

Winchester Cumberland Presbyterian Church

Statement of Policy on Child Protection and Prevention of Child Abuse and Emergency Response

Winchester Cumberland Presbyterian Church, located in Winchester, Tennessee remains committed to providing and maintaining a safe, nurturing environment for all adults (18 and older), children, and youth under the age of eighteen while in its care during events which are sponsored or co-sponsored by the Church.

Ministries with Children and Youth

Implicit in the involvement of persons in ministries to children and youth are the Biblically based terms COVENANT and SHEPHERD. There is an implied covenant between the leader and the child and the child's parents to be a good shepherd of that child, leading him or her towards an understanding of the love and grace of Jesus Christ.

A commitment to this call includes the adoption and enforcement of this Policy on child protection and prevention of child abuse. This policy applies to all clergy, leaders, volunteers and other persons who work with children in any paid or voluntary capacity. All children's leaders and childcare providers who regularly interact with children or youth must read, be in agreement with, and sign this policy, and affirm that they have not resigned or been terminated or had a criminal conviction from a position or leadership role for reasons related to abuse or misconduct .

The Church believes that appropriate personal relationships between adult leaders and children and youth of the Church foster the community of Christ. Common expressions of affection (appropriate hugs), affirmation (pats on the back), support (prayer) or physical care taking (changing diapers, etc.) are appropriate in our community of caring Christians. Care will be taken, however, that adults do not behave in a sexually inappropriate way during Church-sponsored activities, such as by demonstrating excessive physical expressions of affection or imposing such expressions upon another individual.

STAFF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION GUIDELINES

A. Age

In recruiting and hiring volunteers and paid staff to work with children and youth in any position of authority, they must be at least 18 years of age. If a volunteer is younger than 18 years of age they will be supervised by an approved staff person or volunteer at all times.

B. Workers with children

Winchester CP Church will not use anyone as a worker for children/youth or vulnerable adults in the church unless they have completed a satisfactory background check.

C. Background Checks

Criminal background checks shall be made of all clergy, paid staff, and volunteers who have supervisory program responsibility for children or youth (e.g. youth group leaders) and all other church employees, to the extent permitted by law, prior to employment, to determine current or historic child abuse or sexual misconduct, criminal records, violent or pedophilic behavior.

D. Prior Convictions

Individuals who have been convicted of physical or sexual abuse or neglect may not work in any church-sponsored activity or program for preschoolers, children, youth or vulnerable adults.

E. Confidentiality of Information

The church will keep confidential all information received in the background check. Selection information will be marked as such and stored in a locked location with limited access afforded only to church staff and others with a need to know.

STAFF SUPERVISION GUIDELINES

All meetings of children and/or youth affiliated with Winchester CP Church will be governed by the following guidelines:

A. Two adult rule

We will try to maintain the two adult rule, but we understand that may not always be possible. In that event doors will remain open at all times. This applies to classroom activities, activities away from the church facility and when transporting children and youth. Other church sponsored or community groups of children or youth who meet at the church should have two or more leaders present whenever possible. When feasible, both male and female leaders would be present. If the group stays overnight at the church, or if a church sponsored group leaves the premises, two or more leaders must be present and must include at least one male and female if the group is mixed gender.

B. Open Door Policy

Further protection for the children requires that an open door policy be followed. This policy shall state that the parents of the children served, the clergy, administrative and professional staff of the church have the right to visit and observe the children's/youth activity, classroom, or church-sponsored program at any time, unannounced.

C. Doors and Windows

All classroom and office doors will have a window or visibility from hallway or remain open while occupied. Doors that do not have visibility from the outside will be kept open at all times while occupied.

D. Individual Counseling

One-on-one interactions are sometimes necessary and appropriate but care must be taken that they be conducted in an environment that provides visibility by other adults. If at all possible, another adult is to have knowledge of staff members' whereabouts and with whom they are meeting. Children and youth receiving individual counseling should be told they are free to discuss any aspects of the counseling process with a parent or other adult, especially if they are uncomfortable about anything that occurs in counseling. All incidents of suspected abuse and neglect revealed during the session will be reported.

E. Outings Away From Church Property

1. All children and youth participating in out-of-town and over-night outings must have written consent and a medical release form. (Medical release and consent forms may be completed for a one-year period and must be renewed annually).
2. There must be access to a phone, cell phone or pager when groups are away from the church property.
3. In no circumstance is one adult (other than the parent) to take a child or children on an overnight outing alone. On youth overnight outings, there will be a 1:7 staff/volunteer:youth supervision ratio observed. Female staff will supervise female youth in their sleeping quarters and male staff will supervise male youth. Married couples will not stay together but observe the female/female and male/male sleeping arrangements. With the exception of a parent/child combination, a staff and youth will not occupy the same bed or sleeping bag.

F. Training

Prior to working in the youth or children department, workers must undergo child protection safety training. Initial training on issues of child sexual abuse in church settings shall be required for all clergy, paid staff and volunteers who regularly supervise youth activities (e.g. youth group leaders) and all other church employees. In addition, a summary of current child abuse statutes and reporting requirements for your legal jurisdiction are to be made available to all clergy, paid

staff and volunteers who regularly supervise youth activities, Church Session members and all other church employees.

G. Verification of Reading of Policy Statement

Upon receipt of the this policy statement, the volunteer or paid staff person will read and sign a statement that he/she has read Winchester CP Church's Child Abuse Protection Policy.

RESPONSE BY CHURCH WORKERS TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

As caring Christians, we are committed to protect and advocate for children/youth participating in the life of the church. The church is entrusted to provide an emotionally safe, spiritually grounded, healthy environment for children, youth, and adults in which they are protected from abuse. It is our legal and moral responsibility to report suspected abuse whenever it comes to our attention regardless of where that abuse takes place. We shall report suspected abuse to stop potentially existing abuse and to prevent further abuse. To report abuse is to witness to the world of the love and justice of God. Reporting abuse is a form of ministering to the needs of those crying out for help. If abuse occurs, it is our intention to act as an advocate for all affected persons, providing support, information, assistance and intervention. We seek to provide a supportive atmosphere, offering both objectivity and empathy as we seek to create a climate in which healing can take place.

If abuse is suspected by, observed by or disclosed to a volunteer and/or paid staff member of the church, that person shall report the incident immediately to the pastor. (If the accused is the pastor, see information below.) Be prepared to do the following:

- A. Ensure the protection of and tend to the immediate needs of the child, as the situation requires.
- B. IMMEDIATELY notify the proper authorities & the senior pastor.
 1. notify TN Department of Children's Services, 877-237-0004
 2. notify the pastor in charge. If the pastor is the accused party, the designee will notify the Stated Clerk of the Session and the Stated Clerk of Murfreesboro Presbytery.
 3. give written documentation to the pastor and/or the Personnel Committee.
- C. The pastor or designee will notify the parents of the victim and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety of the child/youth until the parent(s) arrive. It is important to emphasize that the proper authorities must be notified even if the parent(s) does not wish the incident to be reported. (Note: If one or both of the parents is the alleged abuser, contact the proper authorities listed above. Follow their advice about notification of the parents.)
- D. After having reported the suspected abuse to the proper authorities, the incident is to be reported immediately to the church's attorney, and the church's insurance company. A report will also need to be made to the General Assembly Office.
- E. If the accused is working in a volunteer or paid position with children or youth in the church, immediately, yet with dignity and respect for the sacred worth of the person, remove the accused from further involvement with children and/or youth.
- F. Once the proper authorities have been contacted and the safety of the child or youth is secured, the pastor or other designated person may tell the accused that a report has been made. If the accused is a volunteer or paid staff of the church, that person shall be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished. If the accused is a paid staff person of the church, arrangements should be made to either maintain or suspend his or her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

- G. Any contact with the media should be handled by a pre-determined spokesperson. Care will be taken to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved. The spokesperson should generally convey that the matter is under investigation and any comments made prior to the conclusion of the investigation would be premature.

I have read and agree to comply with these policies. I also state that I have not been arrested or convicted of a crime involving sexual abuse or misconduct or resigned from or been terminated from any position for reasons relating to sexual, physical, or mental abuse or misconduct. I hereby agree to authorize any background check the Winchester CP Church may choose to conduct, and to sign any documents necessary to do so.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Care for All Persons

Fire Safety

In the event of a fire, all persons will be directed to the back parking lot by the church buses and wait for fire personnel to arrive. No person shall re-enter the building until cleared by an emergency professional.

Storm Warning

In the event of a storm warning, such as a tornado, all persons should remain in the building and report to the basement and wait until the storm warning has passed. No person shall leave the building during this time.

Medical Emergency

In the event of a medical emergency, the following procedures should be followed.

1. Call 911
2. Notify the Pastor

Spokesperson for the Church

In the event of any type of incident, all media should be directed to the Stated Clerk of the Church Session. This should be the only person in conversation with the media at any time.