

The Wesleyan Church of North America

GUIDELINES FOR CHILD PROTECTION

(Recommended for use by local churches)

Last Revised: August 31, 2021

Introduction:

The Wesleyan Church of North America as of 2020 encompasses 24 districts and more than 1500 local churches and affiliated Wesleyan ministries. Most, if not all, local churches offer programs and activities designed to meet the needs of children or which include children as do many Wesleyan affiliated entities. As Wesleyans, we consider children to be a gift from God and the future of our church. During their tender formative years, it is very important that we make a concerted and educated effort to safeguard children in our care and supervision from harms all too present in the world today. We acknowledge that child abuse is not an isolated event; the repercussions of abuse reach families and the wider community as well.

The General Church is committed to do all that it can to keep children safe and asks each district and local church to do likewise. Becoming educated about child abuse, instituting procedures to prevent incidents of abuse, and knowing what to do if abuse is suspected is the core of these Guidelines. Adoption of Guidelines for Child Protection (“Guidelines”) by all organizations whose work includes children such as local churches, camps, daycare centers and schools is strongly advised.

The General Church recognizes and respects the autonomy of the districts, local churches and other Wesleyan entities. Nonetheless, the faith, actions and concerns of the local churches are intrinsically intertwined with the districts and General Church especially regarding any local occurrence that results in harm to a child.

It is the position of The Wesleyan Church that its districts and local churches remain attentive to the safeguards necessary to protect those most vulnerable in our services and programs. As such, the General Board of Administration has approved these comprehensive Guidelines for Child Protection in template form.

The national church strongly recommends but does not require each local church to adopt these Guidelines.

It is our hope that by providing these Guidelines in template form, sample forms, child protection training resources and sources for background checks, the tasks associated with adoption of such guidelines will be lighter for the adopting local churches and Wesleyan entities. We recommend districts and local churches use some form of the provided template to develop policy for each specific district and local church, where adherence to the requirements of such policies will be conditions upon which Workers’ (as defined therein) participation in the districts’ and churches’

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ministries will be required. The template has, accordingly, been designed to be specific in its guidance at the local level while allowing for flexibility given the differing circumstances and makeup of each congregation and Wesleyan entity.

Note: Each jurisdiction has its own child protection laws. These laws and a local attorney should be consulted to ensure that any guidelines adopted by a local church comply with all applicable local, state, U.S. federal, or Canadian laws.

Janelle Vernon
General Secretary

TEMPLATE
CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES
OF Click or tap here to enter Church/District.

Last Revised: Click or tap to enter a date.

I. Purpose – The Click or tap here to enter church or affiliate name here (hereinafter, the “Church”) has a sacred desire to keep our children and youth safe from harm. These Child Protection Policies (“Policies”) aim to prevent child abuse and neglect, as well as unfounded allegations against workers and leaders in order to promote a greater sense of confidence, safety and peace in the Church to facilitate its worship and work. We are aware that abusers exist in all kinds of situations, and we recognize the importance of balancing our urge to welcome with the need to protect.

Although the Church is concerned when any form of child abuse takes place anywhere, the specific focus of these Policies is to make effort to ensure that abuse does not occur within the framework of this Church, its programs or ministry activities. These Policies are intended to ensure the Church is a truly safe and caring place in all of its settings.

This Policy is intended to govern the conduct of all Church Workers. “Workers” as defined herein includes all individuals, whether paid employees or volunteers, and whether full or part time, who are or will be engaged in providing the Church’s services to minors regardless of location.

II. Standards of Conduct – The Church endeavors to provide a safe environment for all children entrusted into its care during worship services, during involvement in any church ministry and any church sponsored event.

A. Prohibited Conduct: As defined in this Policy, Worker conduct toward minors that is prohibited includes¹:

- **Child Abuse** - The injury of a minor by another person, which might not be intentional, but is not accidental. It is usually classified as physical abuse, emotional abuse, or sexual abuse.
- **Physical Abuse** - The actual or potential physical harm perpetuated against a child. Physically abusive behavior includes, but is not limited to, shoving, hitting, slapping,

¹ Note: Each jurisdiction has laws specific to its jurisdiction regarding child abuse which define the terms in those laws. The definitions above are general only – not jurisdictions specific. Be aware that some jurisdictions limit the definition of child abuse to actions of abuse or neglect to only those adults who have legal guardianship over the abused minor. In these jurisdictions, abuse of children by others will be governed by other criminal statutes. Please seek the appropriate legal guidance for laws in your jurisdiction.

shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, drowning, strangling and poisoning.

- **Grooming** - Refers to behavior by an offender towards a minor over time that makes it easier for an offender to procure a child for sexual activities. For example, an offender might build a relationship of trust with the child, then seek to sexualize that relationship (an example is encouraging romantic feelings, or exposing the child to sexual concepts through pornography).
- **Online Grooming** - The act of sending an electronic message to a child, with the intention of procuring the recipient to engage in or submit to sexual activity with another person, including, but not necessarily, the sender; or of sending an electronic message with indecent content to a recipient whom the sender believes to be a child.
- **Child Pornography or Child Abuse Images** - In accordance with the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 'child pornography' means 'any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes.' The latest trend, online sexual exploitation of children, is the use of online video streaming to distribute child pornography, often real-time sexual acts.
- **Spiritual Abuse** - The actions by a spiritual leader or system that try to control, manipulate or dominate a child. This control is often in the form of fear. Spiritual abuse also includes misidentification of demonic or witchcraft influences.
- **Exploitation (commercial and/or sexual)** - This may include one or more of the following:
 - committing or coercing another person to commit abuse against a child
 - possessing, controlling, producing, distributing, obtaining or transmitting child exploitation material
 - committing or coercing another person to commit an act or acts of grooming or online grooming
 - using a minor for profit, labor, sexual gratification, or some other personal or financial advantage
 - treating a child in a certain way for the benefit of others and to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development
- **Ill-treatment** - Disciplining or correcting a child in an unreasonable and seriously inappropriate or improper manner; making excessive and/or degrading demands of a child; hostile use of force towards a child; and/or a pattern of hostile or unreasonable and seriously inappropriate degrading comments or behavior towards a child.

- **Child Neglect** – Any act of neglect that results in an unreasonable risk being posed to a child’s health or welfare by an adult who is responsible for the child’s health and welfare. Also, the failure to act in a manner that would prevent or eliminate that risk by a responsible adult who has (or should have) knowledge of that risk*.
- **Sexual Abuse** - Any behavior by an adult that uses a child for sexual stimulation or gratification, whether it involves actual touching or not, and regardless of consent or apparent consent. Examples of Sexual Abuse include, but are not limited to the following:
 - Any conduct that would amount to a sex offense toward a minor person under state, U.S. federal, or Canadian criminal codes, including but not limited to: sexual interference, invitation to sexual touching, sexual exploitation of a minor, exposure, vagrancy, sexual assault, indecent acts, incest and aggravated sexual assault.
 - Any sexual relationship by a Worker with a minor.
 - Any Worker activity directed toward establishing a sexual relationship with a minor, such as sending intimate letters; engaging in sexualized dialogue in person, via the Internet, in writing or by phone; making suggestive comments.
- **Sexual Harassment** – Any sexualized behavior by a Worker that uses or seeks to use the Worker’s position as a leader, counselor, minister, or older member to create an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment for a minor.

Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to the following:

- Unwanted sexual advances.
- Offering favoritism in the Church’s programs or otherwise in exchange for sexual favors.
- Making or threatening reprisals after a negative response to sexual advances.
- Visual conduct: leering, making sexual gestures, displaying suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, or posters.
- Verbal conduct: making or using derogatory comments, epithets, slurs and jokes.
- Verbal sexual advances or propositions.
- Verbal abuse of a sexual nature, graphic verbal commentaries about an individual's body, sexually degrading words used to describe an individual, suggestive or obscene letters, notes or invitations.
- Physical conduct: touching, assault, impeding or blocking movements.

B. Examples of Prohibited Conduct: The following list of conduct is not exhaustive but contains examples of prohibited conduct by Workers directed at minors, which may or may not constitute Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, but which are impermissible, nonetheless.

- Kissing

- Demanding hugs
- Inappropriate touching genital region, upper legs, buttocks, chests, whether through clothing or otherwise
- Unwanted, reluctant or forced touching
- “Piggyback” rides
- Overly rough physical games, including horseplay, which put a minor’s physical or emotional well-being at risk
- Allowing minors to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Making sexually suggestive comments about, or to, a minor, including social media
- Ridiculing or rejecting a minor, bullying
- Inappropriate invading of privacy when a minor is using the bathroom
- Making sexually descriptive, sexually explicit or sexually suggestive comments about, or to, a minor, including but not limited to through verbal communications, emails, texts, phone calls, or social media
- Engaging in grooming behaviors or other attempts to sexualize relationships
- Changing diapers when not in the presence of another approved Worker
- Grabbing a minor by any part of their body with sufficient force to risk physical harm
- Spinning a minor by their limbs
- Tossing a minor
- Seating a minor on a high surface

C. Prohibited Disciplinary Actions: Workers shall not administer corporal punishment, even if parents or guardians have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the pastor or pastor’s designee if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

D. Desired Conduct: As a preventative measure, all church workers are required to follow the procedures adopted by the Church. The following best practices are suggested:

1. **Two-Adult Rule:** In ministry with minors, especially involving infants and pre-school aged children, there should always be a minimum of two approved Workers, who are unrelated by blood or marriage to each other, in the immediate area. It is advisable to have a ministry supervisor or leader conduct periodic checks of approved workers as they supervise children. Groups larger than 10 young children should have additional supervision, depending upon the age of the children and the activity.

Minor Age	Adult-to-Minor Ratio
0 - 18 months	1:3
18 months - 5 years old	1:5
6 years - 11 years	1:8
12 years - 17 years	1:10

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However, for children who are older, but still under the age of 18, the following exceptions are acceptable:

- a. Sunday School classes for kindergarten through high school students may have the presence of only one approved teacher if the following measures have been taken:
 - i. The door is left open or there is a window in the door that allows unobstructed visibility into the classroom; and/or
 - ii. The classrooms are periodically monitored by another approved adult worker.
 - iii. One approved adult teacher may lead elementary, middle school and high school Sunday School/ Bible classes if two or more teenage students are present.
 - iv. Under no circumstances will it ever be acceptable for a teen helper to be alone with a class of children.
2. **One-on-One Meetings**: The nature of much ministry, especially youth ministry, is that it often takes place spontaneously. Nonetheless, one-on-one meetings between an adult church worker and an individual minor must be conducted in an area that provides visibility to other adults and be conducted at a time when other adults are normally present in that vicinity.
3. **Restroom Use**: When taking children to the restroom, one Worker may escort the children, but the Worker should be visible at all times by another Worker in doing so. Minors should be provided as much privacy as possible when using restrooms.
4. **Electronic Communications**: Workers should communicate with minors electronically only on a group list basis. Workers should not communicate electronically with a minor on a one-to-one basis such as through email, texting, chat rooms, or other social media while serving in the Worker capacity on behalf of the Church.

III. Preventative Measures and Hiring/Volunteering Requirements

- A. **Initial Screening Requirements** require all workers (“Workers”), whether paid employees or volunteers, and whether full or part time, who are or will be engaged in providing the Church’s services to minors, whether in the Church or among the general public, to adhere to the following screening requirements as a condition of such service in the Church:
 - Complete an application (See sample attached as ***Appendix F***) and interview (See sample questions and form attached as ***Appendix G***);

- A personal interview will be included as part of the selection process for each Worker;
- Criminal background checks shall be completed for all adult Worker applicants. Information pertaining to such criminal background checks is set forth below in Section B of these Policies;
- The Church shall check any and all applications against [Click or tap here to enter jurisdiction.](#) and U.S. federal or Canadian sex offender internet registries. Any Worker applicants found to be on such a list shall not be allowed to serve in ministries involving minors.
- The Church should be mindful of requirements pertaining to background checks under the Fair Credit Reporting Act. [*Appendix H*].
- A further check of the personal references may be made to determine the suitability and character of the applicant. The references check shall be documented by completing the Reference Check Interview Notes [*Appendix A*].
- Participate in required child protection training (see Section IIIB);
- Sign the Worker's Covenant (*Appendix C*) after reviewing the Child Protection Policies of [Click or tap here to enter name of Church/District.](#)
- Approved Workers must have a demonstrated commitment to and regular involvement of at least six months with the Church. Exceptions to this policy are strongly discouraged and must receive the approval of [Click or tap here to enter title of supervisor.](#) If such approval is given, it shall be documented on the application, by stating the reason for the exception along with the signatures of the Board of Administration/Trustees [directors, other appropriate governing body].
- All written application forms, signed consents and background check reports shall be securely stored, with access available only to authorized personnel, in order to duly protect confidentiality.
- Periodically, additional background checks may be performed by the Church. Workers may also be required to participate in additional training classes or events, as a condition of continued service.

Note: It is the policy of the Church that anyone convicted of child neglect or child abuse (physical or sexual) or any sex-based crime MAY NOT serve in any position involving minors in the Church or on behalf of the Church to minor members of the general public.

B. Criminal Background Check: A new criminal background check must be completed and a favorable report received **prior to** any Worker beginning work/ministry in any capacity with minors in the Church. This check shall include both a State and National (U.S. federal or Canadian) criminal background check. See *Appendix H* for background check related requirements.

Background checks are generally requested by and processed through the Church. Background results will be sent to the Church. If the Church uses an outside agency to obtain the checks, the results may be sent to the Church and that agency. Workers may ask the Church to provide a copy of the background check results. See *Appendix A*.

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C. Mandatory Training: All Workers and all local church employees and leadership are required to complete the requisite training components which are designed to instruct the participants of the:

- Church's policies for the prevention of child abuse.
- The Church's established procedures to be used in all ministries with children.
- Signs and indicators of possible child abuse.
- Required steps to report an alleged or actual incident of child abuse.
- Law of applicable jurisdiction regarding child abuse specific to where entity is located.

At the completion of the training, participants must sign a Worker's Covenant (*Appendix C*) signifying that they have completed the required training, are knowledgeable about the Church's policies and procedures that must be followed for the prevention of child abuse, and understand when and how to report on suspected child abuse.

Workers who do not participate in required training will be required to make up the missed training prior to being permitted to participate as a Worker.

D. Ongoing Requirements for All Who Work with Children:

- Participate in all required training sessions on child protection;
- Be aware and vigilant when working with children;
- Fulfill Procedures for Reporting Child Abuse (Section IV).

E. Ongoing Responsibilities of Church Leadership:

- Ensure all who work with children in the Church have obtained a favorable background check;
- Ensure all who work with children in the Church have received child protection training required by the Church;
- Ensure all who work with children in the Church are knowledgeable about the Church's policies;
- Conduct periodic review of these policies and update as needed;
- Require periodic background check updates. Every 2 -3 years is advised.
- Report incidents that may lead to claims to Church's insurer.
- Ensure written application forms, signed consents and background check reports are securely stored, with access available only to authorized personnel, in order to duly protect confidentiality.

IV. Procedures for Reporting Child Abuse²

1. What Must Be Reported? Suspicion of or secondary report by another of inappropriate, abusive or neglectful conduct of a child by a fellow worker or by any outside individual, should be immediately reported. Generally, the confidential report (*Appendix D*) should contain the following information: (1) The name of the Reporter. (2) the names and addresses of the child and his or her parents or other person responsible for his or her care; (3) the age of the child; (4) the gender of the child; (5) the nature and extent of the child's injury or injuries, maltreatment or neglect; (6) the approximate date and time the injury or injuries, maltreatment or neglect occurred; (7) information concerning any previous injury or injuries to, or maltreatment or neglect of, the child or his or her siblings; (8) the circumstances in which the injury or injuries, maltreatment or neglect came to be known to the reporter; (9) the name of the person or persons suspected to be responsible for causing such injury or injuries, maltreatment or neglect; (10) the reasons such person or persons are suspected of causing such injury or injuries, maltreatment or neglect; (11) any information concerning any prior cases in which such person or persons have been suspected of causing an injury, maltreatment or neglect of a child; and (12) whatever action, if any, was taken to treat, provide shelter or otherwise assist the child. This information should be reported to the extent known. **Note however, that the Worker should not carry out any investigation to obtain the above-listed information except to the extent that such information is readily available without consulting the abused or neglected child.**

2. Report to Whom? Report internally to [Click or tap here to enter name of supervisor](#) for reporting purposes. (*hereinafter "Supervisor"*) **and** local authorities as required by law, usually police or child welfare agency. If Supervisor is unavailable or the allegation involves the Supervisor or Supervisor's family member, the allegation or suspicion should be reported to [Click or tap here to enter name of alternate supervisor](#).. It is the responsibility of the Supervisor to handle the matter in a manner consistent with these Policies and all applicable laws. In most circumstances and jurisdictions, **it is the reporter's duty, not the Supervisor's duty, to make the report to the civil authority.**

3. Who Must/Should Report? Under some jurisdiction's laws, certain individuals have a legal duty to report suspected abuse or neglect of a minor. These individuals, often referred to as Mandatory Reporters, may include medical professionals, educators, and human services workers. Some jurisdictions include clergy in this list. A few jurisdictions now require any adult suspecting child abuse to report. If you are a mandatory reporter in your jurisdiction, you should be aware of your reporting responsibilities and must follow those mandatory reporting requirements in your work as well as church ministry. Under the laws of many jurisdictions, a minister, clergy member, or priest of an established church of any denomination *may enjoy a statutory privilege of an exemption from testifying on a disclosure made within spiritual counseling.* However, in some jurisdictions this privilege

² These requirements will vary by jurisdiction. Consult legal counsel to determine your jurisdiction's specific requirements.

is withheld if the disclosure concerns child abuse. Additionally, while the privilege attaches to testimony, it is not likely applicable to making a report. Consult your jurisdictions' laws for specifics.

All suspicions of Prohibited Conduct, as defined in Section IIA of these Policies, shall be reported consistent with local laws.

4. How to Report to the Supervisor? Notify Supervisor verbally, in person or by phone. This should be done in a place which allows both the reporter and the Supervisor to speak confidentially.

5. How to Report to the Appropriate Civil Authority? Call the number provided in Appendix E for the appropriate civil authority in your jurisdiction.

6. When to Report? Make your report immediately or as soon as possible after learning of an alleged incident or you develop a suspicion that abuse and/or neglect has occurred.

7. What Happens When a Report Is Made? After a report is received by the agency or police, a reporter is usually also required in most jurisdictions to follow up with a written report within 24 – 48 hours. See **Appendix D**; however, some jurisdictions provide a specific form that must be used. The agency you contact will provide you with instructions regarding when, where and how to submit the written report. An investigation into the allegation will be initiated by the appropriate civil authorities. Most jurisdictions allow the reporter to remain anonymous. Note that the civil authorities have no duty to share information garnered during their investigation with the reporter or the church or entity. Notwithstanding, it would be wise at the start of this process to learn the contact information for the person in charge of the investigation should further contact become necessary.

8. The Role of the Church's Attorney.

The Church should have on retainer an attorney or a law firm with experience in the areas of Church law, child protection and mandatory reporting, and who regularly assists churches in addressing these areas of law. Churches seeking assistance in identifying a qualified attorney should consult their district superintendent or the Office of the General Secretary. The Church should notify and involve the Church's attorney from the time the Church receives knowledge of an incident that may require reporting to ensure that the Church complies with all its legal obligations.

9. What Steps Will the Supervisor Take?

- a. Noting that all allegations shall be taken seriously and reported pursuant to applicable jurisdictional law, regardless of how much time has passed since the alleged Prohibited Conduct [section IIA] occurred, the following steps must be

immediately implemented by the Supervisor upon being advised of Prohibited Conduct suspicions: (*Supervisor should review list in its entirety before acting.*)

- i. Ensure the alleged victim and all other children under the Church's responsibility are safe.
 1. The first priorities are alleged victim care, safety and to help prevent further hurt.
 - a. Do not confront the accused until the safety of the alleged victim is secured.
 2. Temporarily remove the alleged abuser from all contact with children via his/her ministerial positions, if applicable.
 - a. Treat the accused abuser with dignity and confidentiality knowing allegations will undergo investigation and may be unfounded.
- ii. Report the alleged incident to the alleged victim's parent(s) or guardian(s). [*See Appendices D and E*].
 1. Unless expressly instructed by the Church's legal counsel, the Supervisor shall not invite the church reporting Worker to accompany him/her to meet with the child's parent(s) or guardian(s).
- iii. Report the alleged incident to the pastor.
 1. If the pastor is the accused, report the alleged incident to the local board of administration chair.
 2. The pastor or board chair should report the alleged incident to the district superintendent and the Office of the General Secretary.
- iv. Report the alleged incident, subject to counsel of the Church's attorney, to the local authorities as required by law and cooperate fully (as required by law) with the investigation conducted by law enforcement officials or child welfare agency.
 1. Before taking any action beyond what is required by law, consult with the Church's attorney to avoid negatively impacting privacy, employment, health care, liability and other legal issues.
- v. Because every instance of alleged abuse must be recorded and kept in the Church's confidential files for review by the appropriate Church officials and law enforcement agencies as required, ensure a process to handle and retain all incident documentation with the utmost thoroughness and confidentiality. [*See Appendix D*]
 1. Verify that the reporting Worker made the required initial report and written follow-up report to the civil authorities pursuant to that jurisdiction's laws.
 2. Keep detailed and accurate records of all steps taken by the Church in response to the allegations. Retain copies of all reports, correspondence and formal statements.
 3. Remember that reporting is not an investigation.

- a. No attempt should be made by church leaders and congregants at this point to determine the validity of the accusation.
 - b. After a report is made, an investigation should be carried out by professionals who are trained for and have experience with these types of cases.
- 4. Consult with legal counsel as needed, for matters such as mandated reporter obligations, scope and applicability of clergy privilege, safety of the victim and/or accused, communications with other Church members and staff, media relations and other publicity considerations.
 - a. Discuss all planned disclosures and written statements with the Church's attorney in advance of making any statements, issuing anything in writing or releasing church documents.
 - i. discern what is appropriate information to disclose and if, when, how and to what extent to address the whole church community to begin the healing process;
 - ii. assist the pastor in preparing a brief and honest statement that can be made to the congregation. Information shared must not include unnecessary details, place blame, interfere with the victim's privacy, or violate any confidentiality concerns.
 - iii. designate ONE and ONLY ONE spokesperson to make all necessary statements or responses to the news media and/or the public.
- 5. Safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.
- 6. Subject to express permission from the victim and his or her family, notify the victim assistance coordinator / advocate, and the Church's victim care team.
 - ii. Report the incident to Church's insurance carrier. The insurance company may name an attorney to provide additional representation.
 - iii. Meet with the reporter of the incident and leaders of the affected ministry to discern next steps, if any, to begin the healing process of those leaders and youth members of that ministry.
 - 1. Discern the follow-up needs of alleged victim and alleged abuser and their families.
 - iv. If the accused is a Church paid employee or contractor, as a precautionary measure, that person will be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the Church's investigation is completed. The Board President or another designated representative will determine to either maintain or suspend the accused's wages until allegations are cleared or substantiated.
 - a. Whenever any staff - paid or volunteer - is temporarily or permanently suspended, it is advisable to do so in a formal

writing. The writing can follow a conversation, if preferred, but the Church’s attorney should always be consulted before putting anything in writing in a potentially volatile and litigious situation.

APPENDIX LIST

Letter	Topic	Page #
A	Criminal Records & Reference Checks	
B	Sample State Requirements for Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect	
C	Covenant	
D	Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse	
E	Reporting Contacts Information	
F	Sample Worker Application	
G	Sample Screening Interview Questions	
H	Background Check Rules and Resources	

APPENDIX A

CRIMINAL RECORDS & REFERENCE CHECKS

Authorization & Release

Click or tap here to enter church name. requires a criminal records check as well as employer and personal reference checks for those who wish to work with children, in a leadership capacity or as an employee in any capacity.

- I authorize the Church and its affiliates to perform a criminal background check on me.
- I authorize the release of information from my current and former employer(s) as needed in response to reference checks by the Church.
- I understand and authorize the Church to release the results of my criminal background, employment and personal reference checks to appropriate leadership on an as-needed basis.
- I understand and authorize the Church to conduct subsequent periodic criminal background check updates so long as I continue to be involved with youth as a volunteer, leader or an employee, in any capacity.
- I understand that, by law, I have the right to review the results of my criminal records check and to contest those results with the appropriate civil authorities.
- I understand that the results of the criminal background check will be utilized for determining my eligibility to work with children, assume a leadership position or be employed by the Church.
- I understand that it is the Church's policy to disallow anyone with convictions for child abuse, abuse or sexual crimes with any others to work with or near youth.
- I hereby affirm that I have never been convicted of child abuse, abuse or sexual offenses towards anyone.
- I hereby affirm that I have never been accused of being sexually, physically or emotionally abusive of a child.

[Signature on page following]

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By my signature below, I do forever waive and release, and I further agree to hold harmless and indemnify [Click or tap here to enter church name.](#) (“Church”) and its directors, pastors, officers, employees and agents from and against any and all liabilities, costs, claims and related expenses including attorneys’ fees arising from any causes of lawsuits, disputes or other actions related to the Church’s investigation into my background in connection with my application for position as a Church employee, volunteer or leader.

Print Name: _____ Date: _____

Sign Name: _____

Signed in the presence of: _____ (Witness signature)

CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK

Applicant Information

The information below is needed to conduct this records check. Responses to the demographic questions are for background check purposes only and will have no bearing on hiring decisions.

Full Name: Click or tap here to enter last name., Click or tap here to enter first name. Click or tap here to enter middle name. Click or tap here to enter maiden name if applicable.

Gender: Male Female

Race (please select): White.

Date of Birth: Click or tap to enter a date.

Social Security Number: Click or tap here to enter SS#.

Current Address: Click or tap here to enter full address.

Previous Addresses: Click or tap here to enter previous address 1.
Click or tap here to enter previous address 2.
Click or tap here to enter previous address 3.

List Other Names Previously Used By You: Click or tap here to enter other names if applicable.

Have you ever been convicted of a crime? Yes No

Do you have any legal charges pending against you? Yes No

If yes in either case, offer explanations regarding convictions or charges pending:
Click or tap here to enter explanation.

I affirm that the information I have provided above is true and complete.

Signature of Applicant: _____

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Date: _____

[If you engage an outside agency to conduct background checks, it will likely require use of its own forms.]

APPENDIX B

STATE OF MARYLAND [Sample Only] (Substitute with the law of your jurisdiction, as appropriate)

Requirements for Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

CODE OF MARYLAND REGULATIONS, Section 07.02.07 requires reporting child abuse or neglect in the following manner:

1. An individual shall immediately report suspected child abuse or neglect to the local department of social services, or report the suspected incident to a local law enforcement agency.
2. Health practitioners, educators, human service workers, and police officers are required to report, both orally and in writing, any suspected child abuse or neglect, with oral report being made immediately and the written report being made within 48 hours of the contact which disclosed the suspected abuse or neglect.
3. A report shall include:
 - a. The name and home address of the child and the parent or other individual responsible for the care of the child;
 - b. The present location of the child;
 - c. The age of the child;
 - d. The names and ages of other children in the home;
 - e. The nature and extent of injuries or sexual abuse or neglect of the child, including any information known to the individual making the report of previous possible physical or sexual abuse or neglect;
 - f. The information available to the individual reporting:
 - i. Which might aid in establishing the cause of the injury or neglect;
 - ii. About the identity of the individual or individuals responsible for abuse or neglect; and
 - g. If reporting abuse or neglect of a child involving mental injury, a description of the substantial impairment of the child's mental or psychological ability to function that was observed and identified, and why it is believed to be attributable to an act of maltreatment or omission of proper care and attention.
4. Reports of abuse shall be made to the local departments of social services or the appropriate law enforcement agency. Reports of neglect shall be made to local departments of social services.
5. An employee of a local department of social services, who receives a report of suspected child abuse or neglect, shall report the information to the protective services unit within the local department at once so as to initiate prompt handling of the report of suspected child abuse or neglect.

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APPENDIX C

WORKER’S COVENANT

By my signature below, I acknowledge each of the following to be true:

- I have received a copy of [Click or tap here to enter church/district name.](#)'s Policies for Child Protection.
- I have read and understand the contents of these Policies.
- I have participated or will participate in training regarding these Policies.
- I understand that it is the Church’s policy that if I have a reportable suspicion of child abuse, according to the laws of this State, I should immediately do the following:
 - Inform Supervisor of my suspicion; AND
 - Report the suspected abuse to the appropriate civil authority; AND
 - Follow up with a written report to the civil authorities within 24 – 48 hours of the verbal report, as and if required by law; AND
 - Cooperate with Civil Authority investigating this matter; AND
 - Cooperate fully with the Supervisor, as requested.

In exchange for the privilege of serving [Click or tap here to enter church/district.](#) , I agree to comply with all the policies and procedures set forth in [Click or tap here to enter church/district name.](#)'s Policies for Child Protection.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

[This should be collected by Named Supervisor and kept with background check reports.]

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APPENDIX D

REPORT OF SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF CHILD ABUSE

1. Printed name of worker (paid or volunteer) completing this form who observed or received disclosure of child abuse (whose signature is below): Click or tap here to enter name of worker.

2. Victim's name Click or tap here to enter victim name.

Victim's age and date of birth Click or tap here to enter age and DOB.

Victim's gender Click or tap here to enter gender.

Victim's home address Click or tap here to enter address.

Victim's present location Click or tap here to enter victim location.

Names and ages of other children in the home Click or tap here to enter information.

3. Nature and extent of injuries or sexual abuse Click or tap here to enter nature and extent of abuse.

Approximate date and time the injury or injuries, maltreatment or neglect occurred Click or tap here to enter

4. Any information known of previous possible physical or sexual abuse Click or tap here to enter

5. Date/place of initial conversation with/report from victim Click or tap here to enter

6. Victim's statement (give your detailed summary here) Click or tap here to enter summary

7. Name of person accused of abuse Click or tap here to enter name.

Relationship of accused to victim (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other) Click or tap here to enter relationship.

8. Date reported to Named Supervisor Click or tap to enter a date.

Signature of Person Making Report

Date

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[Substitute with form required in your entity's jurisdiction, as appropriate.]

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE NAMED SUPERVISOR

9. Action taken, if any, to treat, provide shelter or otherwise assist the victim: Click or tap here to enter information.

10. Call/Visit victim's parent/guardian

Name(s) of alleged victim's parent(s)/guardian(s): Click or tap here to enter names.

Phone: (Home) Click/tap here (Office) Click/tap here. (Cell) Click/tap here

Date/time of initial contact Click or tap to enter a date. Click or tap here to enter Time.

Spoke with Click or tap here to enter name.

Summary Click or tap here to enter summary.

11a. Call Pastor:

Date/time Click or tap to enter a date. Click or tap here to enter time.

Spoke with Click or tap here to enter name.

Summary Click or tap here to enter Summary.

11b. Call Child Protective Services and/or Police:

Date/time Click or tap to enter a date. Click or tap here to enter time.

Spoke with Click or tap here to enter name.

Summary Click or tap here to enter summary.

12. Call Church Attorney's Office:

Date/time Click or tap to enter a date. Click or tap here to enter time.

Spoke with Click or tap here to enter time.

Summary Click or tap here to enter time.

13. Call Church Insurance Agent (if applicable):

Date/time Click or tap to enter a date. Click or tap here to enter time.

Spoke with Click or tap here to enter time.

Summary Click or tap here to enter time.

**Other Contacts (please indicate) Click or tap here to enter name(s).

Date/time Click or tap to enter a date. Click or tap here to enter time.

Spoke with Click or tap here to enter time.

Summary Click or tap here to enter time.

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APPENDIX E

REPORTING CONTACTS INFORMATION

Supervisor: Click or tap here to enter supervisor.
(Named as internal contact)

Civil Authority to Report to: Click or tap here to enter civil authority.

District Office Contact Info: Click/tap here to enter District Super Name.
District Superintendent Phone: Click/tap here

General Church Office Contact Info: Janelle Vernon
Executive Director
Communications and Administration
317-774-7907

Church's Attorney: Click or tap here to enter text.

Church's Insurance Agent: Click or tap here to enter text.

Date last updated: Click or tap to enter a date.

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APPENDIX F

SAMPLE APPLICATION (To be placed on church/district letterhead)

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Application for Youth and Children's Ministry Workers

Date: _____

General Information

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Best Time to Reach You: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Driver's License: State: _____ Number: _____

Are you a member of the Church? yes no How long have you been attending services? _____

Church program(s) you have participated in: _____

What ministries have you served in? _____

Degree(s) and/or certification(s) you have related to children: _____

_____ CPR or First Aid certified: _____

List experience(s) working with children: _____

Why are you interested in working with children?

Which particular program would you like to work with? _____

References: Please provide two (2) references for individuals you have known for at least one (1) year. Reference forms are attached. Please detach and give to those persons you ask for a reference. It is your responsibility to remind these individuals to return the completed form directly to the church.

Interview: You will be contacted upon completion of your background check to schedule an interview.

Background Check: Every children's worker is required to obtain a criminal background check prior to any involvement in children's ministry. See attached sheet for instructions on how to obtain this.

Church letterhead

REFERENCE FORM

The following individual has applied to [Click or tap here to enter church/district name](#).work in one of our children's programs. Our application process requires each applicant to supply two (2) references. The applicant asks that you complete this Reference Form and return it to the Church within seven (7) days. Thank you!

Applicant's Name: _____ Date: _____

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

How long have you known the applicant?: _____

Please describe the nature of your relationship with applicant: _____

Applicant's strengths: _____

Applicant's needs for growth: _____

Do you have any reservations about the applicant working with children? Yes No

Please explain: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Note: You may be contacted directly by a Church leader as a follow up to your reference.

Please return this completed form directly to: [Click or tap here to church/district name](#), address, attention of.

APPENDIX G

SAMPLE SCREENING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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Youth & Children's Ministry Worker

THE INTERVIEW

General Suggestions:

- ✓ Interview should last 20 - 30 minutes.
- ✓ Form your questions to be open-ended to elicit more than a simple yes or no.
- ✓ Use a one-page interview form which contains the name of the applicant, name and title of interviewer, date, time and place of the interview. [*Sample form follows.*]
- ✓ Take brief notes of the interview, especially anything that bears notice.
- ✓ The interviewer should sign the interview sheet and state on the form whether or not the interview raised any concerns about the applicant that indicates follow up is needed or that the applicant should be disallowed from any ministry with minors.

Sample Questions: (*Choose 4 – 6 applicable questions or edit to meet your needs.*)

- Tell me about your experiences working with children or youth.
- What skills or strengths would you bring into your youth ministry work?
- What attracted you to this Church? What do you like best about this Church?
- Tell me about your best memories as a child participating in a church youth program?
- What are your hobbies? What do you do when you have free time?
- What age children are you most comfortable with? Why?
- Why are you interested in doing children's ministry here?
- How would you handle the following situation(s):
 - A child age 3 takes a toy that another similarly aged child was peacefully playing with?
 - A child age 8 takes a toy that a younger child was playing with?
 - A child age 10 hits another child for no apparent reason?
 - A 14-year-old who is usually gregarious is sullen and withdrawn?
 - On an outing, a 9-year-old acts out several times inappropriately?
 - A parent demands that another child be banned from the nursery for hitting her child?
 - A co-worker is constantly texting rather than being attentive to the children?
- What are your personal and professional goals?
- How do you evaluate your success as a youth ministry worker?
- What do you consider to be the ideal environment for elementary age ministry? Youth ministry?
- Share one personal or spiritual growth area that you have been working on.
- What qualities do you look for in a children's ministry leader?
- Where do you get ideas for your work in children's ministry?
- Describe a successful lesson or concept that you have taught to youth?
- What do you consider to be the three (3) most important characteristics in a youth ministry worker?
- Who is one of your role models? What do you find admirable about this person?
- Name two (2) things that you do to grow in faith.

(Church's name or letterhead here)

Youth & Children's Ministry Worker

INTERVIEW NOTES

Date of Interview: _____ Time/Length of Interview: _____

Applicant Name: _____

Children's ministry position/age applicant is most interested in: _____

Interviewer's Comments:

Interviewer's knowledge of applicant (circle one):

Well acquainted Passing acquaintance Just met today

- Positive Characteristics:

- Areas of Need:

- Concerns:

Based solely on this interview, would you recommend this applicant for children's or youth ministry work? Yes No For what age level or program? _____

Signature of Interviewer

Interviewer's Printed Name

[This should be kept in secure location with applicant's application & background check record.]

APPENDIX H BACKGROUND CHECK RULES AND RESOURCES

I. Background Checks and the FCRA

Churches conducting background checks can run the check themselves or use a third party. However, it is nearly impossible for most churches to gather some kinds of information independently, such as credit history and criminal records. As a practical matter, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's national criminal database (National Crime Information Center) can be accessed only by legally authorized entities. As a result, most churches use third-party providers, also known as a consumer reporting agencies (CRAs), making them subject to Fair Credit Reporting Act.

Specifically, the FCRA applies to the use of third-party service providers to obtain background information on employees and may apply to volunteer placement as well. The FCRA's purpose is to encourage fairness, truthfulness, and confidentiality in obtaining and using background check reports.

In order to comply under FCRA:

1. Before obtaining a background check, the Church must notify the individual (using an easy-to-read document) that the Church may be obtaining the report. See Appendix A.
2. The Church must obtain written consent from the individual before obtaining the consumer report. See Appendix A.
3. The Church must certify to the CRA that the Church will comply with disclosure and "adverse action" requirements of the FCRA and will not use the information provided to violate equal employment opportunity requirements.
4. If the Church is considering an adverse decision pertaining to an employee's or volunteer's employment or involvement, respectively, the Church should:
 - a. Provide a copy of the background check to the prospective employee/volunteer.
 - b. Notify the employee/volunteer that it is considering an adverse decision based on the report.
 - c. Provide the name of the reporting agency and advise the employee/volunteer of their rights to dispute any inaccurate reporting.
5. If the Church determines to take an adverse action, the church should wait a "reasonable time" (at least five days) and provide written notice to the employee/volunteer.

Please note that despite the fairly strict requirements under FCRA, Churches have broad discretion to determine their own qualifications for volunteers and employees engaged in the Church's ministries under the ministerial exception doctrine. **The above requirements are thus primarily procedural and should not impinge on the Church's First Amendment rights.**

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II. Resources for Obtaining Background Checks.

A. Risks of Church-performed checks.

With the increased use of online resources, a vast amount of previously confidential employee/volunteer information is publicly available. While these resources may contain valuable data, a Church's reliance on such data is legally risky. For example, Churches that rely on online or social networking resources have no assurances that what they see is accurate or that it refers to the actual employee/volunteer (instead of someone sharing the same name). A careless online search may result in a Church taking an adverse action against an individual who might have been a perfect fit for the job.

B. Third Party Consumer Reporting Agencies (CRAs).

There are dozens of private companies providing background checks to churches and other ministries. The following private companies provide background checks for churches and have strong reputations among religious organizations:

- a. Protect My Ministry (protectmyministry.com)
- b. Safe Hiring Solutions (safehiringsolutions.com)
- c. C4 Operations (c4operations.com)

In addition to the foregoing, consult with your church's insurance company to see if the company has a preferred CRA provider. The insurance company may be able to provide access to certain negotiated discounts between the insurance company's recommended CRA and the insurance company's customers.