must follow the following procedures when working with the children newborn through 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

## Two Adults:

When ministering to children, there should always be two adults present who have been approved through the screening process. If one adult must leave the room, a parent should be asked to stay until the other adult volunteer returns. No adult should ever be alone with a child behind closed doors. Children ages 12 through 17 working with the children must be supervised by two approved adults.



## Name Tags:

All volunteers should wear name tags.

## Windows:

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

## Off-Site Activities:

Activities taking place off-site must be approved in advance by the Director of Children's Ministries or Youth Pastor.

## Bathroom Policy:

- For children younger than first grade:  
Children using the bathroom in the *nursery wing* must be accompanied by an adult female. The door should be left ajar and the adult should wait outside the door. Adults should only enter if the child asks for assistance. Children using the bathroom in the *main bathrooms* must be accompanied by a same gender adult who stays with the child in the bathroom but not in the stall.
- For children first through fifth 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 *main bathrooms*.

## Discipline:

- Volunteers are expected to implement the procedures laid out in "Guiding Children's Behavior" (see the last page of this brochure) when administering 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 area coordinator should be contacted as soon as possible to discuss appropriate methods of behavior management.

## Nursery Safety:

- No one other than scheduled volunteers should enter the rooms.
- Identification tags must be issued for each child (one for the caregiver and one that is attached to the child) upon arrival and must be returned to the nursery volunteer by the parent in order to pick up the child.
- A child should not be removed from the nursery room for any reason other than when he or she is picked up by the caregiver or to use the bathroom.

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**Please note that there are additional operating procedures  
specific to each area of ministry within the Children's Ministries.**

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**Reporting of any suspicious behavior should be given to the Director of Children's Ministries or a member of the Session who will in turn follow the reporting procedures.**

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## Guiding Children's Behavior

**Want  
more  
information?**

### Contact:

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Director of  
Children's Ministries  
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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 are the guidelines that 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 the story, turn the shelves around so they face the wall.
- Make sure children know expectations for behavior. They 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."
- Provide logical consequences that are connected to the misbehavior. For example, if a child is running through the room and knocks over a container of crayons, have the child pick up the crayons.
- 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 the 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., four minutes for a four-year-old). A chair for a time-out should be placed in an unused area of the room, away from other children.
- If it is necessary to use a time-out or other discipline, it is very important to communicate the situation with the parents when they pick up their child.
- 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 a 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 show by example the love and forgiveness of our Lord.

