

Adopted by the Session 8/15/15, Revised 5/3/22

Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church Child Protection Policy

- A. Requirements for all Youth Workers (includes: Youth/Children Sunday School Teachers, Youth Group Leaders, Children's Church Leaders, and Nursery Workers)
1. Current Member of Covenant Church for at least 6 months
 - a. Exceptions to the 6-month membership must be specifically approved by the Session.
 2. Criminal History check
 - a. Criminal history checks to be done on all current and all future Youth Workers (done at expense of Covenant Church).
 - 1) Copy of a recent criminal history check completed within the last year will be accepted.
 - 2) Must have completed Covenant's Youth Worker Certification form.
 3. Leadership of each committee is responsible to lead process training and guidelines for new leaders.
 - a. Special consideration should be given to young adults in distinguishing appropriate leadership relationships versus peer friendships when graduating out of a peer group into leadership.
- B. Classroom supervision
1. During Sunday School, the superintendent, member of the leadership team, or an elder will serve as a roving supervisor.
 - a. The roving supervisor will make regular but unscheduled visits to the various Sunday School rooms.
 2. Two-deep leadership
 - a. Nursery
 - 1) Two-deep adult leadership is mandatory for all nurseries. Teen volunteers between the ages of 13-18 years of age may serve alongside the adult leaders. At no time should the teen volunteer serve alone with only one adult leader. If unable to provide two-deep adult leadership, nursery groups will be combined or the nursery coverage cancelled.
 - 2) At no time should the leadership be two members of the same family, whether it is a parent/child relationship or a spouse/spouse relationship. Each member must be unrelated.
 - b. Children's Church and Sunday School classes are pre-school to 6th grade:

- 1) Two-deep leadership is desired; efforts should be made to create this situation as much as feasible. One of the leaders must be 18 years of age or older and the other at a minimum 15 years of age.
 - 2) At no time should the leadership be two members of the same family, whether it is a parent/child relationship or a spouse/spouse relationship. Each member must be unrelated.
 - 3) All classes must have a minimum of 2 children. In the event that only one child is present, a member of the Children's Christian Education Team should be consulted.
3. Architectural considerations
- a. All youth rooms should have doors with windows that allow for easy observation by parents and supervisors.
 - b. All student seating should be arranged to give an optimal view of all students within each classroom.
 - c. Clear sight lines must be maintained at all times.
- C. Child Release
1. For Children 2nd grade or younger:
 - a. During class these children are not to be released from their classroom unless accompanied by an adult or youth classroom aide.
 - b. At the end of the church service and Sunday School class, children age infant through 2nd grade are to be released only to their parent/guardian or a person designated by the parent/guardian.
- D. Bathroom procedures
1. Preschool and kindergarten children will use the adjoining bathroom between the nursery and the kindergarten rooms.
 - a. Leaders are not permitted to be alone with the child in the bathroom.
 - b. Leaders should encourage children to do as much for themselves as possible.
 - c. If assistance is required, the leader may ask another leader or volunteer to stand and watch by the door as they assist the child.
 - d. If an accident occurs, the child's parents should be called to address the situation.
 2. 1st and 2nd grade children will use the hallway bathroom.
 - a. The leader will maintain a visual sightline on the children as they go to the bathroom and come back.
- E. Youth Group Ministry – Special considerations
1. One-on-one appointments
 - a. Meetings within the church building

- 1) If a youth group leader feels a one-on-one type meeting is necessary, he/she may only do so with the prior approval of a pastor or the parent of the young person.
 - 2) Open door requirement – leaders should not meet one-on-one with youth in a private or non-visible place. Any one-on-one meeting between a leader and a youth should be conducted in the secretary’s office with the door left open or outside in public view.
- b. Meetings outside of the church
- 1) If a youth group leader feels a one-on-one type of meeting is necessary, the youth leader must arrange to meet the youth in a public place.
 - 2) At no time should the leaders meet one-on-one with youth in a private or non-visible place. Leaders should sit across from the youth during the meeting.
 - 3) Leaders may not meet or drive alone with youth in a car unless approved by the youth’s parent.
2. Dating
- a. At no time should anyone working with the youth pursue a dating relationship with a student. Great care must be taken by leaders in dealing with youth of the opposite sex to avoid anything that could be misconstrued as romantic interests – to include the use of phone calling, text messaging and social web pages when communicating with youth.
- F. Use of Technology
1. Emails
 - a. All emails regarding youth activities or youth programs should go through the church secretary.
 - b. If emails must go out, and going through the church secretary is not an option, then the parents/guardians of the youth must be included in all email correspondences. No private emails are permitted between any adult leader/teacher and any youth of the church.
 2. Texting
 - a. All parents of youth must sign a release form which would provide written permission for leaders to communicate with the youth unhindered.
 - 1) If a signed release is not provided, and the youth texts a leader, the leader should cc the supervising Elder in their response.
 3. Social Media
 - a. Youth Leaders/teachers may engage with youth on social media, however private messaging is not permitted. All social media site

messages should be open to view by the friends or members of that site.

- 1) In the event a youth sends a private message to a leader, the leader should respond via a group message with the supervising Elder in copy, or wait to communicate with the youth at church.

4. Leaders are encouraged to save all communications with youth.

G. Reporting Suspected Abuse

Note* this policy only addresses your obligation as a Covenant Church volunteer who works with youth. If you work with youth in your job or with another organization, you should consult your employer or organizational leaders about your legal or other obligations with regard to such activities.

1. All Youth Workers are strongly advised to review the *Guidelines for Mandated Reporting* booklet provided by the church to ensure understanding and compliance with Pennsylvania law requirements on mandated reporting.
2. If you suspect abuse of any child who attends Covenant Church or who is involved in any Covenant Church program, activity or service, you must report your suspicion to a member of the Child Protection Emergency Response Team Immediately upon reaching that belief.
3. In addition to reporting any suspicion of abuse to a member of the Child Protection Emergency Response Team, if you have reasonable cause to suspect abuse in the circumstances listed in the *Guidelines for Mandated Reporting* booklet, Pennsylvania law requires that you report your suspicion to the Pennsylvania Department of Human Service in the manner and within the time frames provided in Subsection E. The Child Protection Emergency Response Team can help you determine whether there is reasonable cause to make such a report, but it is your obligation to make the report.
4. Covenant Church will provide additional training as needed to educate/update/remind volunteers of church policies, emergency procedures, as well as how to recognize/report abuse.
5. Individuals currently serving on the Child Protection Emergency Response Team include:
 - a. Sherry Berrick
 - b. Debbie Peters
 - c. Jay Wagner
 - d. Kim Wagner
 - e. John Sallade
 - f. Stephanie Schaeffer
 - g. John Fromuth