

Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth

**New Wilmington Presbyterian Church
New Wilmington, PA**

Revised April 2015

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the *Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth* is to establish the unwavering commitment of the congregation of the New Wilmington Presbyterian Church to the physical safety, emotional security, and spiritual growth of all. This policy emphasizes appropriateness of conduct in all areas of the church building as well as in all areas of her programs. The concept of sanctuary is to sanctify and edify all of God's children in all ways, in all facilities, and in all programs at all times.

Jesus extended his care in a tender and urgent way to children. Jesus said in Matthew 19:14, "Let the children come to me and forbid them not for such is the kingdom of heaven." Mindful of these words of the Lord, it is with compassion and care that the New Wilmington Presbyterian Church addresses the issue of child abuse.

Parents and guardians desire that their children experience healthy relationships with their peers and with adults. Parents and guardians have good reason to expect that others who care for their children do so in a professional and healthy manner. The New Wilmington Presbyterian Church shares these concerns and wants to ensure that all of its programs and activities for children are conducted in a safe environment.

Whether as employees or volunteers, adults who teach, direct, counsel, or coach children must hold themselves to the standards referred to in this Policy so that trusting relationships work toward growth and maturity of the child in the Christian faith community. This applies to any paid employees and volunteers who are responsible for nurturing and protecting the children entrusted to their care.

The *Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth* of the New Wilmington Presbyterian Church as set forth in these pages has been revised to better comply with both state laws and the church's insurance provider. Required steps are established to prevent child abuse and to respond in those instances when child abuse is discovered or reasonably suspected.

The main safeguards required by this Policy are the screening of personnel; the training of personnel with regard to safe environment practices and awareness of signs of child abuse; and all applicable local, state, and federal laws. All of these safeguards are intended to assist personnel and volunteers in their responsibility to provide children with the greatest care. The New Wilmington Presbyterian Church is committed to the application of these safeguards, including compliance with state regulations.

Everyone in the New Wilmington Presbyterian Church who is involved in the care of children should become familiar with this revised Policy. For those with questions or who need further information, contact the Children's Ministry coordinator at 724-946-3541, ext. 24. It is the prayer of the Session and staff of New Wilmington Presbyterian Church that children and youth experience the sacredness of sanctuary as it is embodied in the employees and volunteers of this church.

1. DEFINITIONS

A. Personnel

- All employees
- Regular volunteers who perform a church/school related service for children/youth on a full or part time basis
- Occasional Volunteers who perform a church/school related service for children/youth in a supervised setting on an irregular basis

B. Child

- A person under the age of eighteen

C. Child Abuse

According to Pennsylvania state law, an abused or neglected child is any child whose parents or other persons responsible for his/her care:

- cause or threaten to cause a non-accidental physical or mental injury,
- neglect or refuse to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, emotional nurturing or health care,
- abandon the child,
- neglect or refuse to provide adequate supervision in relation to a child's age and level of development,
- commit or allow to be committed any sexual act upon a child, including incest, rape, indecent exposure, prostitution or allow a child to be used in any sexually explicit visual material,
- create an imminent risk of serious physical injury, sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child because of any recent act or failure to act.

D. CHILDLINE:

To report suspected child abuse: 1-800-932-0313

II. CODE OF BEHAVIOR

To share in the ministry of Christ is a great privilege as well as a tremendous responsibility. The privilege is the joy of sharing in the mission of Jesus Himself. The responsibility is acting in a way that conforms to the attitude and actions of Christ. As is evident in the Gospels, Jesus had a deep, abiding respect for each human being and never did anything that harmed or misled people in their personal or spiritual life.

The public needs to know that the Church is committed to protecting the children/youth who are entrusted to its care and to ensuring that those offering services are in right relationship with the children/youth receiving services.

There is a challenge in the Scriptures to “live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:1-3).

In this spirit, Personnel:

- will represent the Church in a faithful, authentic and loving way, supporting the teachings, disciplines and tradition of the Christian Church;
- will exhibit the highest Christian ethical standards and personal integrity in their day-to-day work and personal lives;
- will conduct themselves in a professional manner in both church and work environments, avoiding any flagrant or public misconduct;
- will hold one another accountable to conduct and standards appropriate to their respective roles;
- will foster the dignity of each person and be committed to the best interests of others;
- will respect the integrity of all individuals and protect the confidentiality of all information to which they have access;
- will not take advantage of any relationship with a child/youth for their own benefit;
- will not physically, sexually or emotionally abuse anyone;
- will not neglect a child who is in their care.

III. PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE

III A. Screening of Personnel

Employees & Volunteers: prior to working with children/youth in any program, all church employees and volunteers must have

- a signed *Disclosure Statement* (see Appendix A, B) indicating the person has received, read and agrees to conform to the *Policy for the Protection of Children and Youth*.

Examples are, but not limited to, volunteers who teach Sunday School, Confirmation Class, and/or Children’s Church; volunteers who work with youth groups; volunteers who participate in

extended overnight trips with children and youth; Nursery volunteers; any volunteers who have regular, ongoing contact with children and youth.

Regardless of community affiliation and participation in previous background checks, all employees and regular volunteers must comply with the above requirements.

Appropriate supervising personnel should know their volunteers and screen them adequately:

Appropriate supervising personnel are to consider the following areas when hiring employees or seeking volunteers.

- Does the individual have healthy adult relationships?
- Is the individual's behavior with people inappropriate in terms of kinds of touch, content of conversation and suggested activities?
- Does the person have a criminal history? History of substance abuse? Unstable employment record? Pastoral discretion should be utilized in determining how this will affect the person's fitness to work with children.
- Does the person have good references from employers, friends, and previous organizations?

Documentation for all compliance issues related to screening will be maintained by supervising personnel in a secure, locked file in the church, school, agency or institution. Records should be kept alphabetically so documentation on a particular individual can be located in an efficient manner if necessary. These records must be kept indefinitely.

It is prohibited to hire a person or place a volunteer in a position working with children or youth who is a perpetrator of a founded case of child abuse or is listed in the central register.

III B. Training of Personnel, Parental Notification

1. Personnel

All employees are required to complete the training course provided at www.reportabusepa.edu. Documentation that this program has been completed will be maintained by supervising personnel in a secure, locked file. Records should be kept alphabetically so documentation on a particular individual can be located in an efficient manner if necessary. These records must be kept indefinitely. This training course is recommended for all volunteers.

2. Parental Notification

Information regarding child abuse and safe environment will be provided to parents and guardians annually. Consent must be obtained from the parent of guardian for children to participate in an off-site organized program or activity sponsored by New Wilmington

Presbyterian Church. Such permission must include instructions for emergency care should that become necessary.

III C. Guidelines for Working with Children and Youth

1. At least two screened adults must be present for any activity or program sponsored by New Wilmington Presbyterian Church. Alternately, at least three individuals (one screened adult and remaining two no younger than 5 years of age) must be present at every function and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area during all activities involving children or youth. Care should always be taken to ensure an appropriate ratio of adults to young people.
2. Consent must be obtained from the parent or guardian for children to participate in an off-site organized program or activity sponsored by New Wilmington Presbyterian Church. Such permission must include instructions for emergency care should that become necessary.
3. There must be at least two adults accompanying children/youth on any overnight trips. Care should always be taken to ensure an appropriate ratio of adults to young people. If both male and female youth are present, male and female adult leadership is required. Care needs to be taken that there is a safe environment provided for sleeping, showering, bathing, dressing and all other aspects of being away for a period of time. Adults must always respect the privacy of youth. Adults must likewise respect their own privacy.
4. When staying in a hotel-style room or camping, it is never appropriate for an adult, other than a parent or legal guardian, to share a bed or room alone with a young person.
5. Persons transporting children to or from events must be known to the leader of the event. The driver must be at least 21 years old. Background checks are required; and, the driver must have
 - a valid state driver's license, qualified for the vehicle being operated
 - have no record of convictions for the past five years for DUI, driving with a suspended or revoked license or reckless endangerment
 - have proof of insurance
6. Adults other than a parent or legal guardian transporting their own child should never transport one child alone. An exception would be when the safety of the child would be compromised; for example, leaving the child with no ride home after attempts had been made to reach the parents/legal guardian.
7. During the time adults are responsible for the oversight/chaperoning of youth during day activities or overnight trips, they are never permitted to provide for youth or use themselves alcohol and/or cigarettes, illegal drugs, weapons, audiovisual material, music, or other printed materials unsuitable for youth.

8. A “buddy system” of a young person with another young person on trips is recommended as a good safety system.

9. Employees or volunteers are never to give gifts to individual children without the prior knowledge of the parents. Since gift giving can be a form of buying loyalty or silence, it should be done on a group basis or for special occasions only.

10. Adult supervisors and others must show discretion before touching another person; often physical touch can be misinterpreted. Age, gender, race, ethnic background, emotional condition, prior experience and present life situations all affect how touching is received and interpreted. Physical contact with youth should occur only when appropriate and should never occur in private.

IV. COUNSELING AND SPIRITUAL DIRECTION OF CHILDREN/YOUTH

- A. Counselors who are licensed professionals and spiritual directors who hold recognized credentials bear full responsibility for establishing and maintaining clear and appropriate boundaries in accord with their professional standards.
- B. With the exception of those mentioned in statement A above, all others providing counseling or spiritual direction and meeting alone with children/youth should utilize the following precautions: the door to the meeting room must be left open and/or allow for visibility from the outside barring emergencies, another adult must be informed of the meeting and be nearby
- C. Counseling and spiritual direction of children/youth should be done in an appropriate setting and at an appropriate time. Private living quarters are never a suitable place for counseling or spiritual direction.

V. RESPONSE TO CHILD ABUSE

A. Persons Who Must Report Abuse

According to state law, the mandate to report child abuse is imposed on any individual who comes into contact with children in the course of his or her work or professional practice. Voluntary personnel who perform services for New Wilmington Presbyterian Church should also consider themselves to be mandated reporters if they come into contact with children during the course of their volunteer work.

These mandates are criminally enforceable under Pennsylvania law. Legal immunity is granted to any individual who, in good faith, makes a report of suspected child abuse, even if he/she was not under a legal obligation to do so.

B. Incidents to be Reported

Alleged past or present physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect of a child will be reported, regardless of where the incident occurred. Child abuse disclosed directly to a mandated reporter

must be reported to the proper authorities. In addition, second-hand reports of abuse that are received by a mandated reporter must also be reported to the proper authorities if they afford the mandated reporter “reasonable cause to suspect” that child abuse has occurred.

The mandate to report applies to all child abuse, not just abuse that has been perpetrated by church personnel. Possible abusers could include for example, parents, relatives, older siblings, neighbors, youth group or sports leaders, family friends and other children. It is recommended that any doubt concerning the application or interpretation of these provisions should be resolved in favor of reporting. The civil authorities will determine the particulars and take appropriate action.

C. Other Persons Who Can Report Abuse

Any person may make a report of child abuse. The report is made when the person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is abused. Only suspicion, not proof, is needed.

D. General Procedures for Reporting

A mandated reporter is obligated to immediately notify the person in charge when abuse is suspected or has been disclosed so that the immediate process of reporting can be supported. A failure to report is a serious matter.

All reports of child abuse are to be made immediately to the 24-hour Child Abuse Hot Line (CHILDLINE). The toll free number is 1-800-932-0313. In the event of likely imminent danger, contact local police. A written report is to be made within 48 hours and sent to the Child Protective Services agency in the county in which the abuse occurred.

In addition to these General Procedures, please refer to the Specific Reporting Procedures that follow.

E. Specific Procedures for Reporting

Employees and volunteers are required to follow the general reporting mandates when they suspect that child abuse has occurred.

1. If the abuse is perpetrated by an NWPC employee or volunteer:

- a. Employees and volunteers are required to report to the program supervisor if they suspect that a child has been abused by a fellow employee or volunteer. The supervisor will immediately support that individual in filing an immediate report of the suspected abuse through CHILDLINE and the local county Child Protective Services agency. In addition, the program supervisor must notify the Pastor that a report has been made.
- b. If the suspected perpetrator is the supervisor to whom the report would ordinarily be made, then the employee or volunteer is to bypass the program supervisor and immediately report the suspected abuse to CHILDLINE. In addition, the reporting employee or volunteer must notify the Pastor and/or the Executive Presbyter of the Presbytery of Shenango that a report has been made.

- c. Reports regarding abuse by fellow employees and volunteers are to include:
- The name, age, address and school of the student.
 - The name and address of the student's parent or guardian.
 - The name and address of the school administrator.
 - The name, work and home address of the perpetrator.
 - The nature of the alleged offense.
 - Any specific comments or observations that are directly related to the alleged incident and the individuals involved.

2. If the abuse is perpetrated by a person other than a church employee or volunteer:

- a. Follow general reporting procedures in Section V, 1, a-c above.

VI. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any communication regarding a child abuse case must be limited to the proper reporting authorities until such time as a clear determination of the allegation has been made.

VII. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this policy is to ensure a safe environment for all children who are served by this congregation. By articulating a code of behavior through training and education, guidelines for prevention, recognition of child abuse and through a clear procedural response, New Wilmington Presbyterian Church strives to establish an environment where the spiritual growth of our children can be strengthened and nourished.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT FOR VOLUNTEER COMPLIANCE

Required by the Child Protective Service Law

23 Pa. C.S. Section 6344 (relating to volunteers having contact with children)

I have read and understand the policy of the New Wilmington Presbyterian Church entitled Policy for the Safety and Protection of Children and Youth. I will comply fully with all the requirements specified in this policy including the procurement of background checks and participating in mandated training. My questions (if any) pertaining to the above named policy have been satisfactorily answered.

_____ I swear/affirm that I am seeking a volunteer position and **AM NOT** required to obtain a clearance through the Federal Bureau of Investigation, as:

- the position I am applying for is unpaid; **and**
- I have been a resident of Pennsylvania during the entirety of the previous ten-year period.

_____ I swear/affirm that I am seeking a volunteer position, as the position I am applying for is unpaid. I have **NOT** been a resident of Pennsylvania during the entirety of the previous ten-year period. Therefore I am required to obtain a clearance through the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

I swear/affirm that I have not been named as a perpetrator of a founded report of child abuse within the past five (5) years as defined by the Child Protective Services Law.

I swear/affirm that I have not been convicted of any of the following crimes under Title 18 of the Pennsylvania consolidated statutes or of offenses similar in nature to those crimes under the laws or former laws of the United States or one of its territories or possessions, another state, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico or a foreign nation, or under a former law of this Commonwealth.

- Chapter 25 (relating to criminal homicide)
- Section 2702 (relating to aggravated assault)
- Section 2709 (relating to stalking)
- Section 2901 (relating to kidnapping)
- Section 2902 (relating to unlawful restraint)
- Section 3121 (relating to rape)
- Section 3122.1 (relating to statutory sexual assault)
- Section 3123 (relating to involuntary deviate sexual intercourse)
- Section 3124.1 (relating to sexual assault)
- Section 3125 (relating to aggravated indecent assault)
- Section 3126 (relating to indecent assault)
- Section 3127 (relating to indecent exposure)
- Section 4302 (relating to incest)
- Section 4303 (relating to concealing death of child)
- Section 4304 (relating to endangering welfare of children)
- Section 4305 (relating to dealing in infant children)
- Section 5902(b) (relating to prostitution and related offenses)

- Section 5903(c) (d) (relating to obscene and other sexual material and performances)
- Section 6301 (relating to corruption of minors)
- Section 6312 (relating to sexual abuse of children), or an equivalent crime under Federal law or the law of another state.

I have not been convicted of a felony offense under Act 64-1972 (relating to the controlled substance, drug device and cosmetic act) committed within the past five years.

I understand that I shall not be approved for service if I am named as a perpetrator of a founded report of child abuse within the past five (5) years or have been convicted of any of the crimes listed above or of offenses similar in nature to those crimes under the laws or former laws of the United States or one of its territories or possessions, another state, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico or a foreign nation, or under a former law of this Commonwealth.

I understand that if I am arrested for or convicted of an offense that would constitute grounds for denying participation in a program, activity or service under the Child Protective Services Law as listed above, or am named as perpetrator in a founded or indicated report, I must provide the administrator or designee with written notice not later than 72 hours after the arrest, conviction or notification that I have been listed as a perpetrator in the Statewide database.

I understand that if the person responsible for employment decisions or the administrator of a program, activity or service has a reasonable belief that I was arrested or convicted for an offense that would constitute grounds for denying participation in a program, activity or service under the Child Protective Services Law, or was named as perpetrator in a founded or indicated report, or I have provided notice as required under this section, the person responsible for employment decisions or administrator of a program, activity or service shall immediately require me to submit current clearances obtained through the Department of Human Services, the Pennsylvania State Police, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, as appropriate. The cost of clearances shall be borne by the employing entity or program, activity or service.

I understand that if I willfully fail to disclose information required above, I commit a misdemeanor of the third degree and shall be subject to discipline up to and including denial of a volunteer position.

I understand that the person responsible for employment decisions or the administrator of a program, activity or service is required to maintain a copy of my clearances.

I hereby swear/affirm that the information as set forth above is true and correct. I understand that false swearing is a misdemeanor pursuant to Section 4903 of the Crimes Code.

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Witness: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT APPLICATION FOR PROVISIONAL EMPLOYMENT
Required by the Child Protective Service Law
23 Pa. C.S. Section 6344 (relating to employees having contact with children)

I have read and understand the policy of the New Wilmington Presbyterian Church entitled Policy for the Safety and Protection of Children and Youth. I will comply fully with all the requirements specified in this policy including the procurement of background checks and participating in mandated training. My questions (if any) pertaining to the above named policy have been satisfactorily answered.

I swear/affirm that I have applied for clearances through ChildLine, the Pennsylvania State Police, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation and am submitting a copy of the appropriate completed request forms to the employer, administrator, supervisor or other person responsible for employment decision.

I swear/affirm that I have not been named as a perpetrator of a founded report of child abuse within the past five (5) years as defined by the Child Protective Services Law.

I swear/affirm that I have not been convicted of any of the following crimes under Title 18 of the Pennsylvania consolidated statutes or equivalent crime under the laws or former laws of the United States or one of its territories or possessions, another state, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico or a foreign nation, or under a former law of this Commonwealth.

- Chapter 25 (relating to criminal homicide)
- Section 2702 (relating to aggravated assault)
- Section 2709 (relating to stalking)
- Section 2901 (relating to kidnapping)
- Section 2902 (relating to unlawful restraint)
- Section 3121 (relating to rape)
- Section 3122.1 (relating to statutory sexual assault)
- Section 3123 (relating to involuntary deviate sexual intercourse)
- Section 3124.1 (relating to sexual assault)
- Section 3125 (relating to aggravated indecent assault)
- Section 3126 (relating to indecent assault)
- Section 3127 (relating to indecent exposure)
- Section 4302 (relating to incest)
- Section 4303 (relating to concealing death of child)
- Section 4304 (relating to endangering welfare of children)
- Section 4305 (relating to dealing in infant children)
- Section 5902(b) (relating to prostitution and related offenses)
- Section 5903(c) (d) (relating to obscene and other sexual material and performances)
- Section 6301 (relating to corruption of minors)
- Section 6312 (relating to sexual abuse of children), or an equivalent crime under
- Federal law or the law of another state.

I have not been convicted of a felony offense under Act 64-1972 (relating to the controlled substance, drug device and cosmetic act) committed within the past five years.

I understand that I must be dismissed from employment if I am named as a perpetrator of a founded report of child abuse within the past five (5) years or have been convicted of any of the crimes listed above. I understand that I am not permitted to work alone with children and must work in the immediate vicinity of a permanent employee during this provisional employment period.

I understand that if I am arrested for or convicted of an offense that would constitute grounds for denying employment or participation in a program, activity or service under the Child Protective Services Law as listed above, or am named as perpetrator in a founded or indicated report, I must provide the administrator or designee with written notice not later than 72 hours after the arrest, conviction or notification that I have been listed as a perpetrator in the Statewide database.

I understand that if the person responsible for employment decisions or the administrator of a program, activity or service has a reasonable belief that I was arrested or convicted for an offense that would constitute grounds for denying employment or participation in a program, activity or service under the Child Protective Services Law, or was named as perpetrator in a founded or indicated report, or I have provided notice as required under this section, the person responsible for employment decisions or administrator of a program, activity or service shall immediately require me to submit current clearances obtained through the Department of Human Services, the Pennsylvania State Police, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The cost of clearances shall be borne by the employing entity or program, activity or service.

I understand that if I willfully fail to disclose information required above, I commit a misdemeanor of the third degree and shall be subject to discipline up to and including termination or denial of employment.

I understand that the person responsible for employment decisions or the administrator of a program, activity or service is required to maintain a copy of my clearances.

I hereby swear/affirm that the information as set forth above is true and correct. I understand that false swearing is a misdemeanor pursuant to Section 4903 of the Crimes Code.

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Witness: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____