



Child Protection Policy

Westchester Bible Church
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Westchester, IL (708) 562-3040

REVISIONS

Original: **6/10/2015**

Revisions:

8/20/2015 - revised Children's Ministry Workers, p. 3 to clarify that non-members who are regular attenders may serve in Children's Ministries

10/01/2015 – pending Board Approval, updated Bathroom policies to distinguish Westchester Christian School bathroom procedures

Introduction

Our goal of leading children to Christ can best be accomplished when parents and guardians are confident that their children are safe at church and church-related activities. The main objective of this policy is to provide a safe environment for children (newborn-age to seventeen) entrusted to Westchester Bible Church (WBC). In seeking to accomplish this objective, two other important objectives are being accomplished: the protection of WBC's workers from false allegations as well as the reduction of WBC's risk and liability exposure. To accomplish these objectives, WBC must implement the Child Protection Policy and monitor its effectiveness.

We believe staff and volunteers are to place a high priority on the safety and security of the children entrusted to our care. Children's Ministry Staff and Assistant Staff are required to sign a Child Protection Policy Agreement Form stating that they have read and understood and agree to abide by the policies in this document. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend the annual training on these policies.

What is child abuse?

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Verbal/Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.
- **Sexual abuse** – The legal definition of child sexual abuse may vary from state to state, but in general "A person sexually abuses a child when he or she exposes the child to sexual acts or behavior. Child sexual abuse can involve: Sex acts that involve penetration; Touching the child's breasts or genitals; Making a child touch the perpetrator's breasts or genitals; Voyeurism (that is, when a perpetrator looks at a child's naked body); Exhibitionism (that is, when a perpetrator shows a child his or her naked body). In addition, other forms of child sexual abuse may include the following: Showing a child pornography or using a child in the production of pornography; Child sexual exploitation, such as trafficking or child prostitution; Internet-based child sexual abuse, such as creating, depicting, and/ or distributing sexual images of children online; or stalking, grooming, and/or engaging in sexually explicit behaviors with children online" (© National Sexual Violence Resource Center 2011.)

How common is child sexual abuse?

According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, in a year, about 1 in 12 children are sexually and nearly 1 in 10 over their lifetimes. About one in three girls and one in seven boys will be sexually abused before the age of 17 (© National Sexual Violence Resource Center 2011.)

What are the warning signs that a child may be sexually abused?

Child sexual abuse is not always obvious and many children do not report that they have been abused. Many children are embarrassed or feel guilty. Some fear the consequences of a disclosure and the ramifications it will have on the family and the people who sexually abuse children. Children often love and trust the people who sexually abuse them, creating further barriers and complications in coming forward. They may feel confused because of the ways in which their bodies may have reacted to the abuse. Victims may also have a fear that there is something wrong with them or that they caused the abuse. A child may show any or none of the following warning signs if he or she is being abused Bodily signs (e.g., bed-wetting, stomachaches, headaches, sore genitals); Emotional signs (e.g., fear, sadness, mood changes, acting out, refusing to be left alone with certain people); Sexual signs (e.g., inappropriate sexual behavior with objects or other children); Verbal signs (e.g., voicing knowledge about sexuality that is not age- or developmentally appropriate). These indicators may be cause for further attention and concern on the part of parents, caregivers, teachers, and others involved in children's lives. (© National Sexual Violence Resource Center 2011.)

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

Children's ministry staff may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at WBC becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the **immediate supervisor and/or Ministry Director** for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at WBC or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation.
3. Civil authorities will be notified, and WBC will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. WBC will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. The Chairman of the Board, Chairman of the Elders, and/or the Senior Pastor will be our spokesmen to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he is alleged to be involved. We will seek the advice of legal counsel before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the congregation. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking to the media.
6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

Screening & Selection of Staff

All Children's Ministry Staff seeking to work with children must submit to a background check. Prospective workers will be asked to complete a Confidential Security Screening form allowing the church to run the background check. If an individual declines to sign the authorized form, he/she will be unable to work with children.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the pastoral staff and Christian Education Committee on a case-by-case basis in light of the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children, crimes of a sexual nature, and/or for offenses involving violence will immediately disqualify the applicant. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The Confidential Screening Form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at WBC or secure online background agency such as PROTECT MY MINISTRY.

During the screening process, WBC shall use its best efforts to maintain confidentiality. The screening and selection policy shall apply to all Children's Ministry Staff involved in any manner with child/youth ministry on behalf of WBC.

Children's Ministry Workers

Children's Ministry Staff or Children's Ministry Workers refers to any paid or volunteer staff member who is 18 years or older and who are members of WBC. Assistant Staff will be regular attenders of WBC for at least 6 months, will always be paired with a Children's Ministry Worker, and will never be left alone with children. Assistant Staff are not to teach, but are to support the staff in the classroom setting by playing with children, helping with craft and snack time, etc. They are required to be trained in and to follow the Child Protection Policy. Assistant Staff may include helpers ages 14*-17 who assist in classrooms and will always be paired with adult Children's

Ministry Staff. Illinois law defines a **neglected minor**, in part, as "*any minor under the age of 14 years whose parent or other person responsible for the minor's welfare leaves the minor without supervision for an unreasonable period of time without regard for the mental or physical health, safety or welfare of that minor.*" (705 ILCS 405/2-3) (from Ch. 37, par. 802-3)

All Children's Ministry Workers will wear a badge to identify themselves as qualified ministry workers.

Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 14 (see above fingerprint under Children's Ministry Workers)
- Must be screened as specified above.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

Two Adult Policy

Our normal operating procedure requires that there will be a minimum of 2 Children's Ministry Staff members in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. WBC recognizes that there will be occasions in which children in Youth Ministry meet in discipleship-type groups when there is one leader meeting with a group of youth (no less than 2).

It is our goal that a minimum of two (2) adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation.

Furthermore, every classroom will have a window in the door or the door will remain open while children are present.

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of WBC never to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. A child should never be spanked, grabbed, hit, shaken or verbally abused.

There are three expectations that guide the behavior policy for children at WBC: Respect, Responsibility, and Active Participation (see Appendix A).

WBC follows a 3 strikes policy with regard to violations of the behavior policy. Children who are creating a distraction in the classroom will be given a warning and spoken to about their behavior.

In the case of a second offense, the child will be spoken to again, discreetly, and warned that a 3rd offense will result in removal from class. The child will be moved away from other children who may be creating a distraction (in the case of younger children, a "time out" may be instituted – teachers are asked to follow the guideline of 1 minute per age of life. A 3 year old would be in time out for 3 minutes a 2 year old would have a 2-minute time out, etc.). Upon the 3rd offense, the child's parent will be called and the child will be removed from class. In the case of the 3rd offense, the Children's Ministry Director should be notified.

If a more serious behavioral issue occurs, a child may be removed from class without the 3 strikes policy being put into effect. The Children's Ministry Director should be notified if a child is exhibiting ongoing behavioral issues.

Teachers are encouraged to keep the lines of communication open with parents and to speak to parents about behavioral issues they are observing in the classroom.

Discipline is not meant to be punishment. Instead, it is a time for teaching--the very kind of teaching Jesus did with his disciples. Teaching of this kind has two purposes: first, to immediately stop inappropriate behavior; second, to help the child find another, more appropriate way to behave. Here are some procedures for correcting behavior:

- a. Go over classroom rules, before the class begins. These rules should be posted somewhere in your classroom (1. Respect God 2. Respect Leaders 3. Respect Others).
- b. Prevent problems before they occur. The best way to avoid trouble is to stop it before it happens.
- c. Set clear limits. Use the word "no" as little as possible because it does not teach the child appropriate behavior. Instead, give the child information. Save the word "no" for dangerous situations.
- d. Redirect behavior. Try offering the child another activity.
- e. Offer a choice. When you say, "You may play with the truck or the car. Which one do you want?" you are giving the child a choice.
- f. Acknowledge feelings. Use the words "I see" often. Show the child that you understand.
- g. Talk through problems.
- h. If you have tried working through these corrective procedures without success, then it is time to call in the appropriate staff member. It is the staff member's responsibility to talk with the parents about behavioral issues.

A Few Tips to Keep in Mind:

1. Acknowledge a child's good behavior.
2. Talk about the action and not the child's personality.
3. Remember that seventy percent of communication is non-verbal.
4. When addressing a child's behavior, always lower your voice.
5. Realize that a child's behavior may simply be a cry for your attention.
6. Pray for God to give you patience and show you how to best teach the child.

Physical Contact with Children

Physical contact with children should be minimal and should be reserved to patting on the top of the head, patting on the shoulder, patting on the upper back, shaking hands, high fives, and an occasional hug (preferably on the side).

Avoid having children sit in your lap as often as possible. Preschoolers should not be carried or held unless they need to be comforted. In this case, only an adult female staff member should be comforting the child in this manner and only for a short time in order to calm the child down. If a child has been crying for 10 minutes and is inconsolable, the parents will be called. Children age 5 and up should never need to sit in a lap or be held.

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

- 1) For minor injuries (scrapes and bruises), workers will provide First Aid (Band Aids, ice, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from their classroom. First Aid kits are located in or near each classroom. Ice packs are kept in the Fellowship Hall. Gloves should always be worn for First Aid treatment.
- 2) For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent or guardian will be immediately summoned. The Children's Ministry Director will be summoned immediately, as well. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
- 3) Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident or accident report will be completed. In the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional, an incident report will be completed **by the adult supervising the activity where the incident took place**, under the direction of the Children's Ministry Director.

Sick Child Policy

WBC seeks to provide the safest possible environment for children. Parents are asked to keep children who exhibit the following signs of illness at home:

- Fever
- Eye Infections
- Diarrhea
- Cold Symptoms
- Cough/Nasal Discharge

If a child exhibits any of the above symptoms, parents will be notified and asked to pick their child up from class.

Releasing Children from Class

Children 2nd grade and under will not be released from a Children's Ministry class or activity until a parent or guardian picks the child up. Proper check out procedures in the Nursery and in the preschool class (using badges) must be followed. Siblings are permitted to check children in and out of class if they have the appropriate badges (Indicating parental permission). In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to present the "child check," **the immediate supervisor and/or Children's Ministry Director** will be contacted and they will be responsible for releasing the child to the care of a parent or guardian after discussing the surrounding circumstances with the parent or guardian.

Transportation Policy

All youth must ride in vehicles driven by authorized adults which must:

1. Be at least 21 years old for the passenger van and 25 years old and CDL certified for the bus.
2. Have a valid Illinois driver's license, qualified for the vehicle being operated.
3. Have no record of convictions for the past five years for DUI, driving with a suspended or revoked driver's license or reckless endangerment.
4. Have proof of insurance
5. Never be alone in a vehicle with a youth other than his/her own child. Therefore, no fewer than three persons, one of them an adult, should occupy a vehicle traveling to/from an activity. Adults are in the front seats, all minors ride in the back seats.
6. Youth workers and adult volunteers must do their best to avoid driving a child / youth of the opposite sex. Male workers should drive boys. Female workers should drive girls.
7. In any situations where workers have no option other than to drive a minor to or from home, they must have the minor's prior written parental consent and have either the ministry department head or pastoral consent including when and where.
8. Ensure vehicles are not filled beyond capacity for their use, that seat belts are always secured and that occupants remain seated at all times and behave appropriately.
9. Maintain sign-in sheets to identify individuals riding in their vehicle.
10. Must understand emergency contact procedures and maintain contact with the person in charge (e.g. cell phone).
11. Children / youth must have a signed an "Activity Participation Agreement" in order to participate in a church-sponsored event that requires transportation and/or activity off of the church premise, or overnight on church premise (See Appendix B).

NURSERY: Diaper Changing & Restroom Guidelines

It is recommended that only Nursery Staff will change diapers. Gloves should be worn for diaper changing. Men are never to change diapers (except that a father may change his child). Only children who are potty trained are permitted to move out of the Nursery into preschool classrooms (exceptions will be made for children with Special Needs).

Our bathroom policy is that parents take their children to the bathroom prior to each class. In the event that a restroom break is needed: only female ministry workers should escort a group of children to the bathroom. They should always go in a group (no less than 2 children), never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check to make sure the bathroom is empty, and then prop the door open and allow the children to go inside. Bathroom doors should always be propped open. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the worker should leave the stall door open as she assists the child. Workers should enter the restroom stall to assist a child only when absolutely necessary.

Children in grades 3-6 may be permitted to use the restroom without supervision as long as the "buddy system" is used; meaning they take a friend of same gender with them to the restroom.

In the event of a potty accident, staff members are to escort the child to the Nursery for the Nursery staff to attend to the child. Pull-ups and clean clothing are available in the Nursery.

For the protection of all, workers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child.

Westchester Christian School shall create, enforce and maintain bathroom policies and procedures that are appropriate for the ages of their students.

Youth Ministry

All youth workers are to adhere to the rules/expectations given for all children's ministry workers as listed out in the WBC Child Protection Policy.

With respect to the "2 Adult Policy," youth workers are to follow these general guidelines:

1. We will strive to follow the 2 Adult Policy when possible (ie, at typical youth gatherings, during retreats, etc)
2. When the 2 Adult Policy is not the best means of reaching the stated goals of specific youth events (ie, relating to discipleship, counseling, etc):
 - a. When possible, have meetings with more than one student.
 - b. Youth Worker is to avoid any meeting with student(s) of the opposite gender when another youth worker is not present.
 - c. Youth Worker is to never have a one-on-one meeting in private (meet in public place, let youth pastor & parents know about meeting in advance).

When counseling issues arise within the discipleship relationship with a student:

1. Youth workers are to maintain a clear line of communication with the Youth Pastor or Youth Leader.
2. Youth workers are to not share counseling issues with other students or other youth workers (unless those workers or students are directly related to the issue at hand).
3. Youth workers are never to make any promises of complete confidentiality with a student.

Appendix A

WBC BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS FOR CHILDREN

WBC's Children's Ministry seeks to provide a safe, loving, and nurturing environment in which Bible-based teaching and Biblical example allow children the opportunity to come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ and to grow spiritually in the Lord. In order to achieve these goals children are asked to follow three basic guidelines: respect, responsibility, and active participation.

RESPECT

- Be respectful in attitude and behavior to all teachers, helpers, and children
- Keep your hands to yourself, no roughhousing
- Address all teachers and helpers as Mr., Mrs., Miss
- Listen and follow directions from your leaders
- Raise your hand and wait to be called on in class
- Bow your head and close your eyes during prayer
- Stay in your seat during class; ask permission before standing and moving around

RESPONSIBILITY

- Bring your Bible to class
- Listen quietly to teachers during lesson time
- Look for ways to be helpful and kind to others
- Be a good example for others and model godly behavior

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

- Enthusiastically participate in discussion and other activities
- Be encouraging to others
- Lend a helping hand to classmates and leaders when they need it

Appendix B

Activity Participation Agreement

Activity Information *(To be completed by the activity sponsor)*

Name of sponsoring organization: **WESTCHESTER BIBLE CHURCH**

Address: 10600 W CERMAK ROAD, WESTCHESTER, IL 60154 Telephone: 708-562-3040

Name of sponsor's coordinator(s): _____ Telephone: _____

Name of sponsor's coordinator(s): _____ Telephone: _____

Description of activity: _____

Date(s) and location of activity: _____

Mode of Transportation: _____

Participant Information *(To be completed by participant or authorized guardian)*

Name of participant: _____

Name of parents/guardians: _____

Address: _____ Telephone: _____

Name of emergency contact: _____

Telephone (daytime): _____ Telephone (evening): _____

List allergies or medical conditions: _____

Is sponsor authorized to approve medical treatment? Yes No

Is participant covered by personal/family medical insurance? Yes No

If yes, name of insurer: _____

Policy or group number: _____

Participation Agreement

I acknowledge that participation in the activity described above involves risk to the participant (and to the participant's parents or guardians, if the participant is a minor), and may result in various types of injury including, but not limited to, the following: sickness, bodily injury, death, emotional injury, personal injury, property damage, and financial damage. In consideration for the opportunity to participate in the activity described above (the "activity"), the participant (or parent/guardian if the participant is a minor) acknowledges and accepts the risks of injury associated with participation in and transportation to and from the activity. The participant (or parent/guardian) accepts personal financial responsibility for any injury or other loss sustained during the activity or during transportation to and from the activity, as well as for any medical treatment rendered to the participant that is authorized by the sponsor or its agents, employees, volunteers, or any other representatives (collectively referred to as the "activity sponsor"). Further, the participant (or parent/guardian) releases and promises to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the activity sponsor for any injury arising directly or indirectly out of the described activity or transportation to and from the activity, whether such injury arises out of the negligence of the activity sponsor, the participant, or otherwise.

If a dispute over this agreement or any claim for damages arises, the participant (or parent/guardian) agrees to resolve the matter through a mutually acceptable alternative dispute resolution process. If the participant (or parent/guardian) and the activity sponsor cannot agree upon such a process, the dispute will be submitted to a three-member arbitration panel for resolution in accordance with the rules of the American Arbitration Association.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____
(Participant and/or ALL parent/guardians if participant is a minor)

Volunteer Acknowledgement

The Child Protection Policy contains important information about WBC’s objective to keep all children and youth in a safe environment. I understand that I should consult the Pastor and/or an Elder if I have any questions that are not answered in this Policy. I also acknowledge that revisions to this Policy may occur at any time.

My signature below acknowledges that I have received and read this entire Policy.

My signature also indicates that I agree to serve faithfully and to comply with and adhere to the policies and procedures outlined in this Policy.

Signature Date

Printed Name

Pastor/Elder Date