

CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

I. PURPOSE

To help Warwick Memorial United Methodist Church (Warwick Memorial) provide a caring, protected and secure environment for children and youth.

II. BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

Warwick Memorial seeks to honor God's love for children and to provide for their well being. This caring community seeks to prevent any form of child or youth abuse or neglect. We seek to be in ministry to families where abuse may occur. The Bible is the foundation upon which we base all policies, procedures, and ministries.

And they were bringing children to Him, that He might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it He was indignant, and said to them, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." And He took them in His arms and blessed them, laying His hands upon them. (Mark 10:13-16)

Jesus teaches us explicitly that children have the right and the keys to the Kingdom of God. He demonstrated this through blessing and touch. Our goal in response to this biblical mandate is to maintain a safe, secure and loving place where children and youth may grow. We seek to provide a place where care givers, teachers and leaders (both paid staff and volunteers) minister appropriately to their needs.

III. VIRGINIA'S CHILD ABUSE LAW (Copied from the Virginia Code)

Under Virginia law Section 63:1-248.2, an abused child is defined as one who is less than eighteen years of age, whose parents or other persons responsible for his/her care creates or inflicts, or threatens to create or inflict, or allows to be created or inflicted a substantial risk of death of disfigurement, or impairment of bodily or mental functions. This includes the following: failure to provide care necessary for health, abandonment, commits or allows sexual exploitation, is endangered or neglected Child abuse may be physical, sexual, emotional or mental, and may be the result of actions or omissions to act, (e.g., lack of care for a child).

Section 63.1-248.3, Virginia Revised Code, states that "Any person licensed to practice medicine or any of the healing arts, any hospital resident or intern, any person employed in the nursing profession, any person employed as a social worker, any probation officer, any teacher or other person employed in a public or private school, kindergarten, or nursery school, any person providing full-time or part-time childcare for pay on a regular planned basis, ...and any person associated with or employed by any private organization

responsible for the care, custody or control and children who has reason to suspect that a child is abused or neglected, shall report the matter immediately ... to the local department of the county or city wherein the child resides or wherein the abuse or neglect is believed to have occurred or to the Department of Social Services toll-free child abuse and neglect hotline.”

In addition, everyone should report any known or reasonable suspected child abuse immediately. Any report is confidential and the person making the report is immune from liability for making such a report, unless it is proven that such a person acted in bad faith or with malicious intent.

IV. TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE (Copied from the Virginia Code)

A. DEFINITION

Child abuse refers to any act committed by a parent, caregiver or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child on a daily basis), or a stranger which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child’s physical or mental health or welfare.

B. TYPES OF ABUSE

The following definitions and explanations in this section are from the Virginia Department of Social Services.

1. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is defined as a physical injury, threat of injury or creation of a real and significant danger of substantial risk of death, disfigurement or impairment of bodily functions. Such injury or threat of injury, regardless of intent, is inflicted or allowed to be inflicted by non-accidental means.

Examples: asphyxiation/bone fracture; brain damage, skull fracture, subdural hematoma; burns, scalding; cuts, bruises, welts, abrasions; internal injuries, poisoning; sprains, dislocations; gunshot, stabbing wounds.

2. Physical Neglect

Physical neglect is the failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, or supervision for a child if the child’s health or safety is endangered. Physical neglect may include multiple occurrences or a one-time critical or severe event that results in a threat to health or safety, such as a toddler left alone. Other types of neglect include abandonment, inadequate supervision, inadequate clothing, inadequate shelter, inadequate personal hygiene, inadequate food and malnutrition.

3. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse includes any act defined in the Code of Virginia which is committed, or allowed to be committed, upon a child by his/her parent or other persons responsible for the child’s care. Examples of such abuse are

sexual exploitation, sexual molestation, intercourse/sodomy and other sexual abuse.

4. Medical Neglect

Medical neglect is refusal or failure by a caretaker to obtain and/or follow through with a complete regimen of medical, mental or dental care for a condition, which if untreated, could result in illness or developmental delays.

5. Failure to Thrive

Failure to thrive is a syndrome of infancy or early childhood which is characterized by growth failure, signs of severe malnutrition, and variable degrees of developmental retardation. Children are considered to be in this category only when the syndrome is diagnosed by a physician and is caused by non-organic factors.

6. Mental Abuse/Neglect

Mental abuse or neglect is a pattern of acts or omissions by the caretaker which result in harm to a child's psychological or emotional health or development.

7. Educational Neglect

The child's caretaker is directly responsible for the failure of the child to attend school or an approved alternative program of study.

8. Bizarre Discipline

Any action in which the caretaker uses eccentric, irrational or grossly inappropriate procedures or devices to modify the child's behavior is considered bizarre discipline.

V. REDUCING THE RISK OF CHILD AND YOUTH ABUSE

For the purposes of this document, Warwick Memorial defines:

A "Child" as a person from birth through 5th grade

(For the purposes of Section V.E.1.d below, an "infant" is a child less than 2 years old.)

A "Youth" as a person in 6th through 12th grade and less than 19 years old.

A "background check" as one that includes at least:

Social Security Number Validation and Death Record Search

Phone Number Lookup (by number and by name)

Employment Termination Report Search

State Sexual Offender Search in Virginia

National Criminal File Search

As of this version of this policy, these checks are provided through contract with ScreenNow Employment.

A “Member” as a person who has formally joined our church, including affiliate and associate members of record.

In an effort to create the safest possible environment within Warwick Memorial , several abuse prevention measures shall be utilized. These measures include background checks of all paid staff who work with our children and youth as well as background checks of all UMYF volunteers. In addition, we make provision for regular training on child and youth abuse issues for all paid staff and volunteers, we employ standards for appropriate classroom discipline, and we have open classrooms.

A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL APPLICANTS

All applicants shall meet the following requirements:

1. Complete Warwick Memorial’s Child/Youth Protection Training.
2. Complete and sign the attached form stating they have read our Child/Youth Protection Policy, understand it, and will abide by it.
3. Certify by signature on the attached form whether they have ever:
 - a. Been convicted of any offenses involving the sexual molestation, physical or sexual abuse, or rape of a child
 - b. Been the subject of a founded case of child abuse and/or neglect.
 - c. Been convicted of a violation of law (other than minor traffic violations) or had any convictions expunged.

If the answer to any of these questions is ‘yes’, the applicant shall provide details in writing. An applicant answering ‘yes’ to these questions shall only be accepted as Volunteer Staff if that person is deemed suitable for a leadership role in the eyes of the appropriate Age Level Coordinator, Director of Youth Ministries, Director of Children & Family Ministries, Pastors and/or members of the Staff/Parrish Relations Committee.

B. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR VOLUNTEER STAFF

Volunteers who desire to work with children or youth at Warwick Memorial shall meet the following requirements:

1. Volunteers who work with our children or youth shall be members of this church.
2. Volunteers shall not be allowed to work with our children or youth unless they have been members of the church for at least six (6) months.
3. Volunteers who have been members of Warwick Memorial for less than six (6) months may work with children and youth provided that they do so only under close supervision by a person who has been through our church’s child protection training and has been a member of this church for six months.

C. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR PAID STAFF

All paid staff who work with our children or youth, including those who work in our nursery or the Early Childhood Music School, shall meet the following requirements:

1. Paid staff shall be hired after interview and approval of the Warwick Memorial Staff/Parish Relations Committee.

2. Paid staff shall pass a church-selected background check.

D. VOLUNTEER AND PAID STAFF BACKGROUND CHECKS – COST, CONFIDENTIALITY OF RESULTS, AND SECURITY OF RECORDS

1. The cost of background checks shall be paid by the church.
2. Confidentiality of Background Check Results
 - a. The results of background check investigations shall be afforded a high level of protection since they contain sensitive, private information. Potential paid staff and volunteers in the youth programs are aware that these checks will be conducted, but they shall also be confident that the results will be properly protected and released only to leaders who have a need to know.
 - b. Access to background check results. People in the following positions will have access to the background check results as necessary: Warwick Memorial UMC pastors, the Director of Youth Ministries, the Director of Children & Family Ministries, and the Staff/Parrish Relations Committee Chair.
3. Security of Background Check Records
 - a. Physical Security of Background Check Results. The actual files will be stored in a locked container kept on the church grounds. The key for the container will be kept by the pastors.
 - b. Retention of background check results. Because of the potential for litigation involving paid staff and volunteers working with children and youth many years after the period of their service, the background check results will be kept on file for a period of 75 years from the date of the report.

E. VOLUNTEER AND PAID STAFF TRAINING RENEWAL

1. Previously qualified volunteers and paid staff shall be encouraged to renew their training and commitment every two years.
2. Whenever this policy is changed significantly as judged by the Directors of Children & Family of Ministries and Youth Ministries, previously qualified volunteers and paid staff shall read the revised policy, attend the training, and commit to the new requirements.

F. REQUIRED NUMBER OF ADULT LEADERS

1. On-site Activities
 - a. Activities at the church building: When children or youth are present at the church, at least one adult leader shall be present.
 - b. Overnight activities: When children or youth spend the night at the church at least one adult leader of the same gender as the group shall be present. If the group includes both boys and girls, both male and female adult leaders shall be present.
 - c. An adult leader is defined as a person eighteen (18) years of age or older and no longer a high school student who has successfully completed the required background checks, Child/Youth Protection Policy Training, and

has been deemed suitable for a leadership role in the eyes of the appropriate Age Level Coordinator, Director of Youth Ministries or Director of Children & Family Ministries.

- d. Adult to child/youth ratios for on-site activities:

Age Group	Required Adult to Child/Youth Ratio
Infants	1 adult to 4 children
Children	1 adult to 8 children
Youth	1 adult to 15 youth

2. Off-site Activities

- a. Day trips: Whenever children or youth are transported away from the church, at least one adult leader shall be present.
- b. Overnight trips: Whenever children or youth are transported away from the church, two or more adult leaders of the appropriate gender shall be present. If the group includes both boys and girls, two or more adult leaders (at least one of each gender) shall be present. If a second adult leader cannot be reasonably arranged from this church and the group will be housed with other church groups where there will be additional chaperones of each gender present, a Warwick Memorial UMC adult leader will make arrangements in advance, if possible, to utilize the other groups' chaperones to meet the spirit of this rule.
- c. Exception regarding evening Bible studies: If an approved Bible study is being held in a private home approved by an adult UMYF leader, it is only necessary for one leader to be present, provided that there are two or more middle or high school youth present. Approval of the Bible study may be made by the Director of Youth Ministries or a Pastor.

G. CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE

- 1. If a child is behaving inappropriately, the paid staff or volunteer will tell the child specifically what he/she is doing that is not acceptable and explain the expected behavior. (e.g. "We do not throw the blocks. We use blocks for building.") If this measure is not effective, the child will be guided to another activity.
- 2. If the inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be placed at a table to work alone away from the other students.
- 3. If the child's inappropriate behavior continues after these steps have been taken, the child may be taken to an appropriate person (e.g. the pastors or Sunday School Superintendent) and left under the supervision of that person.
- 4. No physical punishment or verbal abuse (e.g., ridicule) is to be used at any time.
- 5. If isolating the child within the classroom or removal of the child from the room becomes necessary, the situation will be discussed with the child's parents or guardian as soon as possible. The discussion should include the church leader who witnessed the inappropriate behavior and other church leaders as judged to be appropriate by the appropriate Age Level Coordinator, Sunday School Superintendent, Director of Youth Ministries or Director of Children & Family Ministries.

H. OPEN CLASSROOMS

Classrooms or child care rooms may be visited without prior notice by paid staff, volunteers, or parents.

VI. REPORTING CHILD ABUSE, CHILD NEGLECT, OR OTHER CHILD ENDANGERMENT

- A. It is the responsibility of paid staff and volunteers to report child abuse if it is suspected. Child Protective Services (CPS) shall be notified. Anonymous reporting is permissible.
- B. Paid staff or volunteers should feel free to contact CPS to ask questions about what has been observed.
- C. Paid staff and volunteers are encouraged to keep records of observations of unusual behavior or symptoms of the children in their care.
- D. Abuse shall be treated seriously. It shall not be ignored in hopes that it will go away.
- E. Allegations of child abuse, child neglect, or other child endangerment shall be reported to the Virginia Department of Social Services as required by state law.
- F. Allegations of child abuse, child neglect, or other child endangerment shall be reported to the District Superintendent immediately.
- G. Allegations of child abuse, child neglect, or other child endangerment shall be reported to the church's insurance carrier and attorney.
- H. Pray for all persons affected by the allegation.
- I. Documentation of all procedures in handling the allegation shall be kept.
- J. The accused shall not be confronted. However, he/she shall be relieved of all duties/contact with children or youth until the investigation is complete.
- K. Strict confidentiality about both the victim and alleged perpetrator shall be observed.

VII. POLICY REVIEW

The Child/Youth Protection Policy of Warwick Memorial shall be reviewed annually. A verification follow-up report will be made each year at Charge Conference to insure the integrity of the Policy and its procedures.

**PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO:
 Warwick Memorial United Methodist Church
 Attn: Child/Youth Protection Policy
 38 Hoopes Road
 Newport News, Virginia 23602
 757-877-2270**

Please answer the following sign, date, detach and return this portion to indicate you have read, understand and accept the Child/Youth Protection Policy and its procedures of Warwick Memorial United Methodist Church.

Copies of the Warwick Memorial UMC Child/Youth Protection Policy may be found in the church library or at www.wmumc.org.

Use reverse side if necessary.

Name (please print) _____

Present Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Home phone (____) _____

Social Security Number _____

Name(s) and addresses (city/state) of the church(es) you have attended regularly during the past five years:

Your former residential addresses over the last ten years (P.O. boxes will not be accepted):

List all previous church work (include church names and addresses) involving children or youth:

List all previous non-church work (include organization names and addresses) involving children or youth:

(Form continues on next page)

List your current driver's license number and its state of issue:

Personal references (not relatives):

Name _____ Phone _____

Name _____ Phone _____

Have you ever been convicted of any offenses involving the sexual molestation, physical or sexual abuse, or rape of a child?

Yes___ No___ If yes, explain in detail.

Have you ever been the subject of a founded case of child abuse and/or neglect?

Yes___ No___ If yes, explain in detail.

Have you ever been convicted of a violation of law (other than minor traffic violations) or had any convictions expunged?

Yes___ No___ If yes, explain in detail.

I have read and understand the Policy and agree to abide by it. I authorize and release any reference, church, or organization listed to give Warwick Memorial UMC any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my work with children or youth.

Your signature _____ Date _____

Please print your name _____