CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROTECTION

We at Waverly Presbyterian Church believe that children and youth should be in a safe, healthy, nurturing and stimulating environment. Our programs are child-focused, addressing the total needs of the child through integrated and developmentally appropriate programming.

This policy applies to all employees and volunteers who have the responsibility of directing the activities of infants, preschoolers, children and youth under age 18 and adults who are developmentally disabled.

Clearances

All adult volunteers and staff (age 18 or older) working with children are required to receive appropriate background checks as required by state law. For both volunteers and staff, that includes the Pennsylvania State Police Criminal History Record Information and the Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance. Staff members also must have a fingerprint-based federal criminal history (FBI) check submitted through the Pennsylvania State Police or its authorized agent. Volunteers must have the FBI check if they have lived outside of Pennsylvania in the last 10 years. If they have lived in Pennsylvania for the last 10 years, they must swear or affirm in writing that they are not disqualified from service based upon a conviction of an offense(s) spelled out under Section 6344 of state child protective laws. Under state law, these clearances are good for five years. Waverly reserves the right to conduct background checks more frequently for any employee or volunteer.

The clearance requirement is in keeping with state laws which require certain clearances for employees and volunteers who have direct contact with children because they provide care, supervision, guidance or control of children, or have routine interaction with children. Routine interaction is regular and repeated contact that is integral to a person's responsibilities.

On request, Waverly will pay the fees for the appropriate clearances.

Supervision

Two or more caregivers will be present for any activity involving youth under age 18.

Room doors shall remain open at all times for programs sponsored by the church.

Volunteers

A volunteer will be permitted to work with minors only after he/she has been actively involved in the life of the church for a minimum of six months. Volunteers will assist in programs or classes prior to leading them, when possible.

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State Laws and Mandated Reporting

Employees and volunteers are expected to comply with state laws, including mandated reporting requirements. The list of those required by state law to report suspected child abuse includes, but is not limited to, clergy; employees of a child care service who have direct contact with children; and "individuals (paid or unpaid) who – on the basis of their role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled activity or service – accept responsibility for a child."

A mandated reporter must make a report of suspected child abuse if he/she has "reasonable cause to suspect a child is a victim of child abuse." Mandated reporters are required to make an "immediate and direct" report of suspected child abuse to ChildLine either electronically at https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis or by calling 1-800-932-0313. State law also requires the person reporting suspected child abuse to "immediately thereafter notify the person in charge of the institution, school, facility or agency or the designated agent of the person in charge. " For Waverly, this means notifying the teaching elder (pastor), clerk and chair of the Session personnel committee.

A more detailed explanation of state laws can be found on the Internet at KeepKidsSafe.pa.gov.

Record Keeping

The church office administrator(s) will maintain in the church office files of the clearance records for each employee and for applicable volunteers. The files will be kept on a confidential basis and shared only with the teaching elder (pastor) and Session as needed.

In early January, the office administrator(s) will review the files to see whether any of the clearances are due to expire within the next 13 months. If clearances will expire, the church office administrator(s) will notify the person involved, the teaching elder and the chair of the personnel committee of Session as to the need for updated clearances. Updated clearances will be required for the involved person to continue in his/her capacity.

Approved by Session 11/18/2018
Approved by Session 8/20/2025

Nursery procedures

Children who attend Sunday School that is hosted in the nursery or stay in the nursery during worship must have a parent or responsible adult over the age of 18 in the church building at all times.

All children participating in the nursery activities hosted by Waverly must have a Family Information Form on file with Waverly, listing parents/guardians and emergency contact persons who will be responsible for the child.

A parent/guardian or other responsible adult must sign their child in and out of the nursery when the child is participating in Sunday School, child care during worship or any other program or event hosted\ by Waverly in the nursery.

Child Custody Exchange

For the safety of our children, Waverly cannot serve as a custody exchange point.

Virtual Meetings

When meeting virtually with youth (through Zoom or other online format), the following procedures must be followed:

- All meetings must be password protected
- Two adults must be present at all meetings
- Names of participants must be changed to first names only when meetings are recorded
- Parent/guardian permission must be given for minor's attendance at virtual events and for when recordings will be made. This may be done once a year by permission form.

Electronic Communication

In order for youth to participate in youth group, and other youth events, parents must give permission

for youth leaders to communicate electronically with their child. This may be done once a year by permission form, specifying the types of communication allowed.

Leaders will follow requirements of mandating reporting.

Amended by Session on 09/20/2023
Approved by Session 8/20/2025