

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND PROCEDURE SAFEGUARDING THE WELL BEING OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The members of West Plano Presbyterian Church (hereinafter "WPPC") believe that we are called by God to create a safe haven for all of the children and youth in our care, protecting those who are powerless and empowering them through faith and trust. During each baptism of an infant, child or adult into this covenant community of faith, the members of this church pledge to uphold that person in Jesus Christ and to teach, strengthen and support the individual's relationship with the household of God. Therefore, the members of WPPC are committed to the safety, welfare, and protection of all children and youth participating in the activities and programs of this church. This policy addresses the preventable risk of any form of abuse or harassment, whether physical, mental or sexual, by any of the employees, teachers or volunteers of this church while on church property or while engaged in church activities or programs. In addition, we are called to stand not in judgment, but with compassion for each other. We believe that any person who has been accused of committing an act of abuse can expect due process, our prayers, and acceptance as a human being.

Therefore, all WPPC activities and programs, regardless of location, involving children and youth, will be subject to the following policy:

- Ordinarily no person will be recommended to the Session of WPPC as a teacher or volunteer leader of children or youth activities until such person has been a member of the church for six months and a ***Volunteer Information Form*** and security background check, if possible, and reference checks have been completed.
- As often as practicable, two adults will be assigned to supervise or lead all activities involving children or youth.
- Where practicable, there must be windows in all youth rooms that will allow people to view the class.
- WPPC will not tolerate or accept any act or omission as specifically described in ***Prohibited Acts*** on pages 2-3.
- Any violation of the policy shall be reported in accordance with ***Reporting Violation of Policy*** on pages 3-4.
- Upon accusation the accused is entitled to prompt and fair disposition of such serious charges.

Volunteer Information Form

Employees, teachers of children and youth, and volunteers for children and youth activities or programs of WPPC will be required to complete a ***Volunteer Information Form*** providing personal and confidential information necessary to perform security background checks and reference checks on each individual. While this process understandably intrudes into the privacy of our lives, the security of our children and youth outweighs the personal invasion inherent with such investigation and disclosures.

All personal information voluntarily disclosed, the results of all security background and reference checks or the refusal of any person to participate in a program or activity in lieu of such disclosure requirements will be considered confidential.

Security background checks for persons 18 and older will be conducted by a staff person (or clerk of session or designated elder in the case WPPC is without a pastor) designated as the "Administrator" with the assistance of the appropriate local agency [Volunteer Center of Collin County, contact person Judy Drotman, (972) 422-1050]. Additionally, character references will be checked by a person designated by the Christian Education Committee or the Session. The written results of the security background checks and the reference checks initially will be reviewed by the Administrator. After this initial review, if the Administrator determines that further review should be made, the Administrator will consult with the Moderator of the Session or appropriate program staff.

Without the written permission of the employees, teachers of children and youth, and volunteers for children and youth activities (and except as may be required by law), the information contained in the *Volunteer Information Form*, the results of the security background check, and the results of the reference check will be disclosed only to the persons designated in the previous paragraph.

The Administrator will maintain a locked storage cabinet in the church for all *Volunteer Information Forms* and results of all record checks. The results of the security background checks will be destroyed periodically if required by the guidelines mandated by the appropriate local agency. Whether disclosed voluntarily or by result of the security background check, the following items will automatically disqualify a volunteer from participating in the leadership or sponsorship of any children or youth activity or program:

Any indictment alleging the offense of, or any conviction for: murder; aggravated assault; sexual abuse; sexual assault (rape); aggravated sexual assault; injury to a child; incest; indecency with a child; inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance of a child; possession or promotion of child pornography; the sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a minor; employment harmful to children; or abandonment or endangerment of a child.

All other convictions or charges for any other crimes not listed above will be reviewed by the Administrator as described in the second paragraph under *Volunteer Information Form*. If an applicant disputes information that appears in his or her criminal history record transcript, he or she may appeal through the Texas Department of Public Safety.

Prohibited Acts

The following acts are prohibited by this Policy and will not be tolerated or accepted during any WPPC activity or program. Any observations or personal knowledge of such violations must be immediately reported to the Moderator of the Session, Director of

Christian Education, or designated program staff (or clerk of session or designated elder in the case WPPC is without a pastor) after the safety of the child, children or youth involved has been assured.

- **Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct towards a child or youth;**
- **Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any adult and a child or youth;**
- **Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between a youth and a child, between two youths, or between two children;**
- **Infliction of physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a child or youth;**
- **Physical neglect of a child, children or youth, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of WPPC;**
- **Causing mental or emotional injury to a child, children or youth;**
- **Possessing obscene or pornographic materials at any function of WPPC;**
- **Possessing or being under the influence of any illegal drugs;**
- **Consuming or being under the influence of alcohol while leading or participating in a children's or youth function at WPPC.**

Reporting Violation of Policy

In order to maintain an environment free of destructive acts toward all children and youth, the staff, employees, teachers, parents and volunteers of WPPC must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation thought to be in violation of this Policy. All questions or concerns of any suspected abusive behavior or harassment shall be directed to the Director of Christian Education, the Moderator of the Session, or the appropriate program staff, (or clerk of session or designated elder in the case WPPC is without a pastor) or in extenuating circumstances, Grace Presbytery's Executive Presbyter.

In the event **anyone** personally witnesses an occurrence in violation of this Policy, that person will be asked to complete an ***Incident Report***. Anyone who should witness such an occurrence should consider the following recommendations as to how such a situation should be handled to insure the security of the child or youth involved and to protect against physical, emotional or psychological injury, to all persons involved.

The following are the steps to take in case of any occurrence of a violation of the Policy:

- **PERSONALLY SECURE THE SAFETY OF THE CHILD, CHILDREN OR YOUTH.**
- **REPORT THE INCIDENT IMMEDIATELY!**
- **DO NOT LEAVE THE CHILD, CHILDREN OR YOUTH ALONE TO REPORT THE INCIDENT.**
- **DO NOT PERSONALLY CONFRONT THE ALLEGED OR ACCUSED VIOLATOR OF THE POLICY.**

- **ALLOW THE DESIGNATED PERSON TO PROVIDE YOU WITH INSTRUCTIONS FOR REPORTING OF THE INCIDENT TO THE PARENTS OR GUARDIAN.**
- **THE MODERATOR OF THE SESSION OR THE DESIGNATED PERSON ON THE RESPONSE TEAM WILL BE SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL COMMUNICATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE CHURCH.**

In the event a child or youth reports abusive conduct while engaged in a church sponsored activity or involving the staff, employees, teachers, parents and volunteers of WPPC, regardless of where the conduct occurred, the person initially contacted by the child should contact the designated person and complete an *Incident Report*. Record verbatim in the *Incident Report* the specific words first spoken by the child or youth and the conduct and demeanor observed concerning the incident.

Consequences of Violation

Any person accused of committing a *Prohibited Act*, whether a staff member, employee, member or volunteer, will immediately be suspended from participation in all children and youth activities and programs of WPPC. Such suspension shall continue during any investigation by the church or law enforcement or child protection agencies.

Any person found to have committed a *Prohibited Act* shall be prohibited from future participation in all children and youth activities and programs of WPPC. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment.

As required by Texas law, all reports of abuse will be timely forwarded to the appropriate child protection and law enforcement authorities. Such reporting must be accomplished in addition to complying with this Child Protection Policy.

Failure to timely report a *Prohibited Act* to the designated person (see page 3) shall be considered a procedural violation of this Child Protection policy and shall be grounds for termination of employment of a staff member or employee and suspension and dismissal from participation in all children and youth activities and programs of WPPC by any person.

****Note:** As used herein, the term “child” refers to all persons from birth through fifth grade, and “youth” refers to 6th grade through 18 years of age.

West Plano Presbyterian Church
Plano, TX 75075
972-596-2415

Applicant Release Form

I am applying/volunteering for a position with West Plano Presbyterian Church. As a condition for consideration, I understand a thorough background investigation will be administered on me. I authorize West Plano Presbyterian Church and any other agent requested by West Plano Presbyterian Church to verify any information regarding criminal history, driving history, education verification, or any other background information required or deemed appropriate by West Plano Presbyterian Church.

I release West Plano Presbyterian Church and all other agents from any liability or damages whatsoever relating to the obtaining of the above mentioned background information and to the use of such information in determining my fitness to serve or be employed in any situation involving children.

Please Print

Full Name _____

Date of Birth: _____

Drivers License #: _____ State: _____

Current Address: _____

City, State, and Zip: _____

Previous address if less than 3 years: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Applicant Signature: _____

Date: _____

West Plano Presbyterian Church Signature: _____

Date: _____

Check Ministry:

Admin Children's VBS Weekday Youth

References: Please list the names, addresses, occupations, and telephone numbers of three people, other than relatives, who are familiar with your character and abilities. References will be contacted.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Years Known</u>	<u>Work Phone</u>	<u>Home Phone</u>
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Reason for report _____

Date of incident _____ Time _____

Name of Reporter _____

Name(s) of Child(ren) _____ Age(s) _____

Quote the child's first words verbatim: _____

Briefly describe child's/youth's demeanor/appearance _____

Briefly describe what happened: _____

What action did you take?: _____

Has the incident been resolved?: yes no Explain: _____

Were there any witnesses?

Names: _____

Signatures (if possible): _____

Date Report submitted to: _____