

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

Approved by Session, Dec. 17, 2025

Westminster Presbyterian Church is deeply aware of its responsibility to safeguard the emotional, spiritual and physical well-being of children and youth. Our commission to protect children and youth comes from Jesus Christ who taught us, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me” (Matthew 18:5). Jesus also said, “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6).

In light of these values, all persons in contact with children and youth through one of Westminster’s child and youth ministry programs shall comply with these guidelines as a condition of their participation regardless of whether they are paid staff or a volunteer.

Qualifications for People Working with Children and Youth

1. **Membership/Regular Attendee.** Adults who supervise children (0-11 years old) and youth (12-17 years old) must be regular attendees or members of Westminster Presbyterian Church for one year, or church staff.
2. **Adult Supervisors.** Adults (18 years old or older) who are authorized to supervise children and youth as specified by this protection policy. Whenever possible they should be at least five years older than the oldest child or youth they are supervising.
3. **Youth Volunteers.** Youth who regularly participate in WPC activities may qualify to serve as “Youth Volunteers” with church activities, including children’s programming. However, the participation of a Youth Volunteer does not count towards the adult-to-child ratios or change any aspect of the WPC Church Protection Policy as it relates to adults. Youth volunteers serve at the discretion of the adult staff member or volunteer supervising an activity.
4. **Applications.** Staff and volunteers who work with children and youth must complete an application.
5. **Criminal History.** In the case of applicants for all staff positions, including those working with children and youth, potential employees will be asked during or immediately after their interview if they have ever been convicted of or pled guilty or no contest to a crime other than a minor traffic violation or have charges pending against them at the time of the application (Oregon law currently prohibits this question from being asked on employment applications). Employee applicants will also be asked if they have ever been accused of any crimes against children.

6. **References.** Applicants for both staff and volunteer positions must provide at least three references for people who know how the applicant interacts with children.
7. **Background Checks.** Criminal background checks will be conducted on all volunteers and employees who work with children and youth. No one known to have committed a sexual offense or child abuse will be allowed to work with children, youth, or other vulnerable populations. Criminal background checks will be updated at least every five years for staff and volunteers. Other background checks may be completed as warranted. For example, those who might be driving children and youth may have their driving records checked.
8. **Special Circumstances.** Individuals from outside the church may in special circumstances (such as Salem Youth Collective where leaders and youth from other churches come together) be allowed to work with Westminster children/youth if they have comparable training and background checks from their home church. When our children/youth participate with other churches off-site, there will be a minimum of two adult supervisors with at least one from Westminster.
9. **Absolute Right of Refusal.** Westminster Presbyterian Church reserves the right to refuse an applicant for volunteer work with children and youth.

Intake and Training

10. **Required Training.** Westminster Presbyterian Church will provide training opportunities at least once a year and as needed for staff and volunteers on reducing the risk of any kind of child/youth abuse, including, bullying, cyber bullying, hazing, grooming, sexual misconduct and sexual abuse. All volunteers and staff are required to take this training before working with children and youth. All staff and volunteers must renew this training every five years. The Church may also opt to offer abbreviated trainings for special events such as Vacation Bible Camp.
11. **Review of the Child Protection Policy.** Each staff member and volunteer working with children or youth will read the Child Protection Policy in full and sign the commitment form. Volunteers and church staff must re-read the policy every five years and sign a form renewing his or her commitment to participating in and implementing the policy. The designated staff person will keep a record of these forms in a confidential and secure file within the church office.

General Procedures

12. **Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation Prohibited.** At all church-related activities, Westminster Presbyterian Church prohibits the following conduct towards any member of a vulnerable population: physical abuse and/or neglect; mental and/or emotional abuse; sexual advances, abuse and/or exploitation; and exposure to

pornography or sexually graphic materials. This policy applies to adult volunteers and staff, and to peer-to-peer interactions.

13. **No Alcohol or Drugs at Children's and Youth Activities.** Alcohol and drugs cannot be present at children's or youth activities. Additionally, staff and volunteers participating in such activities cannot consume alcohol before or during such activities.
14. **Two Adult Rule.** An adult should not be alone with an unrelated child or youth except in public places in direct view of at least one other person. A minimum of two adult supervisors shall supervise church activities. In isolated environments such as trips and overnight activities, a minimum of three adult supervisors is advised. Related adults count as one adult for this rule.
15. **Inappropriate Physical Contact.** Adults working with children and youth may not touch any private area of the body.
16. **Visibility.** Church staff and volunteers must make every effort to meet with children and youth in rooms and spaces that are visible to others.
17. **Discipline.** Adults working with children and youth are never to spank, hit, grab, shake, or use any kind of physical discipline. Physical restraint should only be used in a situation where it is reasonably necessary to prevent an individual from physically harming him/herself or another individual. Disciplinary problems should be reported to parent or guardian, to the lead children's teacher or youth leader as appropriate and to the Minister.
18. **Parental Consent and Medical Authorization.** Parents/legal guardians will annually complete a consent form, liability waiver, and medical authorization form for each youth who will be participating in church activities that year. Staff will be provided access to digital copies of the forms during activities in case of emergency.
19. **In Case of Emergency.** Staff and volunteers must be familiar with a room's immediate exits and call 911 in the event of an emergency.

Transportation Rules

20. **Transportation.** Transportation to church-sponsored activities is to be provided only from the church to the activity and from the activity back to the church. Transportation between the home and the church and return is the responsibility of the parents or guardians to arrange.
21. **Drivers Authorized by Church.** Transportation to and from church activities is to be provided only by drivers who are authorized by the church.
22. **No One-on-One Transportation.** Volunteers and staff shall not be alone while transporting a child or youth from the church to the activity and back.

23. **License & Insurance Required.** Each driver will be responsible for having a current driver's license and proof of insurance.

Cell Phone, Email and Electronic Communication Rules

24. **Electronic communications.** Electronic communications with children shall be through parents or guardians. Electronic communications with youth shall include parents or guardians.

Additional Guidelines and Procedures for Nursery-Aged Children (Ages 0-2) and Pre-School (Ages 2-5)

25. **Designated Staff or Volunteer.** No one other than the designated staff or volunteers for nursery care or preschool may be in the room (other than the parent or guardian of one of the children in that room) without the consent of the staff or volunteer in charge.
26. **Release Guidelines.** Each parent/guardian must sign children in and out of the nursery/preschool room and note where the parent/guardian will be in case they are needed. No child should be released from the nursery/preschool room except into the care of the person who signed the child in, unless noted at the time the child is dropped off that another specified person will be picking the child up. The person picking up children ages 0-23 months must be 18 years or older. The person picking up Preschool children (ages 2-5) and Kindergarten must be 18 years or older unless otherwise specified by the parent/guardian.
27. **Information Form.** At a child's first visit to the nursery or preschool classrooms, a parent/guardian must complete a form that includes information about the child such as special needs or concerns, allergies, permission to eat snacks provided in the classroom, etc. The form also includes a section for the parent/guardian to provide name, address, phone number, email, etc.
28. **Diapering.** Church staff or volunteers may not change a child's diaper. Only the parent/guardian of a child may change a diaper. Parents/guardians will be paged or sent a text to come to the nursery or preschool room if their child needs a diaper change.
29. **Preschool Use of Bathrooms.** Children are taken to the bathroom only upon their request or if the child shows obvious signs of needing to void.
- A child can be encouraged to have another child accompany him/her along with the adult.
 - Keep the main door open while the child is in the bathroom. Remain outside the bathroom where you can hear the child.

- If the child needs assistance with his/her clothes, staff or volunteers assisting the child must be visible when helping with clothing.
- Staff and volunteers are advised to rotate this responsibility, so the same person is not taking the children all of the time.
- Staff and volunteers are advised to verbally request that parents take their children to the bathroom prior to the child entering the classroom.
- Pre-school aged children may use the toddler bathroom next to their classroom.
- No children may be taken to either adult bathroom in the basement.
- Parents/guardians may be notified by text or pager if the child is in need of physical assistance toileting.

**Additional Guidelines and Procedures for Elementary School-Aged Children
(Kindergarten to Fifth Grade)**

30. K-5 Use of Bathrooms. Children are taken to the bathroom only upon their request or if the child shows obvious signs of needing to void.

- A child can be encouraged to have another child accompany him/her along with the adult.
- An adult may not enter the bathroom with an elementary school-aged child unless there is an emergency.
- Remain outside the bathroom door and wait to accompany the child back to the classroom.

31. Release Guidelines. Children are to be released into the care of their parent/guardian. A parent/guardian must directly communicate with the staff person or volunteer, verbally or in writing, to allow another (named) person to pick up the child. This includes older siblings who are under the age of 18 years old to pick up the child. If no one comes to pick up a child, the two responsible adults shall take the child to the narthex in the church where they will stay with the child until the child is picked up.

**Additional Guidelines and Procedures for Middle and High School Youth
(Sixth through Twelfth Grade)**

32. Use of Bathrooms. Whenever possible, mid-high and high school youth must walk to the bathroom in pairs. Youth shall not use either adult bathroom in the basement because of their isolated locations.

Managing and Reporting Incidents (See flow charts page 10)

33. Accidental Injuries. If a child or youth is injured while participating in church-sponsored event, the following steps must be followed:

- For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, staff and volunteers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from care.
- For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, an ambulance shall be called if needed, and the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned.
- An incident report must be completed for injuries other than those considered minor. The report must be completed by the paid staff person or volunteer who witnessed the injury.

34. Abuse Allegations. If a staff member, volunteer, or other person believes abuse or exploitation has occurred, they must report the abuse immediately. If the reporter is with the victim, they should remain with the victim until the victim is in the care of a responsible adult (parents, police, DHS, etc.).

- (1) If the victim is in immediate danger, the reporter should call 911.
- (2) Once the victim is safe, the reporter should complete the Confidential Incident Report attached to this policy.
- (3) Using information from the Confidential Incident Report, the reporter must report the incident to the Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Abuse or Neglect Section at (503) 378-6704. If it is afterhours and DHS is not accepting calls, the reporter should call the appropriate law enforcement agency (for example, the local police or sheriff's department depending on location).
- (4) After contacting either DHS or the police, the reporter must immediately contact a member of Westminster Presbyterian Church's Program Staff. Program Staff will then notify the Safety Team. The reporter making the report shall provide a copy of the Confidential Incident Report to a Safety Team member.
- (5) At no time should the reporter confront the alleged abuser or contact the parents of the alleged victim. Church staff and/or the Safety Team will serve as the point of contact and provide further guidance as needed.

35. Safety Team Procedure. After receiving a verbal report of suspected child abuse, the Safety Team shall:

- (1) Obtain the written report of the incident from the abuse reporter;
- (2) Review the alleged abuse report;

- (3) Determine the appropriate type of action required with guidance from DHS or law enforcement.
- (4) Make an action plan to safeguard the well-being of the alleged victim regarding the alleged incident;
- (5) Keep all aspects of the report, both verbal and written, confidential except to the extent required for reporting purposes. This provision is designed to avoid any consequences from unfounded accusations.
- (6) Maintain the written report in a designated locked file in the church office. Only the clergy, Clerk of Session and the Safety Team shall have access to these files; and,
- (7) Contact the victim's parents (unless a parent is the alleged abuser) to discuss the church's intent to develop a safety plan in light of the allegations. This measure shall be taken immediately.

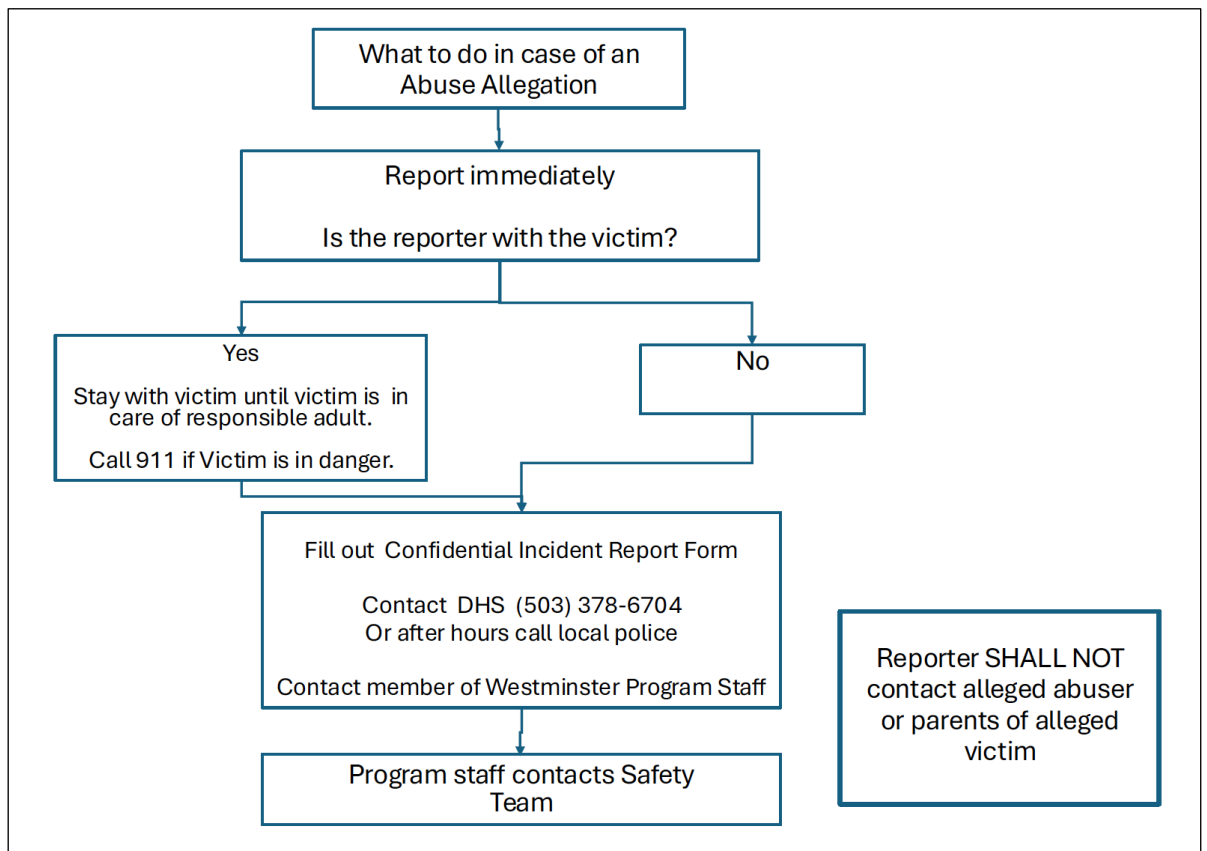
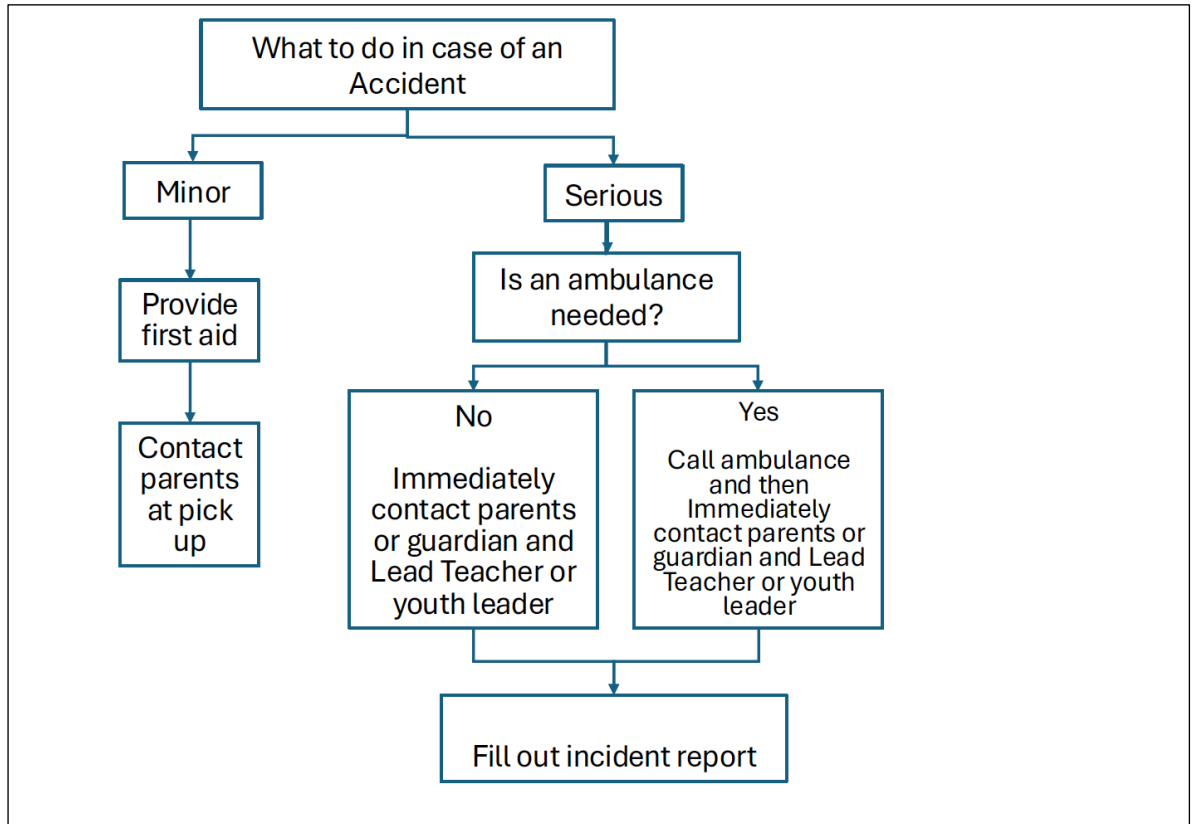
36. Next Steps. Westminster Presbyterian Church will cooperate with the authorities in all investigations of child abuse and will follow the direction of the investigating agency (DHS and/or police) in regard to interaction with the accused and the victim. The victim and their family, the accused, and the reporter will all be treated with dignity and respect throughout the investigation.

- Consistent with guidance from outside authorities, the Safety Team will develop a plan to provide support and care for the alleged victim(s) and their families and will secure the safety of the victim, if possible, before making contact with the alleged abuser.
- The Safety Team will then inform the alleged abuser of the complaint and outline the steps the church will take for the safety of the child. In cases where abuse is reported to authorities or otherwise requested by the victim, the Team shall make immediate efforts to ensure that the accused will have no future contact with the victim.
- The Safety Team will advise Session regarding the means and content of information to be shared with the congregation about allegations of abuse.
- Any person accused of abuse will immediately be suspended from participation in all children and youth activities of the Church. The suspension will continue during any investigation by the Church, law enforcement or child protection agencies and for as long as deemed necessary by Session.
- If the alleged abuser is a church employee, he/she will be relieved of their duties until any investigation is complete. A later reassignment of duties may be applicable as long as there is no direct contact with children.

- If the alleged abuser is a Pastor, a Certified Christian Educator or a Commissioned Lay Pastor, the Presbytery Authority responsible for the investigation shall be notified by the Safety Team or Session by the end of the next business day. An interim Pastor shall be appointed by the Presbytery from the Committee on Ministry. The Session shall follow direction given by the Presbytery Authority.
- Session shall report the incident as soon as possible to the applicable insurance company and/or attorney.
- If the church is contacted by the news media, Clergy are the only authorized people to talk to the news media unless they are the alleged abuser. If the pastor is the alleged abuser, the Presbytery Authority will be the spokesperson.
- The identity of a person found to have committed abuse shall be made known regularly to all staff of the Church and members of all committees involved in children and youth ministries in order to monitor the activities of the person. This policy is to protect children and youth from further harm.
- If the investigating agency (DHS or the police) concludes that the alleged abuser demonstrated poor judgment or unwise behavior, but the behavior did not rise to the level of abuse, the Pastor will offer counseling and guidance to the accused. In the case of a church employee, the Personnel Committee and Pastor shall review the employee's job duties, and his/her ability to carry out these duties. A plan of action will be developed for the employee, if necessary.

37. SAFETY COMMITTEE, POLICY REVIEW, AND TRAINING. Session will appoint a Safety Team.

- The Safety Team will be responsible for reviewing and recommending changes to this policy every five years. The Safety Team will develop procedures for reviewing reports of alleged abuse, recommended responses to these reports, and developing strategies for supporting and caring for victims and their families.
- The church staff overseeing children's and youth activities will be responsible for developing and delivering the volunteer trainings which are the primary tool for communicating the information and requirements contained in this policy. Church staff will also be responsible for conducting background checks and maintaining files for all staff and volunteers. The Safety Team will provide support to church staff as needed.



Westminster Child Protection Policy

Commitment Form

The congregation of Westminster Presbyterian Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. As a volunteer working with children or youth in this congregation, I agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children and youth.

Signature

Print Full Name

Date