

LAKE HILLS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA) CHURCH POLICY AND PROCEDURES ON SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

GENERAL POLICY

It is the policy of LHPC to regard the care and nurturing of children and teenagers under our care as one of our most sacred responsibilities, requiring commitment, decency, and honor on the part of child and youth workers assigned to care for children or youth on church premises or at church activities. This requires screening of such workers for those qualities as part of our responsibility.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A CONFIDENTIAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

The session shall establish and appoint a **Confidential Review Committee (CRC)**. The committee shall consist of three non-staff members of LHPC. The committee members shall serve seven-year terms with the terms of the initial appointees being two, five, and seven years and being seven years for appointees thereafter. As a committee member's term is completed, the committee shall propose a replacement for appointment by the session.

The CRC will conduct background checks, maintain private records, and meet with prospective workers to review the findings of background checks.

The CRC will assume the lead role in investigating reports and/or incidents of sexual misconduct pertaining to this policy.

The committee members should have sound judgment and the ability to maintain confidentiality in all matters, reporting and/or sharing information only on a need-to-know basis (including legal needs).

LAKE HILLS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)

CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES

GENERAL PURPOSE STATEMENT

Lake Hills Presbyterian Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the practices below, our goal is to protect the children of Lake Hills Presbyterian Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” and “youth” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “worker” includes both paid and volunteer persons who work with children.

SELECTION OF WORKERS

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened by the CRC. This screening includes the following:

a) Six Month Rule

No volunteer will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until s/he has been involved with LHPC for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

b) Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written questionnaire providing basic information from the applicant and information regarding previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, reference and employment information, and disclosure of any previous arrests. The questionnaire will be held in confidence on file at LHPC.

c) Personal Interview

Upon completion of the questionnaire, a face-to-face contact may be scheduled with the applicant.

d) Reference Checks

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicant’s references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to family or personal references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at LHPC.

e) Criminal Background Check

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and for the following categories of volunteers:

- Those who will have ongoing leadership roles in church programs (such as Sunday School, children's choir, youth group, church sponsored youth athletic team coaches, etc.).
- Those non-family members having occasional one-on-one contact with children during church programs (such as trip or overnight chaperone, vehicle driver, etc.).

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be required to sign an authorization form allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the CRC on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary our mission will preclude a person from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at LHPC.

TWO ADULT RULE

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or any sponsored activity.

NOTICE OF INJURY, ABUSE, OR MOLESTATION

1. Volunteers or paid ministry workers who become aware of any injury, abuse, or molestation occurring within any ministry activity musts immediately inform their activity coordinator, supervisor, or ministry leader.
2. Activity coordinators and supervisors who become aware of any injury, abuse, or molestation connected with a ministry activity must immediately inform the ministry leader. The ministry leader should then complete an ***Incident Report form***.
3. Ministry leaders who become aware of possible abuse or molestation of a participant must ensure that the participant's parent or guardian is immediately informed that possible abuse or molestation has occurred. The ministry leader will also ensure that the Pastor or Educator is informed for further action including investigation by the Confidential Review Committee and/or reporting to civil authorities as may be mandated by law.
4. As is appropriate, the church's insurance carrier (general or professional liability insurance) and Presbytery of East Tennessee should be notified.

VIOLATION OF POLICY OR PROCEDURES

1. Ministry workers must promptly notify their ministry coordinator or supervisor when they or others violate the procedures mandated by this policy.
2. Ministry coordinators, supervisors, and ministry leaders who become aware of a violation of the procedures set by this policy are required to take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance with them. In the process of ensuring compliance with this policy, it may become necessary to remove workers from their positions.

INTERNAL INVESTIGATION

1. This ministry organization considers any allegation of abuse or molestation a serious matter. Each situation will be fully investigated by ministry leaders, always with the assistance of legal counsel and civil authorities, as indicated.
2. Employees who are the subject of an investigation will be removed from their position, with pay, pending completion of the investigation. Employees who admit to the abuse or molestation will be terminated consisted with the established employment practices of this ministry.
3. Volunteer subjects of any investigation will be removed from their positions pending completion of the investigation.
4. This ministry will remove permanently any employees or volunteers from their ministerial duties within the organization if they are found guilty of abuse or molestation in exercise of ministries. Whenever termination of employment is a factor, we will also consult with legal counsel.