

## **PRESBYTERY OF THE MIAMI VALLEY CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY**

### **Section 8.01      Statement of Purpose**

As Scripture tells us, “Children are a heritage from the Lord” (*Psalm 127:3*). The covenant of baptism unites all Christians in a commitment to care for and nurture our children. Recognizing that nurturing and protecting children and young people is paramount, the Presbytery of the Miami Valley (“the Presbytery”) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the practices in this directive, the Presbytery affirms our goal to protect the children and youth in our care from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior, while at the same time protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

### **Section 8.02      Applicability**

This policy applies to meetings, events or activities that are explicitly sponsored or financially underwritten by the Presbytery and that include or involve children under the age of 18, either as the focus of the event or in a separate child care setting for an adult event. Hereafter in this policy these meetings, events or activities are known as “Event(s).” They include:

1. Stated or Called Meetings of the Presbytery.
2. Presbytery ordination and installation services and other Presbytery-led or sponsored worship services.
3. Presbytery-led or sponsored workshops, training or education events for children or youth, or for adults when separate child care is provided.
4. Presbytery-led or sponsored youth events irrespective of location; chaperoning of participants in the PC (USA) Youth Triennium; the Presbytery spring youth retreat; and similar events.

### **Section 8.03      Exclusions**

1. Events at which children or youth are present but are constantly under the sole supervision and care of their own parents or legal guardians.
2. Youth events, worship services, education or training events, or meetings at specific churches or groups of churches that do not involve explicit Presbytery sponsorship or funding. Those events and meetings are instead covered by the churches’ Child Protection Policies (Book of Order G-3.0106, which requires councils to develop Child Protection Policies applicable to their activities). Promotion of such events on the Presbytery’s web site or through other means does not in itself constitute Presbytery sponsorship.

#### **Section 8.04 Authority and Notification**

The Designated Official (“the D.O.”) of the Presbytery is appointed by the Leadership Council to oversee implementation of this policy. The name and contact information for the D.O is posted on the presbytery web site. The D.O. is tasked with ensuring this policy is adhered to, but also in certain cases with making the policy workable and effective in situations when strict compliance is impossible.

Organizers of events and activities that include children or youth under the age of 18 are responsible for proactively, in advance, notifying the D.O. with key information about the event using Form A or its equivalent. Form A, “Event Form—Child and Youth Protection Policy Applicability,” is available on the presbytery web site ([www.miamipresbytery.org](http://www.miamipresbytery.org)) under the Clerk’s Corner, or from the D.O. The D.O. will then identify which of these events or activities are subject to this policy and advise organizers what actions are necessary to carry out this policy. The D.O. will document those actions for each Event.

#### **Section 8.05 Standards of Conduct**

No harmful or diminishing behavior towards children or youth (including physical, emotional, sexual harm or abuse) is tolerated at Presbytery Events. Paid or volunteer leaders shall not touch or interact with children or youth in any way that is sexually stimulating, emotionally demeaning, or exploitative. Common expressions of affection and affirmation (hugs and pats on the back) or physical care (diaper changes or first aid) are appropriate in this or any community of caring Christians. Staff and volunteers must be careful that physical expressions of affection are not excessive or imposed upon another individual. A specific list of prohibited and allowed behaviors is included in Section 8.10 of this policy.

#### **Section 8.06 Rule of Three and Other Leader Ratios**

Paid and volunteer leaders working with children and youth are tasked with guarding the physical and emotional safety of those in their care and to be aware of signs indicating neglect of the child’s well-being. Situations in which one unrelated adult and one child/youth are alone should be avoided, and are always subject to the standards in Section 8.10, Prohibited Acts. Whenever practical, at least three people (two adults and one child/youth or if necessary one adult and two children/youth) should be present.

1. The normal practice is to have at least two adult leaders/chaperones present for any activity and such additional adult volunteers as are required to provide adequate supervision and care appropriate to the number of children participating. Normally those leaders will be at least three years older than the oldest child or youth supervised. If it is impractical to have more than one adult constantly present, the Event Organizer is responsible for arranging for another adult to check in periodically on the child care setting to ensure appropriate protection standards are being maintained.

2. Staff and volunteers shall transport children and youth in groups rather than alone. In ordinary circumstances, an unaccompanied adult should not drive a single child in connection with a Presbytery Event without the permission of the child's parent or guardian.

Variations from the policies above should be discussed with and approved by the Presbytery's D.O. in advance.

### **Section 8.07 Authorization and Training of Child Care Personnel**

1. **Authorization through church:** When a Presbyterian church hosts an Event within the bounds of Presbytery, and that church has in place and has implemented a Child (and Youth) Protection Policy adopted by its session, that church's policy will apply to the Event unless the terms of this Presbytery policy are more specific or comprehensive, in which case the Presbytery policy will govern. Employees or volunteers who have been authorized, following a formal background check or other approved review process under the church's policy, to work with children and/or youth in the hosting church are normally approved to serve at Events occurring in that church. In that case, the hosting church will submit to the D.O. a completed Form B for each such employee or volunteer who will serve, and provide each employee and volunteer with a copy of the applicable Child (and Youth) Protection Policy. Form B, "Child/Youth Worker Certification Form," is available on the presbytery web site ([www.miamipresbytery.org](http://www.miamipresbytery.org)) under the Clerk's Corner, or from the D.O.
2. **Additional checks:** The D.O. will require additional background checks, at the presbytery's expense, in specific cases when the Presbytery Child and Youth Protection Policy differs from the hosting church's and so is applicable to the Event, or whenever the D.O. determines that a Presbytery-initiated check is advisable. The checks are provided by the Insurance Board (the Presbytery's property and liability insurance provider) or other provider authorized by the Presbytery. Among the types of checks the D.O. may require are:
  - a. A basic check that includes a multi-state criminal background check and a national sex offender registry check.
  - b. A motor vehicle records check when applicable to the duties of the individual.

The person to be considered will authorize the additional checks by signing Form C, "Background Check Authorization Form," available on the presbytery web site ([www.miamipresbytery.org](http://www.miamipresbytery.org)) in the Clerk's Corner or from the D.O.

Where a criminal record exists, the D.O. will consider such factors as the seriousness of the crime; statutes that may legally disqualify the person from working with minors; the length of time since the last offense; any pattern of

criminal activity; and activities the applicant has been involved in since the offense(s) occurred. Crimes that are barriers to volunteer work with children are: violent crimes; sexual assault; sexual abuse or neglect of a child; and drug offenses or driving offenses (depending upon position requirements). Convictions, not arrests, are grounds for disqualification.

3. **Training:** The D.O. may require or encourage any employee or volunteer working with children or youth at an Event to receive training in advance using materials provided by the *Armatas* abuse prevention training resources of the Insurance Board or other provider authorized by the Presbytery. A list of required or optional trainings is in Section 8.12 of this policy.
4. **Supplemental policies:** The Presbyterian Youth Connection Network of the Presbytery may adopt standard policies related to child and youth protection that will be applicable to Events they sponsor or financially underwrite. The Presbytery Leadership Council will review and approve such policies both prior to their taking effect and at any subsequent times when the Network proposes substantive changes in those policies.

### **Section 8.08 Reporting**

Any observation or personal knowledge of any violations of this policy at or in connection with an Event must be immediately reported to the person in charge of the Event, the Presbytery's Executive Presbyter, the Presbytery's Stated Clerk, the Presbytery's Designated Official, and/or the Presbytery Moderator after the safety of the child, children, or youth is assured. Further processes will be in accord with those in Article VI of the Presbytery's PMV Policy and Practice Manual, related to sexual misconduct.

### **Section 8.09 Dissemination**

This policy will be displayed on the Presbytery web site and be provided annually to churches, sessions, pastors and Christian educators participating in the Presbytery, and to new pastors as they arrive in the Presbytery. There will be annual training on child and youth protection at a presbytery meeting or other presbytery-wide gathering.

### **Section 8.10 Prohibited Acts**

The following acts are prohibited by this Policy and will not be tolerated or accepted during any Presbytery Event. Any observation or personal knowledge of such violations must be immediately reported to the person in charge of the Event, the Presbytery's Executive Presbyter, the Presbytery's Stated Clerk, the Presbytery's Designated Official (D.O.), and/or the Presbytery Moderator after the safety of the child, children, or youth is assured.

Staff or volunteers caring for or supervising children or youth at Presbytery Events are prohibited from engaging in the following behaviors at all times:

1. Display affection toward a child in privacy.
2. Use profanity or tell off-color jokes.
3. Discuss sexual encounters with or around children or in any way involve children in the staff or volunteer's personal problems or issues.
4. Date or become romantically involved with children.
5. Use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of children.
6. Possess obscene or sexually oriented materials, including printed or online pornography, on property during a Presbytery Event.
7. Have secrets with children.
8. Stare at or comment on children's bodies.
9. Engage in inappropriate electronic communication with children under care during or after an Event, including texts, instant messages, email, or use of social networking sites, or engage in inappropriate taking or sharing of photographs.
10. Work one-on-one with children in a private setting.
11. Abuse children in any way including (but not limited to) the following:
  - a. Physical abuse: hit, spank, shake, slap, unnecessarily restrain
  - b. Verbal abuse: degrade, threaten, curse
  - c. Sexual abuse: inappropriately touch, expose oneself, engage in sexually oriented conversations, or interact with children or youth in any way that is sexually stimulating, emotionally demeaning, or exploitative
  - d. Sexual activity: engage in sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any adult and a child, or permit sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between an older child and a younger child
  - e. Mental or emotional abuse: shame, humiliate, act cruelly
  - f. Neglect: withhold food, water, or shelter, or fail to provide adequate supervision
  - g. Permit children to engage in the following: Hazing, bullying, derogatory name-calling, games of Truth or Dare, ridicule or humiliation, or sexual activity
  - h. Manipulate or exploit a child in any way.
  - i. Carry any type of weapon on property where a presbytery Event is occurring.

### **Section 8.11 Interactions**

Some forms of personal interaction with children during presbytery-sponsored events are certainly appropriate, but they must be within boundaries that protect children and those caring for them. Here are some examples of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors:

1. **Approval and Affection:** In providing approval or affection, the following guidelines apply:

<b><i>Appropriate Physical Interactions</i></b>	<b><i>Inappropriate Physical Interactions</i></b>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Side hugs</li> <li>• Shoulder-to-shoulder or “temple” hugs</li> <li>• Pats on the shoulder or back</li> <li>• Handshakes</li> <li>• High-fives and hand slapping</li> <li>• Verbal praise</li> <li>• Pats on the head when culturally appropriate</li> <li>• Touching hands, shoulders, and arms</li> <li>• Arms around shoulders</li> <li>• Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations)</li> </ul> <p>These may be inappropriate if unwanted by the child or the employee or volunteer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full-frontal hugs</li> <li>• Kisses</li> <li>• Showing affection in isolated area</li> <li>• Lap sitting</li> <li>• Wrestling</li> <li>• Piggyback rides</li> <li>• Tickling</li> <li>• Allowing a child to cling to an employee’s or volunteer’s leg</li> <li>• Any type of massage given by or to a child</li> <li>• Any form of affection that is unwanted by the child or the employee or volunteer</li> <li>• Compliments relating to physique or body development</li> <li>• Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas</li> </ul>
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2. **Verbal Interactions:** The manner of speaking with children establishes respect. The following guidelines apply:

<b><i>Appropriate Verbal Interactions</i></b>	<b><i>Inappropriate Verbal Interactions</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive reinforcement</li> <li>• Appropriate jokes</li> <li>• Encouragement</li> <li>• Praise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name-calling</li> <li>• Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving children in the personal problems or issues of employees and volunteers</li> <li>• Secrets</li> <li>• Cursing</li> <li>• Off-color or sexual jokes</li> <li>• Shaming</li> <li>• Belittling</li> <li>• Derogatory remarks</li> <li>• Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate children</li> <li>• Derogatory remarks about the child or his/her family</li> </ul>

3. **One-on-one interactions:** Because most abuse occurs when an adult is alone with a child, private one-on-one meetings with a child are prohibited unless absolutely necessary. When so permitted, the following guidelines shall apply:
  - a. When meeting one-on-one with a child, always do so in a public place in full view of others.
  - b. Avoid physical affection that can be misinterpreted. Limit affection to pats on the shoulder, high fives, and handshakes.
  - c. If meeting in a room or office, leave the door open or move to an area that can be easily observed by others passing by.
  - d. Inform other employees and volunteers that you are alone with a child and them to randomly drop in. (Ask to be supervised.)
  - e. Document and immediately report any unusual incidents, including disclosures of abuse or maltreatment, behavior problems and how they were handled, injuries, or any other interactions that might be misinterpreted.

To the extent that any of these guidelines may appear to be in conflict, the spirit of them is that one shall seek to be under the supervision of others while meeting privately with a child.

### **Section 8.12 Required, Encouraged and Optional Training**

The Designated Official (D.O.) in the presbytery may require or encourage any employee or volunteer working with children or youth at an Event to engage in training provided by the *Armatius* abuse prevention training resources of the Insurance Board, or by another provider approved by the Presbytery. The following are examples of these trainings:

1. **Required Trainings** (an exemption may be granted if the individual demonstrates that they have received the same or similar training within a reasonable time period):
  - a. All volunteer adult advisors for each Presbyterian Youth Triennium (PYT).
    - 1) How to Keep Your Camp Safe
    - 2) Duty to Report: Mandated Reporter Requirements and Best Practices
  - b. All volunteer Presbyterian Youth Connection (PYC) Network adult advisors, with refresher trainings every two years.
    - 1) How to Keep Your Camp Safe or How to Keep Your Church Safe
    - 2) Duty to Report: Mandated Reporter Requirements and Best Practices
  - c. Volunteers for other overnight events in which the PMV (not an individual church) pays for all or a portion of the volunteer's registration fee.
    - 1) How to Keep Your Camp Safe
    - 2) Duty to Report: Mandated Reporter Requirements and Best Practices

**2. Encouraged Trainings:**

a. All volunteer adult advisors for Annual Spring Youth Retreat.

1) How to Keep Your Camp Safe

2) Duty to Report: Mandated Reporter Requirements and Best Practices

b. Volunteers who watch children at Presbytery Events such as Presbytery meetings.

1) How to Keep Your Camp Safe

2) Duty to Report: Mandated Reporter Requirements and Best Practices

**3. Optional Trainings:**

Volunteer adult advisors who participate in Presbytery Events may request and if appropriate be offered the option to take additional trainings through the *Armatus* resources that they or the D.O. feels will be relevant or helpful.

**Form A**

**Presbytery of the Miami Valley  
Event Form—Child and Youth Protection Policy Applicability**

Event name and description:

Sponsoring committee, ministry or task force:

Date(s) and time:

Transportation arrangements plan (if applicable):

Facility and arrangements (describe for all activities, including child care rooms and location, play areas, sleeping accommodations and restrooms):

Overview of program activities (for example, what will you do to enhance the faith experience of the children/youth under your care?):

Leadership plan, including responsibilities and names of all adult leaders and chaperones:

Contact Person for this Event

Name:

E-Mail:

Phone:

**\*\*Please submit the completed event form to the Presbytery's Designated Official for approval at least six weeks prior to the event and before advertising the event and/or recruiting volunteers and participants.**

**Form B**

**Presbytery of the Miami Valley  
Child and Youth Protection Policy  
Child/Youth Worker Certification Form**

(Please print or type)

Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Presbytery Event:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ The person listed above has successfully passed the congregation's or the presbytery's background check for volunteers or staff working with children and/or youth.

\_\_\_\_\_ The person listed above has successfully passed the congregation's or the presbytery's motor vehicle check (if applicable to the duties expected at the Event).

\_\_\_\_\_ The person listed above has certified that he or she has NOT previously renounced the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as the accused in the midst of a disciplinary proceeding as a teaching elder (minister of Word and Sacrament), pursuant to G-2.0509 of the Book of Order.

Congregation \_\_\_\_\_

Presbytery \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Staff Member or Ruling Elder Responsible for Background Checks:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*Please submit the completed form to the Presbytery's Designated Official at least three weeks prior to the Event.**

**Form C**  
**Presbytery of the Miami Valley**  
**Child and Youth Protection Policy**  
**Background Check Authorization Form**

(Please print or type)

Full Legal Name (please print clearly):

\_\_\_\_\_

Other Names you commonly use: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Driver's license number (for motor vehicle check only):

\_\_\_\_\_

Presbytery Event: \_\_\_\_\_

By signing below, I hereby authorize the Presbytery of the Miami Valley ("the Presbytery"), at their expense, to conduct one or more background checks on me at their discretion using companies the Presbytery deems acceptable. The background checks may include either or both of the following:

\_\_\_\_\_ A basic check that includes a multi-state criminal background check and a national sex offender registry check.

\_\_\_\_\_ A motor vehicle records check when applicable to the duties I would undertake for this Event.

I understand that my successful completion of these checks is required before I may undertake the duties with children or youth for the Event listed above.

Signature of Volunteer or Employee:

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*Please submit the completed form to the Presbytery's Designated Official at least three weeks prior to the Event.**