



# Eastwood

## PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

### Child and Youth Safety Policies

Dear Volunteer or Staff Member,

At Eastwood Presbyterian Church, we take our responsibility to care for children and youth very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which children can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for volunteers and staff members. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children, protecting children, you, and the mission of Eastwood. The following procedures have been adopted by the Session and will be diligently enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

*Eastwood Presbyterian Session*

# Eastwood Presbyterian Church

## Policies & Procedures for

### Nursery, Children's, and Youth Ministry

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## **Overview of Church Safety System**

Because we desire to protect children involved in our ministry, Eastwood requires all staff members and volunteers working with children or students to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placements begin. If a question arises regarding the necessity of one or more of these steps for any particular situation (e.g., a parent wants to volunteer at a youth or children's event) the pastoral staff or Session is to determine which steps are or are not necessary. However, any staff member or volunteer who has not completed the screening process must be in a supervised role and not work alone with children.

### **STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training**

Eastwood policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a supervisor or a member of the pastoral staff. Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in 'grooming' a child for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or 'gatekeeper'), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, Eastwood requires all staff members and volunteers to complete sexual abuse awareness training. This training should be reviewed every **four** years.

### **STEP TWO: Screening Process**

Staff members and volunteers working or serving with children are required to complete Eastwood's Screening Process. Depending upon the ministry position, differing levels or intensity of screening may be required. These screening steps may include:

- an Employment Application (employees only);
- a face-to-face interview (employees and volunteers\*); and
- references to be checked (employees and volunteers\*).

\*A volunteer must be a member who has attended Eastwood for six months before being eligible to serve in positions providing ministry services to children or youth. Exceptions to this rule may be granted on a case-by-case basis by the pastoral staff or Session.

### **STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures**

Staff members and volunteers are required to review the policies and procedures contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material, and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

### **STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check**

Eastwood requires that all staff members and volunteers eighteen years old or older, working or volunteering in children's or youth activities undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon the ministry position, differing levels or intensity of criminal background check may be required.

## **Child Safety Policy**

### **ABUSE TOLERANCE & REPORTING**

Eastwood Presbyterian Church has **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at Eastwood to act in the best interest of all children in every program.

### **REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS & POLICY VIOLATIONS**

Eastwood Presbyterian Church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. Because sexual abusers ‘groom’ children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to ‘groom’ a child for sexual abuse.

In the event a staff member or volunteer observes any ‘grooming’ behavior, suspicious behavior, or inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.), the behavior should be reported without delay to an immediate supervisor or a member of the pastoral staff.

### **REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY**

All questions or concerns related to policy violations or inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to an immediate supervisor or member of the pastoral staff.

### **ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES**

Eastwood Presbyterian Church staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all church policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal and possible disciplinary action. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Session.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION**

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in Nursery, Children’s, or Youth Ministry. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or child protective agencies.

Any person found to have violated this policy may be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming involving children or students. If the person is an employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment.

Failure to report a policy violation is grounds for termination of an employee. Volunteers who fail to report a policy violation may be restricted from participation in any future activities involving children or youth.

### **REPORTING ABUSE OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE**

If a staff member or volunteer observes any abuse, is made aware of any abuse, or has a reasonable suspicion of abuse, it is that individual’s responsibility to report his or her observations without delay to an immediate supervisor or a member of the pastoral staff.

## **RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE**

In the event a supervisor or member of the pastoral staff receives an allegation or report of abuse or suspected abuse, the Eastwood Presbyterian Church Leadership will take appropriate action on behalf of the church in accordance with the law and this policy.

## **BUILDING & PLAYGROUND SAFETY**

The Children's Director will be responsible for ensuring that the children are monitored during Sunday classes or programming. This will include unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers and children in children's classrooms.

During children's ministry activities and programming, children will not be left unattended in the building or on the playground. Nursery and Children's Ministry staff members or volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in an unobserved or non-monitored location.

After every programming event, nursery and children's ministry staff members and volunteers should ensure that all children have been accounted for and properly released.

On the children's playground, staff members and volunteers are to circulate, watching children during play periods, giving particular attention to the areas not easily seen from all viewpoints. (Example: under slides, in corners, behind structures).

Any two children together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area of the playground.

## **WORKER TO CHILD RATIOS**

Eastwood Presbyterian Church is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Children's Ministries programs. Accordingly, the following worker to child minimum ratios will be used as the standard practice.

<b>Program</b>	<b>Workers</b>	<b>Children</b>
Nursery	2	6
Preschool, 2 and 3 years old	2	12
Preschool, 4 and 5 years old	2	18
Elementary	2	20
VBS	2	20

If a worker is 'out of ratio,' it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the program supervisor or the Children's Director. Supervisors will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately bring worker to children ratios into compliance with church policy.

The Nursery or Children's director, under the supervision of the pastoral staff, may authorize exceptions to these ratios in circumstances that s/he deems safe.

## DISCIPLINE

It is Eastwood's policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children. **No form of physical discipline is acceptable.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, biting or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. In employing this procedure, staff members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines:

- 1) Verbally redirect the child before physically intervening. With younger children some physical redirection may be necessary (for example, removing a toy from the hands of a child that is hitting another).
- 2) If the behavior does not cease, remove or direct the child away from the group to a corner of the room where the group is meeting (avoid being alone with the child).
- 3) Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the time-out, and provide the child with clear explanation of your expectations. ("Jamie, you didn't stop hitting Chris when I asked you to, so you need to sit quietly in the blue chair for three minutes.") In addition, be verbally reassuring, as being removed from the group will likely upset the child. Do not physically hold a child in time-out.
- 4) Provide the child with a chair to sit in or a "spot" to sit on (using a pillow, blanket, carpet square, etc.) until their time-out is complete.
- 5) Follow the rule of thumb that a time-out is ineffective if it lasts longer than one minute for every year of the child's life (3 years old, 3 minutes).
- 6) Monitor the child through the entire time-out without giving your undivided attention. For longer time-outs give intermittent praise to reassure the child and keep them on task. ("Jamie, you're doing a great job of sitting quietly – just 2 more minutes.")
- 7) Praise the child once he or she has completed the time-out and tell them that their reward is being able to rejoin the group. Remind them that repeating their initial behavior will result in further time-out. Follow this with praise.

Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents and the Children's or Nursery Director.

## RELEASE OF CHILDREN

At any time that a child has been entrusted to Nursery and Children's Ministry staff members or volunteers, the Church incurs responsibility for the safety and welfare of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge. Children may be released on their own from Children's ministry activities at an age determined by the Children's Ministry committee.

Nursery and Children's Ministry staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians. Designees must be approved by the Nursery Director.

It is presumed a person who drops off a child has authority to pick up that child.

In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact their immediate supervisor or a member of the pastoral staff before releasing the child.

## **BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINE**

### ***Nursery children***

Because nursery children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies:

#### **Diapering**

- 1) Only female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.
- 2) Changing of diapers should be done only in designated areas approved by the Nursery Director. These areas must have windows and/or lines of sight where other nursery workers can observe.
- 3) Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
- 4) Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in nursery will be recorded on the registration cards (e.g. "Seth Adams has medicine in the bag for rash.")
- 5) Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
- 6) Children should be changed on designated changing stations only.

#### **Toilet training**

- 1) No child will be forced to toilet train.
- 2) Only female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children of either sex.
- 3) When children are taken into bathrooms the door will be left partially open unless there is a window in the door.
- 4) Young children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
- 5) Parents should be consulted on each child's progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with volunteers or staff members. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery will be recorded on the registration card ("Georgia can use the toilet, but she needs to be reminded – ask her if she needs to go.").
- 6) Children should be verbally assisted where possible. If physical assistance is necessary, another staff member or volunteer should be present when possible.
- 7) "Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing.

### ***School age children***

School age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. Children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities. Staff members and volunteers should never take a lone child to the restroom.

If a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another worker to accompany him/her when possible. If another worker is not available to accompany, he/she should go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. If the child requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, while the child remains behind the door

of the bathroom stall. Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the public area of the bathroom with the exterior bathroom door open.

### **Special needs**

Parents will offer instruction to staff members or volunteers to change the diapers of special needs individuals. After the age of 4, parents, legal guardians, or previously approved/ designated volunteers will change all special needs individuals.

### **INTOXICANTS**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drug while in any church facility, while traveling with children, or while working with or supervising children during any Eastwood Presbyterian Church program or activity. Additionally, volunteers should not be taking prescription drugs/mood altering medications that have side effects which could compromise the safety of the children in their care (e.g., pain medications that cause drowsiness, confusion, lack of coordination, or lack of mental clarity).

### **TOBACCO USE**

Eastwood Presbyterian Church requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products (including vaping) in church facilities, while in the presence of children or their parents, or during church activities or programs.

### **MEDICATION**

Other than treatment for minor scrapes (e.g., bandaids) nursery or Children's Ministry staff members or volunteers may not administer medication (or essential oils, etc.) to any child but their own.

### **NUDITY**

Staff members and volunteers serving in Nursery, Children's or Youth Ministry should never be nude in the presence of children in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes during a pool party, weekend or overnight retreat, etc.), the staff member or volunteer leading the event will, prior to the event, submit a plan to the Children's and Youth Committee concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

### **ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN (0-12 years old)**

Staff members and volunteers should never conduct one-to-one, unobserved meetings, classes, or interactions with children while participating in ministry activities or programs. If privacy of conversation is needed, the interaction should take place in a location that is easily observed and monitored.

### **ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS (13-17 years old)**

Staff members and volunteers should never conduct one-to-one, unobserved meetings, classes, or interactions with youth while participating in ministry activities or programs. If privacy of conversation is needed, the interaction should take place in a location that is easily observed and monitored.

However, Eastwood recognizes that meeting the needs of students may occasionally require staff members and volunteers to minister to youth on an individual basis. Staff Members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines when interacting with students.



### **Individual Meetings**

Staff members and volunteers should conduct one-to-one meetings with an individual student at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed, unless prior approval is obtained from the appropriate supervisor.

If a private meeting must occur, the staff member must inform another staff member BEFORE the meeting occurs, and the door must remain unlocked.

### **ONE-TO-ONE ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION**

Eastwood Presbyterian Church recognizes that one-to-one electronic communication (including but not limited to phone calls, texts, and emails) may be needed at times. Staff members/volunteers should not initiate direct one-to-one communication outside the context of discipleship or when serving as the caretaker of the participant.

Parents of participants should communicate additional expectations regarding direct communication with their child to the child's leader or instructor.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children or youth. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children or youth:

1. Children should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.
2. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children or youth while in vehicles.
3. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving church vans, or vehicles owned or rented by Eastwood Presbyterian Church, unless in an emergency.
4. No drivers under age 25 may drive Church-owned or rented vehicles.

### **PARENTAL CONTACT**

Parents who leave a child in the care of Eastwood staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if a child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Children's Ministry or Nursery programs.

### **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their child's program will be required to complete Eastwood's volunteer application and screening process.

## **PHYSICAL CONTACT**

Eastwood Presbyterian Church is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, we have implemented a 'physical contact policy' that promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting children. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by those working in Nursery, Children's, and Youth Ministry programs:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children/youth are important for development, and are generally suitable in the church setting.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to a supervisor or a member of the pastoral staff.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children, youth, or ministry staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
5. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in our ministries must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
6. Do not force physical contact, touch or affection on a reluctant child or youth. A child or youth's preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children and youth under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse must be reported immediately to a supervisor or a member of the pastoral staff.

## **SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS: Children (0-12 years old)**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children, and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any child in the program.

## **SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS: Youth (13-17 years old)**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with youth and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any student in the program. However, it is expected that from time to time youth ministry discussions and lessons may address issues related to purity, dating, sex and human sexuality. These lessons will occur in group settings, and will convey the church's views on these topics.

## **VERBAL INTERACTIONS**

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. Staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is or could be construed by a reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

## **SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from possessing (or transmitting to any child or youth) any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, pictures, films, texts, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children or youth, including those in electronic form.

## **YOUTH MINISTRY: SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS**

It is anticipated that certain Youth Ministry activities may occasionally require that overnight sleeping arrangements be made for youth and staff members and volunteers (i.e. lock-ins, mission trips, ski trips, etc.). In the event an activity requires sleeping arrangements, staff members and volunteers will strictly observe the following rules:

1. The 2-adult rule must be followed; a single youth should not be alone with a staff member or volunteer.
2. All adult leaders must have previously completed the screening and training process.
3. Overnight sleeping arrangements must be submitted in writing to and approved by the Children's and Youth Committee prior to the activity.
4. As long as any students are awake, one trip leader must be awake and monitoring students to ensure safe behavior.
5. Leaders should check with parents and use good judgment regarding PG or PG-13 movies. No R-rated movies are permitted.
6. Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn; both tops and bottoms.
7. In the event of a sleepover on campus that involves both boys and girls, boys and girls must sleep in separate rooms, properly supervised by youth leaders of the same gender.
8. Whenever possible, at least one staff member or volunteer will sleep in the same room (but not same bed) as students, or in an adjoining room with the door between the rooms kept open.
9. In the event that overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each staff member, volunteer, and student will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances a "one-person-to-one bag or blanket" rule will be observed.

**Policies and Procedures**  
**Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement**

I have received and read a copy of MY Church's Children's Ministry Policies and Procedures Manual and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at MY Church.

Further, I understand that the manual may be modified at any time, and that any guidelines may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by MY Church.

I also acknowledge that I have reviewed and agree to fulfill the duties listed in the Manual. While, ideally, I will serve in this ministry for the agreed term, I understand that I may choose to end this relationship at any time. If possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to my supervisor.

I further acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this manual in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between MY Church and me. If I am applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no compensation for hours worked.

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed, as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of MY Church policies and procedures manual.

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Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

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Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

[This page is to remain attached to Child and Youth Safety policies and procedures.]

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Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

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Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

[This page is to be signed, detached and delivered to ministry Director (Nursery, Children's or Youth).]