

Longview Presbyterian Church Safe Church Policy

It is the policy of Longview Presbyterian Church (LPC) to provide a safe environment for the spiritual, physical, and emotional, well-being of children, youth, and vulnerable adults who attend and/or participate in church activities. The requirements and prohibitions set forth in this policy are specifically designed with that in mind. This policy applies to all LPC sponsored activities that involve children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

Policy Rationale

The implementation and documentation of a Safe Church Policy strives to reduce the risk of abuse and neglect for the following reasons:

Children, youth, and vulnerable adults are a gift from God, and the Church has a divine mandate to provide for their safety and nurturing. The Church is called to be a place that reflects the open arms of Jesus. In Matthew 19:14, Jesus says, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." The Church is to be a place of safety and nurture reflective of Christ.

The Book of Order states: All councils shall adopt and implement a sexual misconduct policy and a child and youth protection policy. (Book of Order G-3.0106)

Scope

This specific policy applies only to those situations in which the persons involved are accountable to LPC. As such, the policy is limited to those persons who are either continuing members of the church, employees, members of committees, or volunteers of the church.

Definitions

The following is a list of definitions of terms and their intended use in this particular policy. For the purpose of this policy:

Child: A child will be defined as a person between the ages of 0–11.

Youth: A youth will be defined as a person between the ages of 12–17.

Minor: A minor is any child or youth 0–17 years-old.

Child/Youth Worker: Any person, volunteer or staff, who works with children and/or youth at LPC sponsored events or activities.

All child/youth workers must be at least eighteen-years old and four years older than the oldest youth whom they are serving.

Vulnerable Adult: Any adult person who by reason of physical disability or dependence, developmental disability, mental illness, relative social power or cultural circumstances may be susceptible to physical abuse, sexual exploitation, financial exploitation or manipulation as a consequence of being unable to physically resist, or render judgments regarding physical, mental, financial or environmental well-being. Such persons may be unable to act independently and may, to their detriment, manifest high levels of trust or fear of persons of perceived power or authority.

Child/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Abuse: Any act or failure to act that results in physical abuse, sexual exploitation, financial exploitation, manipulation, psychological or emotional mistreatment, or neglect of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.

Sexual Abuse: The Book of Order defines sexual abuse as, "Sexual abuse of another person is any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to (1) any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without the mental capacity to consent; or (2) any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of ordered ministry or position" (Book of Order, D-10.0401c).

Misuse of Technology: The use of technology that results in harassment or abuse. This includes using technology to send suggestive messages and images to a child or youth.

Adults should not have any technological contact with a child or youth that is not either preapproved by the child/youth's legal guardian with a signed waiver, or the contact is on an open public medium, such as a church website or other social media program.

Responsible Use of Technology: All pictures of children or youth that are posted anywhere on the internet need approval of the parent or legal guardian.

Staff Member: Any person employed by LPC on a full-time, part-time, or contractual basis.

Volunteer: A person, not paid or otherwise employed by LPC who, with the knowledge and consent of LPC is permitted to assist in the preparation and/or administration of LPC activities.

Physical Interactions with Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults

Certain forms of physical contact with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult are inappropriate and, therefore, prohibited and will not be tolerated. They include intentionally touching a child, youth, or vulnerable adult in a personal/private area of the body or intentionally hitting, slapping, or punching, a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, including for punishment or correction.

Staff members and volunteers must establish clear and appropriate lines and boundaries with children, youth and vulnerable adults.

Other Prohibited Behaviors

The following acts or omissions are violations of this Policy and will not be tolerated during any activity or program.

- Verbally abusive language such as belittling, derogatory name-calling, bullying, or harassing remarks.

- Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or abusive conduct.
- Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between LPC staff or volunteer and a minor or a vulnerable adult.
- Physically abusive behavior or infliction of bodily injury to a minor or vulnerable adult.
- Mental or emotional injury to a minor or vulnerable adult caused or exacerbated by a LPC staff or volunteer.
- Physical neglect of a minor or vulnerable adult, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities and programs of the church.
- The presence or possession of obscene or pornographic materials at any church-sponsored event.
- The presence, possession, or being under the influence of any illegal or illicit drugs.
- Consumption of or being under the influence of alcohol or marijuana while leading or participating in church activities while minors are present.
- Other acts of child/youth/vulnerable adults abuse, sexual abuse, or the misuse of technology are strictly prohibited and must be reported immediately.

Events

1. There must be at least one (1) staff or volunteer, when working directly with children, youth, or vulnerable adults at any LPC event, certified in first aid and CPR.
2. Whenever LPC organizes an event that includes minors from other churches or organizations, all staff or volunteers from those organizations or churches must be made aware of this policy and sign the Statement of Acknowledgment form.
3. Whenever LPC joins/participates in an event that another church is organizing, we will follow all their policies and guidelines. If that church does not have a safe church policy or similar document, we will not send our children or youth to those events. When participating in the activity, LPC staff and volunteers shall abide by the policies of that leading church and shall:
 - a. Not send a person to act as a child/youth or vulnerable adult worker whom the council knows has violated the provisions of the Book of Order or policy of a local congregation or Presbytery pertaining to sexual misconduct or child/youth protection.

Travel

The driver of an automobile that is transporting children, youth, or vulnerable adults for a LPC activity must be a staff member or volunteer who is 21 years of age or older, who possesses a valid driver's license and automobile insurance. Minors should not ride in private vehicles or with other students without a written consent form listing which volunteers can drive signed by a parent or legal guardian prior to the church-sponsored event or activity.

Exceptions may be made in the case of an emergency deemed necessary by the staff and volunteers on site.

Overnight Events

Overnight events in which children, youth, or vulnerable adults are present will be required to have two child/youth workers present at all times. One on one interactions will not be allowed overnight.

All attendees will have a liability form signed by a legal guardian in order to attend.

Screening and Background Checking

A child/youth/vulnerable adult worker, whether staff or volunteer, shall be subject to:

- The applicant's consent to a criminal background check, which shall be processed and approved on a case by case basis by a pastor and a CE elder before participation in any child/youth/vulnerable adult activity.
- The applicant must undergo training with a pastor or CE elder regarding LPC policies and regulations before participation in any child/youth/vulnerable adult activity

Reporting Responsibility

In addition to any reporting obligations required by law, it is the responsibility of each staff member and volunteer, to IMMEDIATELY report to a pastor or CE Elder any suspected or known prohibited or inappropriate interaction between a staff member, volunteer, or event participant, and a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.

Any person bringing a report of abuse or assisting in investigating will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment, church membership or affiliation, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged.

Training

Upon employment and/or volunteering and every two years thereafter, the Pastor or CE elder will ensure that each staff member or volunteer will receive training regarding the responsibilities and requirements of this Safe Church Policy.

The training shall cover:

- What constitutes child/youth/vulnerable adult abuse and neglect.
- How to recognize the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect.
 - <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/safety/mandated-reporter>
 - <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/safety/what-is-abuse>
- State laws concerning definitions of abuse and reporting.
- Mandatory criminal background checks and the security of those files.
- Explanation of the importance of the application and screening processes.
- Appropriate boundaries with children and youth, especially regarding adult/child/youth transportation and use of technology.
- If an overnight event is planned, discussions of boundaries involving appropriate sleeping arrangements, and restroom facilities use shall be discussed.

Disciplinary Action

If a volunteer or staff is in violation of this policy it will automatically trigger a meeting with a pastor and the CE Elder. The Pastor and CE elder will determine if the action had the intent to harm or not. If there was no intent to harm, the Pastor or CE Elder will provide additional training to the volunteer or staff, give them a warning, and will let them continue working.

If the behavior continues, the Pastor and CE Elder will determine if they need additional training or if they should continue serving as a volunteer or staff with children.

If the Pastor and CE Elder determine that there was an intent to harm, the volunteer or staff will no longer be allowed to serve with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

All disciplinary actions will be written up and reported to the Personnel Committee for further review.

Receipt and Acknowledgment of Policy

At the time of training every staff member and volunteer will be given a copy of this policy and will confirm receipt of the same in writing.

Confidentiality of Records

The sponsoring organization shall maintain all child/youth/vulnerable adult worker applications, results of background checks, disciplinary actions, and related information in confidential, secured files. These can only be accessed by a Pastor, CE Elder, or Elder from Personnel Committee.

Civil Reporting Procedures For Non-Church Activities/Events

Who is required to report child abuse or neglect?

Anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect can, in good faith, report. If you are identified as a mandated reporter, you are required by law to report your concerns to the local Children's Administration (CA) office, Child Abuse Hotline or law enforcement (RCW 26.44.030).

What circumstances justify a report and when should I report?

If there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect or may be at risk of abuse or neglect, the report must be made at the first opportunity but in no case longer than 48 hours. "Reasonable cause" means a person witnesses or receives a credible written or oral report alleging abuse, including sexual contact, or neglect of a child (RCW 26.44.030).

RCW 26-44-020 defines abuse and neglect as injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child by any person under circumstances which indicate that the child's health, welfare, and safety is harmed. Abuse and neglect does NOT include the physical discipline of a child as defined in RCW 9A.16.100.

What is reportable?

- Physical abuse (defined in WAC 388-15-009)
 - Physical abuse means the nonaccidental infliction of physical injury or physical mistreatment on a child.
 - Physical discipline of a child, including the reasonable use of corporal punishment, is not considered abuse when it is reasonable and moderate and is inflicted by a parent or guardian for the purposes of restraining or correcting the child.
- Sexual abuse (defined in WAC 388-15-009)
 - Sexual abuse means committing or allowing to be committed any sexual offense against a child as defined in the criminal code. The intentional touching, either directly or through the clothing, of the sexual or other intimate parts of a child or allowing, permitting, compelling, encouraging, aiding, or otherwise causing a child to engage in touching the sexual or other intimate parts of another for the purpose of gratifying the sexual desire of the person touching the child, the child, or a third party. A parent or guardian of a child, a person authorized by the parent or guardian to provide childcare for the child, or a person providing medically recognized services for the child, may touch a child in the sexual or other intimate parts for the purposes of providing hygiene, child care, and medical treatment or diagnosis.
- Sexual exploitation (defined in WAC 388-15-009)
 - Sexual exploitation includes, but is not limited to, such actions as allowing, permitting, compelling, encouraging, aiding, or otherwise causing a child to

- engage in: (a) Prostitution; (b) Sexually explicit, obscene or pornographic activity to be photographed, filmed, or electronically reproduced or transmitted; or (c) Sexually explicit, obscene or pornographic activity as part of a live performance, or for the benefit or sexual gratification of another person.
- Negligent treatment or Maltreatment (defined in WAC 388-15-009)
 - Negligent treatment or maltreatment means an act or a failure to act, or the cumulative effects of a pattern of conduct, behavior, or inaction, on the part of a child's parent, legal custodian, guardian, or caregiver that shows a serious disregard of the consequences to the child of such magnitude that it creates a clear and present danger to the child's health, welfare, or safety. A child does not have to suffer actual damage or physical or emotional harm to be in circumstances which create a clear and present danger to the child's health, welfare, or safety.
 - Abandonment (defined in WAC 388-15-011)
 - Parent or guardian abandons a child when the parent or guardian is responsible for the care, education, or support of a child and:
 - Deserts the child in any manner whatever with the intent to abandon the child;
 - Leaves a child without the means or ability to obtain one or more of the basic necessities of life such as food, water, shelter, clothing, hygiene, and medically necessary health care; or
 - Forgoes for an extended period of time parental rights, functions, duties and obligations despite an ability to exercise such rights, duties, and obligations.

Where do I report suspected child abuse and neglect?

Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) within local communities are responsible for receiving and investigating reports of suspected child abuse and neglect. Reports are received by Children's Administration/Child Protective Services (CPS) located in each community office and assessed to determine whether the report meets the legal definition of abuse or neglect and how dangerous the situation is.

Children's Administration offers several ways to report abuse:

- Hotline - call 1-866-ENDHARM (1-866-363-4276), Washington State's toll-free, 24 hour, 7 day-a-week hotline that will connect you directly to the appropriate local office to report suspected child abuse or neglect.
- TTY Callers - call 1-800-624-6186 to place a direct TTY call.

From: <https://www.atg.wa.gov/child-abuse-neglect>

Where do I report suspected vulnerable adult abuse and neglect?

To report abuse or neglect of a vulnerable adult in Washington State, call the:

- Complaint Resolution Unit toll-free hotline at 1-800-562-6078 if the person that you suspect is being abused or neglected is living in a nursing home, boarding home, or adult family home.
- Local Adult Protective Services (APS) office if the person you suspect is being abused is living in their own home or somewhere other than a residential care facility. Find the APS office in your county. Learn more about what happens after you call APS.

What information will I be asked to provide?

Questions that will be asked when you call

- The name, address and age of the child.
- The name and address of the child's parent, guardian or other persons having custody of the child.
- The nature and extent of the abuse or neglect.
- Any evidence of previous incidences.
- Any other information which may be helpful in establishing the cause of the child's abuse or neglect and the identity of the perpetrator.

You do not need to have all of the above information when you call to make a report, but the more accurate information you can provide, the better equipped the offices will be to assess the child's safety.

**STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE LONGVIEW PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
SAFE CHURCH POLICY**

This document is to acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Longview Presbyterian Church Safe Church Policy. I understand and accept that it is my responsibility to read, understand, become familiar with, seek interpretation where necessary, and comply with the policies and procedures contained in this policy.

Signed _____ Date _____

Print name _____

Position _____

TECHNOLOGY CONSENT FORM

I, _____, the legal guardian of the below children/youth consent to the below statements:

Child: _____

Child: _____

Child: _____

Child: _____

I give approval to the staff and volunteers of Longview Presbyterian Church to:

- Contact my child on social media.
- Post photos or videos of my child(ren) on social media and/or the church website.

Signed _____ Date _____

Print name _____

TRAVEL CONSENT FORM

The driver of an automobile that is transporting children, youth, or vulnerable adults for a LPC activity must be a staff member or volunteer who is 21 years of age or older, who possesses a valid driver's license and automobile insurance. Minors should not ride in private vehicles or with other students without a written consent form listing which volunteers can drive signed by a parent or legal guardian prior to the church-sponsored event or activity.

I, _____, the legal guardian of the below children/youth consent to let the volunteers and staff of Longview Presbyterian Church transport my child for the stated event.

Event _____ Date _____

Child: _____

Child: _____

Child: _____

Child: _____

Signed _____ Date _____

Print name _____

