Child Protection Policies & Protocols
Covenant Presbyterian Church
Landen, Wyoming
Approved by Session: May 2, 2016

I. PURPOSE
There are numerous occasions in the ministry of Covenant Presbyterian Church (CPC) when minor children of church members and visitors are under the supervision and care of church employees or volunteers other than their parents, either on church property or at church-sponsored functions. The purpose of this Policy is to establish and maintain a Program that maximizes the safety and protection of these children that God has entrusted to our care and that minimizes the potential for their abuse. It is also a purpose to have a system in place to expeditiously evaluate and, when appropriate, report allegations of child abuse.

II. PROGRAM ELEMENTS
Appropriate procedures and protocols shall be developed, approved, and implemented to address the following Program elements:

A. Screening of Applicants.
Procedures shall be developed to screen all CPC employees and volunteers (hereinafter “workers”) who will have contact with minor children.

B. Training of Workers.
Appropriate materials and methods shall be selected to train workers on proper interaction with children, on avoidance of situations conducive to allegations of abuse, on appropriate forms of discipline, and on recognition of signs of abuse and the procedure for reporting thereof. All workers shall receive copies of this Policy and of any procedures and protocols relevant to their role.

C. Operation of the Program.
Appropriate administrative procedures and protocols shall be defined that maximize the safety and security of the minor children when entrusted to workers and minimize the potential for negligent supervision.

D. Response and Reporting.
A Response Team (RT) shall be appointed with established protocols to evaluate as expeditiously as possible any allegation of child abuse, to report such alleged abuse to the proper authorities where reasonable suspicion is found, the CPC insurance carrier, and the CPC attorney when appropriate, to recommend initial actions to Session regarding an alleged perpetration, and to deal with external requests for information.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES
A. The Session of CPC is responsible for
   • Approving, administering, and altering this Policy.
   • Appointing Session appropriate individuals or committees selected from members of CPC to develop procedures and protocols to implement Policy. Final approval of all procedures and protocols rests with Session.
   • Monitoring the implementation of existing procedures and protocols to assure that they are effectively carried out.
   • Allocating financial resources needed to implement and maintain Policy.
• Appointment a spokesperson for external requests for information.

B. Individuals and committees appointed by Session are responsible for:
• Developing and implementing procedures and protocols related to Policy and obtaining Session approval thereof.
• Providing status reports to Session as requested.
• Referring to Session any requests for financial resources that they deem necessary for effective implementation.

C. CPC workers who have contact with minor children are responsible for:
• Completing the defined screening process.
• Completing the defined worker training.
• Complying with all approved procedures and protocols that are relevant to their roles.

IV. POLICY CHANGES
This approved Policy can be amended and/or altered by majority vote of the Session at two successive Session Meetings. Approved by Session on May 2, 2016. Revised by Session on ________________

Child Protection Protocols

I. Protocols Concerning Receiving Applications
No volunteer shall work with minor children until he or she has been a member of Covenant Presbyterian Church for six months. Exceptions to this rule require a vote of Session.

All current and prospective employees and volunteers of Covenant Presbyterian Church shall fill out written applications approved by the Screening Team, including permissions to check references and conduct background checks.

All new employees and volunteers working with minors shall have at least two references, preferably of an institutional nature (i.e. former employers or other organizations such as a church at which the individual has volunteered). The person or persons conducting the reference check shall date and sign the prospective Volunteer / Employee’s application form and list the name, position, and telephone number of the person contacted, and note any comments made by the reference. In order to qualify as a proper reference, the person serving as a reference also must have known the individual for at least six months.

II. Protocols Concerning Screening Applicants
Failure to either complete or be truthful on the application and permissions to check references and conduct background checks shall be grounds for dismissal or declining to appoint.

A national background check shall be initiated by the Screening Team of all current and prospective employees and volunteers of Covenant Presbyterian Church. Arrest or conviction for a crime of either a violent or sexual nature by a current or prospective employee or volunteer shall be grounds for dismissal or declining to appoint. Written permission (witnessed by another adult) to conduct a background check will be attained by CPC from the applicant [if background check is submitted by CPC].

III. Protocols Concerning Retaining Records
All applications and screening materials shall be held by the Screening Team in a secure and confidential location.
1. A locked file cabinet will be used for employment applications and other confidential papers regarding volunteers and employees.

2. Background Checks are stored online in the CPC “Protect My Ministry” account. This online account is accessible only by password. This password shall be provided to the Administrative Assistant and Session member assigned to Response Team. Session members may have access when reviewing an applicant for employment or volunteer position.

3. Any electronic or hard copies under CPCs control will be destroyed when no longer needed.

IV. Protocols Concerning Training

All employees and volunteers shall receive training required by CPC. Training materials provided by Christian Ministry Resources and/or Christianity Today will be used for training employees and volunteers. New workers are required to view and discuss *Reducing the Risk* (all relevant sections) prior to start ministry. All workers are required to view and discuss this video once per year. CPC will provide two monitored viewings per year.

Girls aged 11 to 17 who assist an approved minister, employee, or volunteer in their work in the Nursery are encouraged to complete a recognized baby-sitting course. 15 to 17 year old *primary* child care volunteers shall be required to complete a recognized baby-sitting course.

V. Protocols Concerning Operating Standards

When minor children are placed in the care of Covenant Presbyterian Church by a responsible parent for a church-sponsored activity, then the church assumes responsibility for those children in their care during that church-sponsored activity, and the Operating Standards of this section shall be followed. However, on other occasions, when minor children are not placed in the care of the church but are in the care of a responsible parent at a church-sponsored activity (for example, when attending Sunday Morning Worship or attending a home Bible Study), then those parents are responsible for their minor children, whether on or off church property, and these Operating Standards do not apply. When there is no church-sponsored activity (for example, when church members and families meet informally in one another’s homes), then the church is not at all responsible for minor children present.

THE TWO ADULT RULE

All employees and volunteers shall follow the Two Adult Rule when working with minor children. Two *unrelated* adults must be present when only one or two minor children are present at a church sponsored event – ie. Sunday School, field trips, camps, VBS, Children’s Church. An exception may be made when two minor children are present and another assigned adult (with background check) periodically makes visual contact with class through windows or an open door.

In addition, an exception may be made if a church employee or volunteer meets with a child at a *public* event or establishment – ie. football game, restaurant. However, the child may not be transported to or from the event or establishment without another *unrelated* adult present, and the employee or volunteer must remain in the view of the general public when with the child at the event or establishment.

Counseling of a minor child by an employee may be done without other adults present, however the minor child must be visible to another assigned adult (with background check) who periodically makes visual contact with the child through windows or an open door.

SPECIAL POLICY FOR FATHERS IN THE FIELD MENTOR FATHERS:

Fathers in the Field is a sponsored ministry of Covenant Presbyterian Church. Special care will be taken by CPC and the Mentor Fathers to provide as much protection to the Field Buddies as is possible for this discipleship ministry. The following are specific policies regulating the interaction of Mentor Fathers and their Field Buddies.
Application to become a Mentor Father at CPC will include the normal screening process delineated in Section II: Protocols Concerning Screening Applicants.

Mentor Fathers may travel alone with a Field Buddy if in town between home and a public location or two public locations (i.e. school to McDonalds or church). When traveling out of town at least one other adult or minor must be with the Mentor Father and his Field Buddy.

When attending an overnight “Celebration Event”, at least two Mentor Father / Field Buddy teams must be together. As explained by Fathers in the Field, “This meets safety and child protection issues, but also enhances the interaction between the abandoned boys and builds comradery among the participants.” If another Mentor Father / Field Buddy team is not available, another adult (with background check) should be present during Celebration Event.

Violations of these protocols should be reported immediately to the Response Team, so that proper supervisory and Session action may be taken.

**VI. Protocols Concerning Initial Contact Point for Allegations**

This policy is to be reviewed by all persons working with children when both starting and at the first of year orientation; and consulted in any event of a concern arising.

A *Response Team* shall be appointed by Session to oversee allegations of misconduct. This team shall include: 1 Session member, 2 women members, and 1 additional male member. Each member of the Response Team is required to have a background check.

1. Anyone working with children who has reasonable cause to suspect that any child is subjected to abuse or to conditions that might result in abuse should immediately report the situation to the Response Team. Any such person reporting shall be reminded that they have the right to report directly themselves to Department of Family Services of Law enforcement. The RT will immediately investigate/look into the reported child abuse. A written report documenting the concern and the result of the RT’s initial investigation shall be filed. The RT shall have a woman member present if the person reporting is a woman.

2. The written report shall include:
   a. Name, age, and address of the child;
   b. Name and address of the child’s parents, guardians, and/or persons with whom he/she is living;
   c. The nature of the child’s injury or condition, information on conditions leading to abuse—all with dates , location, witnesses, as appropriate;
   d. Any other information that might be helpful in establishing the cause of the injuries or the conditions observed.

3. If there is reasonable suspicion or evidence to warrant it, the RT shall contact the Department of Family Services using established procedures and forms of CPC’s child protection committee. The RT will make protecting the confidentiality and privacy of the alleged victim a priority.

4. After the report is made to the DFS, the RT and reporting member will make themselves available for meeting with the Department’s representative to facilitate communication. The church will report any further incidents of abuse to the agency’s representative.

5. The Response Team shall report to the Session, meeting in executive session, that an allegation has been made and whether the RT deemed it necessary to report to the State. Session will determine on a case by case basis whether the Officers of the Corporation, and the Congregation be informed of an allegation. Openness and transparency is to be weighed against the right of the victim’s privacy and confidentiality, the potential for gossip and speculation.

6. If deemed necessary by the RT, a potential offender may be placed on administrative leave or barred from certain or all church activities, and possibly the church grounds and buildings. Certain office bearers shall be required to stand down from his or her office if an allegation against them is made and reported. If this action is taken it must be communicated in writing to the reported perpetrator (or his/her parents if a minor).
a) If the reported perpetrator is a Ruling Elder, a Deacon, or in such a church officer’s household, then that church officer shall be put on immediate leave of absence from all official duties, and it shall be his duty to resign from office (or be removed by Session) in the interests of peace, purity and unity of the church [BCO 21-5:6]. If the matter is resolved with exoneration, he may again become eligible for office.
b) If the reported perpetrator is a Teaching Elder or in a Teaching Elder’s household, he shall be put on immediate leave of absence from all church duties, and the Presbytery shall be notified [BCO 34-1]. If the matter is resolved with exoneration, he shall again become eligible for pastoral duties at CPC.
c) Convicted perpetrators and their families shall refrain from all church activities, including worship services, for the peace and well-being of all concerned, especially the victim. Victims should be given deference in such matters and room made for them to live at peace. Exception to policy: if the abuse happens within a family, the non-perpetrator members of the family may continue to attend CPC.

7. As the case is being investigated, the church will provide supportive aid and counseling services for the child if the Department of Family Services does not request otherwise.
8. Pastoral penitent privilege does not apply in cases of child abuse.
9. If the case becomes known to the media, the Pastor, if not the alleged or reported perpetrator, shall respond to enquiries by reinforcing the existence of the Child protection Policy, stating our institutional concern to protect children, confirming our cooperation with investigating authorities, and releasing only such information as is approved by the church’s attorney.
10. Once a report of child abuse is given to the DFS, the responsibility for investigation and follow-up lies with that Department. It is not the responsibility of the RT or CPC staff or session to investigate the case. Therefore, the RT, staff or Session will not:
   a. Make home visits for investigative purposes;
   b. Take the child for medical treatment (this does not preclude taking action in an emergency situation);
   c. Convey messages between the agency and the parents or guardians.

Appendix - Definitions

‘Child’ means a person who is under 18 years of age or who is reasonably presumed to be under 18 years of age. (Source: Tenn. Code Ann. § 37-1-102)

‘Abuse’ exists when a person under the age of 18 is suffering from, has sustained, or may be in immediate danger of suffering from or sustaining a wound, injury, disability or physical or mental condition caused by brutality, neglect or other actions or inactions of a parent, relative, guardian or caretaker.

‘Dependent and neglected child’ means a child:
1. Who is without a parent, guardian or legal custodian; Whose parent, guardian or person with whom the child lives, by reason of cruelty, mental incapacity, immorality or depravity is unfit to properly care for such child;
2. Who is under unlawful or improper care, supervision, custody or restraint by any person, corporation, agency, association, institution, society or other organization or who is unlawfully kept out of school;
3. Whose parent, guardian or custodian neglects or refuses to provide necessary medical, surgical, institutional or hospital care for such child;
4. Who, because of lack of proper supervision, is found in any public place the existence of which is in violation of law;
5. Who is in such condition of want or suffering or is under such improper guardianship or control as to injure or endanger the morals or health of such child or others;
6. Who is suffering from abuse or neglect; Who has been in the care and control of an agency or person who is not related to such child by blood or marriage for a continuous period of 18 months or longer in the absence of a court order, and such person or agency has not initiated judicial proceedings seeking either legal custody or adoption of the child; or
7. Who is or has been allowed, encouraged or permitted to engage in prostitution or obscene or pornographic photographing, filming, posing, or similar activity and whose parent, guardian or other custodian neglects or refuses to protect such child from further such activity.

'Severe child abuse' means:
The knowing exposure of a child to or the knowing failure to protect a child from abuse or neglect that is likely to cause great bodily harm or death and the knowing use of force on a child that is likely to cause great bodily harm; Specific brutality, abuse or neglect towards a child which in the opinion of qualified experts has caused or will reasonably be expected to produce severe psychosis, severe neurotic disorder, severe depression, severe developmental delay or retardation, or severe impairment of the child's ability to function adequately in the child's environment, and the knowing failure to protect a child from such conduct; or The commission of any act towards the child prohibited by laws pertaining to: Aggravated rape; aggravated sexual battery; rape of a child; incest; or aggravated sexual exploitation of a child; The knowing failure to protect the child from the commission of any such act towards the child. or Knowingly allowing a child to be present within a structure where the act of creating methamphetamine is occurring. (Source: Tenn. Code Ann. § 37-1-602(a))

'Child sexual abuse' means the commission of any act involving the unlawful sexual abuse, molestation, fondling or carnal knowledge of a child under 13 years of age that on or after November 1, 1989, constituted the criminal offense of:
- Aggravated rape;
- Aggravated sexual battery;
- Aggravated sexual exploitation of a minor;
- Criminal attempt for any of the offenses listed above;
- Especially aggravated sexual exploitation of a minor;
- Incest;
- Rape;
- Sexual battery;
- Sexual exploitation of a minor.

'Child sexual abuse' also means one or more of the following acts:
- Any penetration, however slight, of the vagina or anal opening of one person by the penis of another person, whether or not there is the emission of semen;
- Any contact between the genitals or anal opening of one person and the mouth or tongue of another person;
- Any intrusion by one person into the genitals or anal opening of another person, including the use of any object for this purpose, except that it shall not include acts intended for a valid medical purpose;
- The intentional touching of the genitals or intimate parts, including the breasts, genital area, groin, inner thighs, and buttocks, or the clothing covering them, of either the child or the perpetrator, except that it shall not include acts which may reasonably be construed to be normal caretaker responsibilities, interactions with, or affection for a child; or acts intended for a valid medical purpose;
- The intentional exposure of the perpetrator's genitals in the presence of a child, or any other sexual act intentionally perpetrated in the presence of a child, if such exposure or sexual act is for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification, aggression, degradation, or other similar purpose;

The sexual exploitation of a child, which includes allowing, encouraging, or forcing a child to solicit for or engage in prostitution; or engage in an act prohibited by criminal statute regarding sexual exploitation of a minor.

'Child sexual abuse' also means the commission of any act specified above against a child 13 years of age through 17 years of age if such act is committed against the child by a parent, guardian, relative, person residing in the child's home, or other person responsible for the care and custody of the child.
‘Mental injury’ means an injury to the intellectual or psychological capacity of a child as evidenced by a discernible and substantial impairment in the child's ability to function within the child's normal range of performance and behavior, with due regard to the child's culture.

‘Other person responsible for a child's care or welfare’ includes, but is not limited to, the child's legal guardian, legal custodian, or foster parent; an employee of a public or private child care agency, public or private school; or any other person legally responsible for the child's welfare in a residential setting.