

CHILD & YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

WARWICK MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
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PREPARED BY
THE CHILD PROTECTION SUB-COMMITTEE
OF THE FAMILY FORUM

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CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

I. PURPOSE

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

II. BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

Warwick Memorial United Methodist Church 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 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 may grow. We seek to provide a place where care givers, teachers and leaders (both paid and volunteer) minister appropriately to their needs.

III. VIRGINIA'S CHILD ABUSE LAW

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 upon such a child a physical or mental injury by other than accidental means, or creates a substantial risk of death or 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 child care 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 of 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 reasonably 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

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

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

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

Refusal or failure by 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

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

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 actions in which the caretaker uses eccentric, irrational or grossly inappropriate procedures or devises to modify the child's behavior.

V. REDUCING THE RISK OF CHILD ABUSE

In an effort to create the safest possible environment within Warwick Memorial United Methodist Church, several abuse prevention measures will be utilized. These measures include screening of paid and all UMYF workers for past child abuse convictions or expungements, provision for regular training on child abuse issues to paid and volunteer staff members, use of the two adult rule, standards for appropriate classroom discipline and open classrooms.

A. SIX MONTH RULE

All workers with children and youth must be members of this church (including affiliate and associate members, except as listed in Section B). Warwick Memorial United Methodist Church will not allow any person or persons to work unsupervised with children or youth in any church program unless they have been a member of the church for a least six (6) months. Those who have been members of Warwick Memorial United Methodist Church for less than six months may work with children and youth provided that they do so only in close supervision by a person or persons who have been through our church's child protection training and a member of this church for six months. (AMENDED BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL NOVEMBER 5, 2002)

B. SPECIAL STAFF

Special Staff who are not members of WMUMC may be hired to work with youth (e.g. nursery workers) as long as they meet the following requirements:

1. Be hired after interview and approval of the WMUMC SPRC.
2. Pass a church-selected screening.
3. Complete WMUMC's Child-Youth Protection Training.
4. Sign a form stating they have read our Child-Youth Protection Policy and will abide by it.
5. Sign a form stating whether or not he/she has ever been convicted of a misdemeanor or felony, or had such a conviction expunged. (AMENDED BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL NOVEMBER 5, 2002)

C. STAFF AND VOLUNTEER SCREENING

All paid adult workers with children or youth and UMYF workers must undergo a church selected background check. Warwick Memorial will provide this check. (AMENDED BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL NOVEMBER 5, 2002)

Each employed or volunteer children's teacher, child care worker, or child/youth worker will be asked to sign a statement indicating whether or not he/she has ever been convicted of a misdemeanor or felony nor had such a conviction expunged. Also, this screening form will ask for the following: general information, criminal convictions, prior church membership, and prior church volunteer work. Anyone who has had a child abuse conviction or expungement, as well as anyone refusing to sign the statement will not be permitted to work with children and youth. These forms will be kept in the custody of the Pastor(s) or their designee. (AMENDED BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL NOVEMBER 5, 2002)

D. STAFF AND VOLUNTEER TRAINING

All paid and volunteer child care workers, children's Sunday School teachers, youth workers and teachers, and Vacation Bible School workers and teachers will be required to read the church's Child Protection Policy and sign a form indicating that they have read and understand the policy and agree to abide by it. If the teacher or worker does not sign, that person will not be permitted to serve until the policy has been read and the form signed. (AMENDED BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL 5 NOVEMBER 2002)

Teachers or workers will also be required to attend one training session related to the church's abuse policy. The church will offer these training sessions. (AMENDED BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL NOVEMBER 5, 2002)

E. REQUIRED NUMBER OF ADULT LEADERS

ON-SITE ACTIVITIES

- Regular Activities
Whenever children or youth are present at the church, at least one adult leader shall be present.
- Overnight Activities
Whenever 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.
- Youth-Adult Ratios for On Site Activities: The following will be used

Age Group	Required Adult:Child Ratio
Infants up to 2 years	1 adult : 4 children
Children up thru 5 th Grade	1 adult : 8 children
Youth 6 th -12 th Grade	1 adult : 15 youth

- Adult Leaders are defined as persons eighteen (18) years of age or older and no longer a high school student who have successfully completed the

required background checks, Child & Youth Protection Policy Training, and have been deemed suitable for a leadership role in the eyes of the appropriate Age Level Coordinator or Director of Youth Ministries.

OFF SITE TRIPS

- **Day Trips**
Whenever children or youth are transported away from the church, at least one adult leader shall be present.
- **Overnight Trips**
Whenever children or youth are transported away from the church, two or more adult leaders shall be present of the appropriate gender. 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 can not be reasonably arranged from this church and the group will be housed with other church groups where there will be additional chaperons of each gender present, an individual WMUMC adult leader will arrange to utilize the other groups' chaperons to meet the spirit of this rule.
- **Exception: Regarding Evening Bible Studies**: If an approved Bible study is being held in a private home approved by an adult UMYF leader (see above under Youth-Adult Ratios for definition of an adult 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. (ADDED BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL MARCH 20, 2003)

F. CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE

All teachers and workers will use the following discipline measures: If a child is behaving inappropriately, the teacher or worker will tell the child specifically what he/she is doing that is not acceptable and state what the expected behavior is, 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. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be placed at a table to work alone away from the other students. If the child's disruptive 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) Ministries or the Sunday School Superintendent and left under the supervision of that office. No physical punishment or verbal abuse (e.g., ridicule) is to be used at any time. 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.

G. OPEN CLASSROOMS

Classrooms or child care rooms may be visited without prior notice by church staff, parents, or other volunteer church workers (e.g., Sunday School Superintendent).

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

Should there be allegations of abuse at Warwick Memorial United Methodist Church, these procedures will be followed:

1. It is your responsibility to report child abuse if you suspect it.
2. You can call Child Protective Services and report anonymously or ask questions about what you have observed.
3. Keep records as you observe unusual behavior or symptoms of the children in your care.
4. Treat any abuse seriously; do not ignore it in hopes that it will go away.
5. Report the allegation to the Virginia Department of Social Services as required by state law.
6. Call the District Superintendent immediately.
7. Report the allegation to your insurance carrier and attorney.
8. Pray for all persons affected by the allegation.
9. Document all procedures in handling the allegation.
10. Don't confront the accused, but relieve him/her of all duties/contact with children until the investigation is complete.
11. Observe strict confidentiality about both the victim and alleged perpetrator.

VII. POLICY REVIEW

The Child Protection Policy of Warwick Memorial United Methodist Church 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 procedures.

VIII. Security of Background Check Records

Need for Security. The results of background check investigations must be afforded a high level of protection since they contain sensitive private information. Potential employees and volunteer leaders are aware that these checks will be conducted, but they must also be confident that the results will be properly protected and released only to the minimum number of people necessary.

Access to Background Check Results. The following people will have access to the Background Check Results files:

- WMUMC Pastors
- Director of Youth Ministries (for individuals seeking to work with youth programs)
- Staff-Parish Relations Committee Chair

Physical Security of Background Check Results Files. The actual files will be stored in a bank safe deposit box. The key for this container will be kept by the Senior Pastor

Retention of Background Check Results Files. Because of the potential for litigation involving workers with children and youth many years after the period of their service, these records will be kept on file for a period of 75 years from date of the report.

(ADDED BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL MAY 15, 2003.)

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO:

<p>WARWICK MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Attn: Child-Youth Protection 38 Hoopes Road Newport News, Virginia 23602 757-877-2270</p>
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Please answer the following, sign, date, detach and return this portion to indicate you have read, understand and accept the Child Protection Policy and Procedures of Warwick Memorial United Methodist Church.

Copies of the WMUMC 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 code _____ Home phone _____

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

Your residential addresses over the last ten years (PO boxes will not be accepted): *Use reverse side if necessary*

List all previous non-church work involving children or youth (include names and addresses)
Use reverse side if necessary

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

(Form continues on reverse side)

Personal references (not relatives)

Name _____ Phone _____

Name _____ Phone _____

I have read and understand the policy and agree to abide by it. I have no convictions for child abuse or expungements of such convictions. I authorize and release any references or church(es) listed to give you any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my work with children or youth.

_____ Date _____
(Your signature)

Print Name: _____