

The Need for Child Protection

Child abuse strikes children of every age and social background. Statistics indicate that in 95% of the cases abuse occurs in settings where children or youth completely trust adults—in homes, schools, athletic programs, and most sadly, the Church. Our baptismal vows obligate us to reduce the risk of child abuse ever occurring in our ministries. In order to protect and safeguard the children, youth, volunteers, and staff, we have taken positive steps to provide a safer environment.

What Does This Mean To You?

Child Protection policies are a normal part of our school systems. Teachers in local school districts, as well as volunteers in organizations serving children, are screened prior to working with children. WCPC is initiating a similar program to reduce the risk of child abuse.

All staff members and volunteers (18 years and older) who wish to minister to our children and youth on a regular basis, must complete the following requirements:

- WCPC membership
- Complete an Information form.
- Agree to a confidential criminal background check.
- Agree to adhere to the conduct required in WCPC's Child Protection policy.
- Driver's requirements: A DWI/DUI conviction or a traffic violation involving reckless behavior within the last (3) three years will disqualify an individual from driving minors on church activities.

Confidentiality

All screening will remain confidential. Only one staff member will see your criminal history check except for occasions when one other program staff may be consulted. We are only looking for crimes against children; other incidents in your past will not prevent your participation. All records will be secured in locking files. Drivers will have driving records checked.

Training

All volunteers working with children and youth will be offered training to recognize possible signs of child abuse and how to report potential abuse.

Everyone's Responsibility

In a church, protecting children is everyone's responsibility. Please remember that the purpose of these policies is the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of our children.

In addition, this process will protect our volunteers from false accusations and reduce the church's liability both financially and emotionally. This small sacrifice of personal privacy is a priceless gift to our children and your church community.

Commonly Asked Questions

Question: Why did we initiate this program when the risk seems so small? Has something happened?

Answer: No; There have been no incident. We simply have both a moral and a legal obligation to the children and youth of our community that we must uphold, regardless of the risk involved. We want any potential abusers to know that WCPC will not grant them easy access to our children.

Question: What if we don't have enough volunteers to serve our children and youth as a result of implementing this program?

Answer: Some people may refuse to answer a call to service, but we are not willing to consider the alternative of not screening our volunteers and exposing our children to a higher potential of abuse.

Question: Isn't this program a violation of our implicit trust in one another?

Answer: Our trust level should rise as a result of our caring for our children enough to implement a program of this kind. It declares the level of our commitment to the nurture of our children.

Question: Are clergy and staff in the program?

Answer: Background screening checks will be performed on all clergy and staff, including additional reference checks.

Who Else Has Such a Program?

Many churches have instituted child protection programs such as the one at The Woodlands Community Presbyterian Church (WCPC). Presbytery of the New Covenant, of which WCPC is a member, developed guidelines for its churches to use in establishing their own programs. Our policies and procedures are based on the Presbytery of the New Covenant guidelines, with the inclusion of recommendations from the Presbyterian Child Advocacy Network. Much of the format was adapted from similar policies at Preston Hollow Presbyterian Church in Dallas and Webster Presbyterian Church in Webster.

For More Information

Contact any member of WCPC's Child Protection Policy Task Force for more information:

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Child Protection Everyone's Responsibility

*"All your children shall be taught of the
Lord, and great shall be the peace of your
children."
Isaiah 54:13*

Spiritual peace is always in jeopardy when children suffer abuse.

Abuse is a spiritual matter:

It shatters the trust

which is the foundation of faith.

For the faith of our children,

the peace of their parents,

the protection of our teachers,

and the confidence of the community,

we declare The Woodlands Community
Presbyterian Church's

commitment to the protection

of the children and youth in our care.

Child Protection Policy Task Force

The Woodlands Community

Presbyterian Church

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