

Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church
**Child Protection Policy – Abbreviated and
Outside Group Leaders Release Form**

(revised January 2018)

1.0 Purpose

The congregation of Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church (“Woods Church” or “WMPC”) is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all minors and volunteers who participate in the ministries and activities offered within the church. This policy serves as our congregation’s commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

This policy is intended:

- To provide a safe and secure environment for children and youth at WMPC.
- To protect children and youth from sexual, physical, and emotional abuse while participating in activities offered within the church.
- To protect adult volunteers and employees from unwarranted allegations of child abuse.

2.0 Persons Affected

2.1 All minors participating in the activities offered within or affiliated with Woods Church.

2.2 All individuals who work with minors participating in activities offered within or affiliated with Woods Church, including employees, volunteers, and members of outside groups using Woods facilities.

3.0 General Policy Statements

3.1 It is the policy of Woods Church to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all minors participating in activities offered within the Church and to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect in accordance with Maryland law.

3.2 Consistent with the Mission Statement of Woods Church and the guiding principles that govern the church, it is the policy of Woods Church not to place employees in positions, or to assign volunteers to tasks, that cause them to come into contact with minors if the employee or volunteer has been convicted of or is accused of crimes against minors, child abuse or child neglect.

4.0 Outside Groups Using WMPC Facilities

4.1 All leaders of non-WMPC sponsored groups and events using WMPC facilities, which have direct supervision of children and youth, are expected to adhere to these policies. Upon receipt of the policy from WMPC, the leaders must review the Child and Youth Protection Policy and sign the Outside Group Leaders Release Form to acknowledge their review of it and to confirm their agreement to follow the policy.

4.2 Given the nature of the outside groups that use WMPC facilities, WMPC will not perform background checks, seek personal and professional references, review employment records, or obtain civil and criminal records for such groups. Leaders of outside groups will be invited to attend WMPC scheduled training classes and are expected to conduct their own due diligence in this regard.

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5.0 Supervision Requirements for All Staff, Volunteers, and Outside Group Leaders

5.1 Two Adult Rule:

All volunteers and outside group leaders who participate with minors at the Church or at a church related activity must observe a “two adult” rule. This requires two unrelated screened adults to be present at all times during the activity, whether on or off campus. Adults must remain in sight of one another at all times except in emergency situations.

Since spouses cannot be compelled to testify against one another in a court of law, husbands and wives count as one adult. Adults in leadership roles are expected to avoid situations where they are alone with children and youth by having leadership teams of at least two adults for all activities. The presence of two or more adults prevents awkward circumstances where child abuse could occur or be alleged, allows shared leadership, and facilitates appropriate discipline. This two-adult policy also extends to all overnight and off campus-related events. Under no circumstances can one adult alone take or accompany children or youth on an overnight outing.

5.1.1 A minor is defined as someone who is under 18 years of age.

5.1.2 High school seniors who have reached the age of 18 are still considered youth and must abide by the guidelines set for youth.

5.1.3 Volunteers who are assisting adults with children or youth must be at least 12 years of age and do not count as adults.

5.2 Restroom policy:

5.2.1 When using the restroom away from the classroom, small children, ages five (5) and under, must be accompanied by two (2) screened adults. Before the child enters the restroom, the adult will enter the restroom and make sure it is safe.

5.2.2 If a child requires assistance in the restroom, 1 adult shall stand in the door way within eye contact of the other adult who is assisting the child.

5.2.3 When restrooms are directly accessible to children from the classroom where the children’s activities are taking place and not accessible to the general public, children can be allowed to use the restrooms alone.

5.3 Adult/Child/Youth Ratios

5.3.1 The required adult/child/youth ratios for chaperones for any ministry with children or youth that is held within a contained classroom shall be 1:10. Gender balance is suggested.

6.0 Reporting Requirements

6.1 Under Maryland law, any person who has reason to believe that a child has been abused or neglected MUST report it to the Department of Social Services or the police immediately by telephone as soon as possible.

6.2 Do not try to conduct an investigation on your own.

6.2.1 Do NOT interview the child. This is a highly specialized field which requires special training and it must be done correctly to assure accurate and untainted information. Leave

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it to the professionals.

6.2.2 Do NOT confront or interview the suspected abuser.

6.2.3 Once you have reported the suspected abuse or neglect to the Department of Social Services or the police do not disclose it to anyone. Do not contact the parents - leave that to the authorities.

6.3 At no time is a known offender to be assigned to ministries or groups with children and youth.

6.4 At no time is a known offender to congregate with children and youth.

6.5 At no time is a known offender allowed in areas of the church or grounds dedicated to children and youth or in use primarily by children and youth.

Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church employees, volunteers, and members of outside groups:

1. Will not verbally, emotionally, physically or sexually abuse children.
2. Will not discipline children by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care.
3. May use physical restraint only when necessary to protect the child or others from harm.
4. Will provide proper supervision and exercise sound judgment in providing a safe environment at all times.
5. Will avoid situations during Woods sponsored programs where they would be alone with a single child and cannot be observed or monitored by others. As adults supervise children, they should space themselves in a way that other adults can see them.
6. Are expected to observe the Two-Adult Policy in their interaction with children and youth at all times except in emergency situations where impossible to do so.
7. Will provide restroom supervision by always using proper supervision when children are using public bathrooms to ensure their safety. Make sure suspicious or unknown individuals are not occupying the restroom before allowing children to use the facilities. Send children in pairs, and whenever possible, with at least two Woods employees and/or volunteers. Stand in the doorway while children are using the restroom in visual sight of another adult. When assisting younger children, doors to the facility must remain open.
8. Will respect the rights of children and youth not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable, and their right to say no.
9. Will be alert to the physical and emotional state of children entering the program. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported to the Director of Property and Records who will report to the Head of Staff of Woods church.

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10. Will release children only to the authorized parent, guardian, or other individual authorized by the parent or guardian.
11. Will not share inappropriate details of their personal life or ask children to share inappropriate details through any form of communication: written, verbal or electronic.
12. May not date program participants at any time.
13. Are not allowed to give gifts to individual children or youth without knowledge and permission of parents.
14. Are required to read, sign and adhere to all policies related to identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse and attend training sessions on the subject.
15. Are required to report to the Director of Property and Records any circumstances that under this policy affect their ability to work with children and youth.

Please Note:

- Using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, or being impaired by legally prescribed drugs during church working hours or church sponsored programs is prohibited.
- Smoking or use of tobacco during church programs is prohibited.
- Profanity, inappropriate language or jokes, and any kind of harassment in the presence of children is prohibited.

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Acknowledgment of Child Protection Policy and Outside Group Leaders Release Form

This form must be returned to the Director of Property and Records

Name of Group: _____

Group acknowledges that Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church has a policy in place for the prevention of child abuse. Group further acknowledges that it has received a copy of the Policy listed above. We agree to abide by the spirit of the Policy to keep all children safe while we are using the building and/or grounds of Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church.

Group understands and agrees to the terms of the Child Protection Policy – Abbreviated. And, in addition, understands that Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church will not perform background checks, personal and professional reference checks, or provide training for the leaders, supervisors, or representatives of _____ (name of group.) Group further understands that failure to abide by the Policy may result in the termination of the Group's use of Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church's facilities on a temporary or permanent basis.

Please note that this acknowledgment is valid for the period of one year from date signed. If the Group will meet at Woods Memorial Presbyterian Church beyond that timeframe, a new Acknowledgment Form will have to be signed by the Group Leader.

Group Leader Printed Name: _____

Signature of Group Leader: _____

Date: _____