

Child Protection Policy

Presbytery of Missouri River Valley

Approved by Council
April 22, 1999

Approved by Presbytery
May 18, 1999

Approved Revisions by Presbytery
February 20, 2016

Reviewed and reaffirmed by Presbytery
November 2, 2023

Presbytery of Missouri River Valley
CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Table of Contents

- I. Statement of Purpose
- II. Selection and Screening of Volunteers and Staff
 - A. Primary Screening
 - B. Secondary Screening
- III. Training
- IV. Supervision of Volunteers and Staff
- V. Reporting Allegations and Incidents
 - A. Internal Reporting
 - B. Reporting to Child Protection or other Civil Authority
- VI. Response to Allegations and Incidents
- VII. Appendices
 - A. Application Letter
 - B. Application Form
 - C. Authorization to Do Police Background Check
 - D. Reference Forms
 - 1. Written
 - 2. Telephone
 - E. Covenant for Leaders
 - F. Discipline Guidelines
 - G. Incident Report Form
 - H. Resources and References

Presbytery of Missouri River Valley
CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

I. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND POLICY

The Presbytery of Missouri River Valley (PMRV) believes it is called by God to provide and maintain a safe, nurturing environment for all children, youth under the age of 18, and vulnerable adults while in its care during any Presbytery sponsored or cosponsored event (including events and activities sponsored by any PMRV congregation). Each PMRV church shall be required to develop its own Child Protection Policy as required by the Book of Order, G-3.0106.

A commitment to this call includes preventing the following types of inappropriate conduct:

Physical Abuse, including any unwanted touch, any physical contact intended to coerce or do harm, any hitting or touching in anger.

Emotional/Verbal Abuse, including insults, name calling, belittling remarks, unfavorable comparisons with other children or youth, shaming, deliberately causing fear, or using speech to hurt.

Sexual Abuse, which is defined as any sexual contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults in a leader's charge, including:

- fondling private parts
- oral, genital, or anal penetration
- sexual intercourse
- forcible rape
- suggestive sexual comments
- showing pornography (sexually explicit materials)
- exposing sex organs
- allowing children to witness sexual activity

For the protection of our children, all persons working directly with children, youth and vulnerable adults, whether paid or volunteer, at any Presbytery of Missouri River Valley sponsored or cosponsored events are subject to the provisions of this policy. Therefore, all such persons are expected to participate in pre-event training and orientation including but not limited to training to increase their sensitivity to the prevention of any form of abuse to and protection of children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

II. SELECTION AND SCREENING VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF

It is the policy of the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley that all adults working with or supervising minors during any presbytery-sponsored or cosponsored activities and programs (including events and activities sponsored by any PMRV congregation) must satisfactorily complete an application form and police background check. The purpose of this policy is to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate in our activities and programs. It is also the policy of the Presbytery that at least one member of a team working with children or youth must be an active member of a congregation within the bounds of the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley.

Procedures:

- A cover letter, application form, and release form for background check will be provided to all potential staff and volunteers by the Presbytery committee responsible for administration of the program.
- Forms must be completed and returned by the deadline set by the Planning Team or committee responsible for the program or event at which the applicant seeks to serve.
- All forms will be reviewed by the Presbytery committee members assigned to the event and at least one member of the Planning Team or committee responsible for the event or its designee. The review will include:
 - Checking form for completeness.
 - Reviewing answers to questions.
 - Checking references.
 - Securing additional information as reviewers deem necessary.
 - Securing appropriate police background check.
- The reviewers, using the information at their disposal, will decide whether or not the applicant will be approved. Their decision must be unanimous.
- Persons not approved will be so notified in writing.
- Completed forms and related confidential information will be kept in confidential files in the Presbytery office.
- Approval will apply for the calendar year in which it was made, and for the next two calendar years. After that period, the applicant must reapply.
- No person shall be exempt from these procedures.
- At all times, the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley reserves the right to determine who shall serve.

III. TRAINING

The Presbytery Faith, Education and Leadership Development (FELD) Committee will offer and inform congregations of training opportunities several times each year on the importance of protecting children and youth from abuse and the specific provisions of the presbytery's policy. All persons working with and/or responsible for children and/or youth at Presbytery sponsored or cosponsored events and activities (including events and activities sponsored by PMRV congregations) will be required to participate in this training. This training should be provided after recruitment and prior to the beginning of one's time of service. The Presbytery will make every effort to provide this training at a time and location which will allow those who are required to be trained to participate in an appropriate training event. In some instances this may mean providing more than one training event; however, it is the presbytery's responsibility to provide reasonable opportunities for this training. No person who refuses or is otherwise unable to participate in planned training events will be allowed to be responsible for children or youth at a Presbytery sponsored or cosponsored event or activity.

Training will include the following components. Specific events and activities, by virtue of their unique qualities, may require additional components.

1. Scriptural basis for child advocacy, e.g.
Deut. 30:19, choose life
Prov. 13:24, those who spare the rod ...
Mal 4:6, turning hearts of parents to their children
Mark 9:36-37, welcoming the children
Mark 10:13-16, Jesus blessing the children
Luke 17:1-3, forgiveness? The dilemma
I Cor. 3:16-17, our bodies are God's holy temple; called to be advocates for the victims.
2. Importance of the issue for the church
3. Recognition and reporting of child maltreatment to include neglect, emotional physical and sexual abuse
3. The specific components of the Presbytery's Child Protection Policy
4. Review of specific safety procedures relevant for the event or activity
5. Concluding litany of affirmation or covenant for leaders

IV. SUPERVISION OF VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF

In addition to careful screening procedures and training for all children/youth workers, the Presbytery will provide for supervision of all persons with responsibility for children and/or youth at Presbytery sponsored or cosponsored events and activities. This is for the protection not only of the children and youth in our care, but also for the persons working with them. This supervision will take the following forms:

Designation of a "Supervisor"

At each event during which there are programs or activities for children or youth, the Presbytery will recruit and/or designate an adult to supervise the children and youth activities and leadership. While the specific title of this position may vary from event to event, this person will have overall responsibility of the program and for the persons providing leadership. The person may or may not have responsibility for recruitment of leadership, but will be responsible for their performance of tasks and behavior during the event in relationship to their work with children and youth. Ordinarily this person will be the one to whom reports of alleged abuse will be made and who will initiate the official reporting process. It is the responsibility of this supervisor to be familiar with the details of the program design and plans and to know what is happening within classes, workshops, or other groupings of children and/or youth. When there is more than one person assigned supervisory responsibility for a program, specific assignments will be made for each person so that both the individual and the leaders/teachers will be clear about to whom and for whom they are responsible.

Two Adult Rule

Ordinarily, there should be at least two adults working with each group of children or youth. In those cases when older youth are part of the care-giving team for children, an adult must always be present with the group. Insofar as possible, no one should be left alone, one on one, with a child or youth. The only exception to this two-adult policy would be in a situation in which the contact occurs in a public place and other persons are in and out of the areas where the adult is working with children or youth. This will be emphasized during the training of all leaders for children's and youth programs. This rule is intended to protect children and to protect the leaders from false accusation. The Presbytery is committed to providing adequate personnel for all events so that this rule may be maintained.

Parental Permission

The Presbytery will seek parental permission for children and youth to participate in any Presbytery sponsored or cosponsored event during which the children or youth will be under the care of someone other than the parents. The permission forms will indicate the specific nature of the event or program, the type of adult leadership which will be

provided, and any release from liability which may be requested. The Presbytery will also request insurance information and parental permission to seek medical treatment for each child or youth participating in the case of a medical emergency.

Training

All volunteers who work with children or youth will be trained in understanding the nature and various forms of child maltreatment such as neglect, emotional, physical and sexual abuse and the effects each has on the lives of children. Through recognition of these signs of possible abuse, all volunteers will follow the reporting requirements of the state in which the activity or event occurs and in accordance with this policy.

Suspicious Behavior

Supervisors and all persons providing leadership for programs for children and youth will be asked to be alert to and report any suspicious behavior which might suggest inappropriate conduct or relationships between an adult and a child or youth or between older and younger youth at the event.

V. REPORTING ALLEGATIONS AND INCIDENTS

Anyone who has knowledge or suspicion that inappropriate conduct has occurred should report it immediately to the Supervisor of the Children or Youth Program or the Event Staff person and to the proper law enforcement agency or Child Protective Services (LE/CPS) if the conduct involves suspected physical or sexual abuse of a child. It is especially incumbent upon those in leadership positions within the children and youth program to be particularly sensitive and alert to warning signs of abuse and potential incidents. When an individual reports an incident or allegation, that person should refrain from engaging in questioning the alleged victim so that the appropriate investigative procedures may be followed.

Preliminary Steps

The person observing and reporting an incident of alleged inappropriate conduct should first:

- I. Secure the safety of the child/youth. This may include an immediate call to emergency services as deemed necessary.
2. Secure the safety of others and stabilize the environment in which the incident occurred. Under no circumstances should a reporter who has responsibility for a group of children or youth leave them unsupervised in order to report an incident. Seek help from other caregivers who are close at hand.

Internal Reporting

The following procedure should be used to report the incident to the appropriate supervisors or staff at the event:

- I. Reporter reports orally to his/her immediate supervisor, the alleged offender's supervisor, or to the Event Staff if the supervisor is less accessible at the time of the incident or the time of reporting. If the reporter is an event participant and not someone providing leadership, it is appropriate to report directly to the Event Staff. *Event Staff is the delegated Presbytery Staff member assigned to and on-site at the event.*
2. If the incident involves suspected physical abuse of a child or sexual abuse of a child the original witness should place the call to LE/CPS to ensure that the most direct firsthand knowledge is shared. The original witness should remain available to the supervisor to give first-hand information to the officer or professional investigator. The child should not be questioned any further by any Presbytery representative, leaving all questioning and investigation to the child protection professionals.
3. Supervisor reports the allegation/incident to the Event Staff.
4. If the incident does not involve physical abuse of a child or sexual abuse of a child, Event Staff:

- a. Investigates the facts of the incident/allegation.
 - b. Prepares the official incident report (See Appendix G).
 - c. Initiates the response to the allegation and incident.
 - d. Reports to Presbytery office and/or Presbytery Attorney regarding insurance or legal implications, if deemed necessary.
 - e. Contacts parents or responsible adults as soon as feasible.
5. For incidents of suspected physical and sexual abuse of a child, event staff:
- a. Prepares the official incident report (See Appendix G)
 - b. Reports to Presbytery office and/or Presbytery Attorney regarding insurance or legal implications, if deemed necessary.
 - c. Contacts parents or responsible adults as soon as feasible (I would make clear here, that again LE/CPS would drive this. There should be no communication to the parent from anyone other than one of those two if a call has been made unless they are not going to pursue it.

Reporting to Child Protection or Other Civil Authorities

The specific definition of a "mandatory reporter" varies from state to state according to its relevant law. (See Nebraska and Iowa Law below). Ordinarily, these definitions could be extended to include those who have responsibility for the care of children and youth. The Presbytery recognizes that it has a moral, if not legal, obligation to exercise the care evidenced in Christ's invitation to the little children to "come to him." Therefore, when the investigation of an incident or allegation confirms that the incident or allegation is consistent with what would require reporting to civil authorities, the Event Staff will do so. If the incident is such that it poses an immediate or imminent threat to the safety of the child or youth, any person witnessing the incident may report it to the appropriate authorities. All incidents so reported should also be reported to the Supervisor and/or Event Staff as soon as possible. Training for all children and youth leaders will include appropriate procedures for reporting and how to contact appropriate civil authorities if it should become necessary.

Record Maintenance

A confidential record will be kept on file in the Presbytery office that a report of suspected abuse or neglect was made. This notation will include the name of the event or activity and the staff person to whom the report was made, the date and time that the report was made, and the names of the persons making that report. Nothing confidential will be included in this notation.

Iowa Child Protection Laws

Professionals Required to Report Ann. Stat. §§ 232.69; 728.14

The following persons are required to report:

- Health practitioners
- Social workers or psychologists
- School employees, certified para-educators, coaches, or instructors employed by community colleges
- Employees or operators of health-care facilities, child care centers, Head Start programs, family development and self-sufficiency grant programs, substance abuse programs or facilities, juvenile detention or juvenile shelter care facilities, foster care facilities, or mental health centers
- Employees of Department of Human Services institutions
- Peace officers, counselors, or mental health professionals
- Commercial film and photographic print processors

Reporting by Other Persons Ann. Stat. § 232.69

Any other person who believes that a child has been abused may report.

Institutional Responsibility to Report Ann. Stat. § 232.70

The employer or supervisor of a person who is a mandatory or permissive reporter shall not apply a policy, work rule, or other requirement that interferes with the person making a report of child abuse.

Standards for Making a Report Ann. Stat. §§ 232.69; 728.14

A report is required when:

A reporter, in the scope of his or her professional practice or employment responsibilities, reasonably believes that a child has been abused.

A commercial film and photographic print processor has knowledge of or observes a visual depiction of a minor engaged in a prohibited sexual act or in the simulation of a prohibited sexual act.

Privileged Communications Ann. Stat. § 232.74

The husband-wife or health practitioner-patient privilege does not apply to evidence regarding abuse to a child.

Inclusion of Reporter's Name in Report Ann. Stat. § 232.70

The report shall contain the name and address of the person making the report.

Disclosure of Reporter Identity Ann. Stat. § 232.71B

The department shall not reveal the identity of the reporter to the subject of the report.

Nebraska Child Protection Laws

Professionals Required to Report Rev. Stat. § 28-711

Professionals required to report include:

- Physicians, medical institutions, or nurses
- School employees
- Social workers
- The Inspector General appointed under § 43-4317

The office of Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare is created within the office of Public Counsel for the purpose of conducting investigations, audits, inspections, and other reviews of the Nebraska child welfare system. The Inspector General shall be appointed by the Public Counsel with approval from the chairperson of the Executive Board of the Legislative Council and the chairperson of the Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature.

Reporting by Other Persons Rev. Stat. § 28-711

All other persons who have reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect must report.

Institutional Responsibility to Report

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

Standards for Making a Report Rev. Stat. § 28-711

A report is required when:

A reporter has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect.

A reporter observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances that reasonably would result in abuse or neglect.

Privileged Communications Rev. Stat. § 28-714

The physician-patient, counselor-client, and husband-wife privileges shall not be grounds for failing to report.

Inclusion of Reporter's Name in Report Rev. Stat. § 28-711

The initial oral report shall include the reporter's name and address.

Disclosure of Reporter Identity Rev. Stat. § 28-719

The name and address of the reporter shall not be included in any release of information.

Reporting Procedure: Child Physical or Sexual Abuse

- A. If a volunteer or staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child or youth has been subjected to physical or sexual abuse they must:
 - 1. Report to secular authorities:
 - a. Law enforcement at 911
 - b. Iowa Child Protective Services at 1-800-362-2178; or
 - c. Nebraska Child Protective Services at 1-800-652-1999
 - 2. Contact a Pastor, Director of Christian Education, or event coordinator
This information will be kept confidential
- B. Neither the volunteer nor the staff member should engage in "investigation" nor should they attempt to determine whether the reported incident actually occurred.

VI. RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS AND INCIDENTS

The Presbytery recognizes that we have an obligation to respond to a number of individuals and audiences, depending on the facts of the particular allegation/incident.

The Presbytery also affirms that any response decision is at the sole discretion of the Event Staff person in consultation with the committee responsible for the event and in the best interest of the event. A determination of an unfounded accusation may nonetheless result in a leader being asked to relinquish their leadership responsibility and/or to leave the event if such separation is deemed in the best interests of the event and its participants.

The following guidelines shall apply as the Event Staff and committee or Planning Team determine the appropriate response:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| To victim(s): | 1. Determine need for and provide appropriate care for and follow up on immediate needs of the victim(s). |
| To the accused: | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Remove the accused from leadership, at least temporarily, until the investigation of facts is completed.2. Report of an allegation is not a presumption of guilt and, therefore, appropriate care will be exercised to provide the accused with an opportunity to be heard.3. The Committee responsible for the event should not engage in any investigation or attempt to determine whether the incident actually occurred. After LE/CPS has completed its investigation the Committee should meet to determine the next steps regarding the accused's further participation in and presence at similar events.4. The Committee may recommend pursuance of any further disciplinary action needed |
| To parents or responsible adults: | 1. Share the facts of the incident, the committee's actions, and provide care and follow up as appropriate. |
| To the Event: | 1. Event Staff or committee/Planning Team member reports the facts of the incident to a plenary of event participants as necessary and appropriate, exercising appropriate pastoral care for the victim, the accused, and the other event participants. |

COVER LETTER FOR VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM

Presbytery of Missouri River Valley
Child Protection Policy
APPENDIX A

«FirstName» «LastName»
«Address»
«City», «State» «PostalCode»

Dear «FirstName»:

Thank you for your interest in volunteering to work with the children and youth of the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley. Our programs include child care at Stated Meetings and other events, and youth activities such as trips, lock-ins, and Triennium.

Because of the growing awareness of child safety issues, especially in the area of sexual abuse, the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley now requires that every potential volunteer complete the attached application form. We realize that the information requested is of a personal nature, but we believe that this screening process is the best way to meet both our moral and legal obligations. Above all, we want to provide a safe and secure experience for our children and youth.

Please note that at least one of the adults providing supervisory leadership for children and/or youth in a particular situation must be a member of a presbytery or congregation in the synod.

Also understand that a yes answer to one or more of the questions does not automatically disqualify you from working with children and/or youth. It may simply mean that we will need some additional information.

Because of the potentially sensitive nature of the information on the form, access to your application will be very limited. Each application will be reviewed by two people, designated by the committee or planning team for the event and/or the assigned Presbytery staff member. They will review the application, obtain any other necessary information, and decide whether or not to approve your application. All completed forms will be kept in a confidential file in the Presbytery Office.

Please read all of the enclosed information carefully. When you have completed the attached form return it to the Presbytery office addressed:

Presbytery of Missouri River Valley
Confidential Volunteer Application
302 S. 74th Street
Omaha NE 68114-4617

We look forward to sharing with you the joys and challenges of working with children and youth of the church.

Sincerely,

Enclosure: Application Form
Authorization for Background Check

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM

This application is required of all volunteers working with or supervising minors. It is used to assist us in providing a safe environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs. The information is for Presbytery of Missouri River Valley use only. Please send this completed form to the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley at the address below.

Name _____
Last First Middle

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (H) _____ Q Birthdate _____

Social Security Number _____

Enclose a photocopy of your Driver's License or Identification Card with this form.

Age range and type of work preferred: _____

Related training, experience, or gifts _____

Name of your church _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Pastor _____

How long have you been a member of this congregation? _____

In working with children and youth, we believe it is our responsibility to seek an adult staff that is able to provide a healthy, safe, and nurturing environment. Please answer the following questions accordingly.

1. Have you ever been convicted of or pled guilty to a violent or sexual crime or any crime involving children or vulnerable adults?

Yes_ No_

If yes, please describe: _____

2. Have you ever been formally charged with child abuse or neglect? Yes No

Over -+

*Please list three personal references we can contact on your behalf.
(not former employers or relatives)*

I. Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Pastor _____

2. Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Pastor _____

3. Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Pastor _____

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references listed in this application to release any records or information related to working with minors. I understand that the information provided in this application will be held in confidentiality.

Signature *Date*

Return this completed form to:

The Presbytery of Missouri River Valley
Confidential Volunteer Application
302 S. 74th Street
Omaha NE 68114-4617

**AUTHORIZATION FOR
BACKGROUND CHECK**

Presbytery of Missouri River Valley
Child Protection Policy
APPENDIX C

CONFIDENTIAL

Background Check Authorization

Print Name: _____
(First) (Middle) (Last)

Former Name(s) and Dates Used:

Current Address Since: _____
(Mo/Yr) (Street) (City) (Zip/State)

Previous Address From: _____
(Mo/Yr) (Street) (City) (Zip/State)

Previous Address From: _____
(Mo/Yr) (Street) (City) (Zip/State)

Social Security Number: _____ DOB: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Drivers License Number/State: _____

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I hereby authorize the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley and its designated agents and representatives to conduct a comprehensive review of my background causing a consumer report and/or an investigative consumer report to be generated for employment and/or volunteer purposes. I understand that the scope of the consumer report/ investigative consumer report may include, but is not limited to the following areas: verification of social security number; credit reports, current and previous residences; employment history, education background, character references; drug testing, civil and criminal history records from any criminal justice agency in any or all federal, state, county jurisdictions; driving records, birth records, and any other public records.

I further authorize any individual, company, firm, corporation, or public agency (including the Social Security Administration and law enforcement agencies) to divulge any and all information, verbal or written, pertaining to me, to the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley or its agents. I further authorize the complete release of any records or data pertaining to me which the individual, company, firm, corporation, or public agency may have, to include information or data received from other sources.

** The Presbytery of Missouri River Valley and its designated agents and representatives shall maintain all information received from this authorization in a confidential manner in order to protect the applicants personal information, including, but not limited to, addresses, social security numbers, and dates of birth.

Signature: _____ Date: _ _ _ _ _

Return this completed form to:
The Presbytery of Missouri River Valley
Confidential Volunteer Application
302 S. 74th Street
Omaha NE 68114-4617

REFERENCE CHECK SCRIPT

The following script is suggested for telephone reference checks. If reference checks must be done in writing, this script may be adapted for inclusion in a letter requesting information. The person doing the telephone check should keep notes of the reference's responses. These should be placed in the person's file with their application form and other documentation.

Suggested Script:

My name is _____. (Briefly describe your role in the Presbytery - committee or Planning Team on which you serve, etc.).

_____ (name of person being checked) is being considered for a position as (be as specific as possible describing the work they will be doing and the event at which they will serve). He/She gave us your name as someone who could speak to us about his/her work with children and/or youth and has given us permission to contact you. Would you be willing to answer some questions for us?

1. What leadership or teaching responsibility that you are familiar with has _____ had with children and/or youth?
2. What specific gifts or talent do you believe _____ will bring to this position?
3. Our primary concern is for the health and safety of our children and youth. Do you believe that _____ can provide a healthy, safe, and nurturing environment for children and youth? On what do you base that judgment?
4. Are you aware of any problems which may have arisen while _____ was responsible for children and/or youth?
5. Do you have any hesitation in recommending _____ for (this position)?

COVENANT FOR LEADERS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

I consider this a vow to God, a promise to those who planned this event, and a covenant between myself, the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley, and the children and youth with whom I will work and their families.

- ▶ During my time at (event) I will live as a Christian called to service in God's kingdom.
- ▶ I understand that I have been entrusted with the safety and welfare of all the children and youth assigned to me. At all times I will guard their physical safety and mental, emotional and bodily health.
- ▶ I understand that I have been entrusted with the spiritual health of all the children and youth assigned to me. At all times I will care for their faith development. I will care for their needs for friendship and security and I will work to build a caring, loving community within the classroom and within the (event).
- ▶ I will take care of my own physical and spiritual health.
- ▶ I understand that I must be careful of "suggestive" situations. I will never be alone with a child or youth in my care. If someone requests time alone with me, we will meet in sight of others, but not necessarily where others can hear us.
- ▶ I will never touch a child or youth in anger.
- ▶ I will use appropriate signs of affection and Christian caring. I will respect the feelings of those who do not enjoy even the slightest casual touch.
- ▶ I understand all sexual contact with minors including that which is of mutual consent is a criminal offense and must be avoided.
- ▶ I will guard my language. I will not swear or use inappropriate language in the presence of children and youth.
- ▶ I will set a good example of respecting the property where (event) is held and the property of others and I will be a good steward of God's earth.

I have read the job description and covenant and agree to abide by these statements. I understand that if I do not abide by this agreement, my volunteer services can be terminated at the discretion of the Presbytery staff and/or committee or Planning Team for this event. By signing below, I am acknowledging this covenant between the Presbytery and myself.

Signature of Volunteer

Date

Under 18 Parental Agreement

Date

DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES

A. Defining Discipline

"Discipline is teaching, through experience, how to have self-control, self-reliance, self-esteem, and orderly conduct. It is assuming responsibility for our actions and making decisions about our behavior which build healthy relationships." This view of discipline provides a basic understanding for the Logos Program in many churches. Discipline, when promoted with this definition, encompasses much more than negative behaviors, but an entire system of dealing with one another. The Presbytery of Missouri River Valley will uphold this view of discipline as a nurturing and learning process, incorporated with our ministry.

As a result, everyone in a leadership position must be intentional when dealing with children and youth. In a sense, we must be disciplined in our discipline. Almost everyone will encounter some circumstance where discipline is involved. To be effective we must know the basics, practice, and learn from our experiences.

In *How to Be a Great Camp Counselor*, David Burrow explains four reasons why discipline is necessary in a camp setting. Translated to a broader range of settings, his reasons are:

1. Discipline is for the child/youth. If a child/youth is misbehaving, she/he is missing out on our program.
2. Discipline is for the program/event. We not only have a responsibility toward the child or youth, but for every aspect of the program/event. One person cannot be permitted to spoil the atmosphere or destroy the facilities.
3. Discipline is created for all participants. No one person has the right to prohibit others from having a positive experience, or from feeling safe and secure while participating in a Presbytery sponsored or cosponsored event.
4. Discipline is for our leadership. Remaining in a role of leadership is crucial to the success of a program/event.

Therefore, the Presbytery has adopted the following philosophy for discipline at its events.

B. What is NOT Discipline

Things will go wrong at times. Often, our reflexes are to act in a manner not constructive to promoting positive discipline - discipline that will help others learn and grow. Below are five methods of discipline that don't work when dealing with young people and should not be applied to anyone at a Presbytery sponsored or cosponsored event.

1. Physical Punishment - No person with responsibility for the leadership of children and/or youth is permitted to touch another in anger. Not only is this method not permitted, it is not effective. Studies show that employing physical punishment tends to teach that violence and aggression are appropriate solutions to problems. This is not a lesson which we want to teach.

DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES

2. Ignoring the Problem - Problems will not just vanish. By not acting, the young person is learning that the inappropriate behavior is acceptable.
3. Permissiveness - This method will not teach young people to deal with their mistakes, and only contribute to continued misbehavior.
4. Answering in Kind - This is the "bigger and better" game many enjoy playing. Do not allow yourself to respond in a similar, negative manner to that of a young person. Remember that there are reasons for misbehavior and answering in a frustrated or angered tone will only make the situation worse.
5. Sarcasm - This is a popular method of communication in our culture, but not an effective means of discipline. Sarcasm only humiliates the young person and may serve to destroy your relationship with him or her, destroying any hopes for restoring a positive atmosphere. With young children, sarcasm is often misunderstood and is likely to create more distraction than cure.

C. Basic Rules

Rule for dealing with One Another: Everyone is to treat everyone else as a Child of God. No one has the right to treat others as if they do not matter.

Rules for being at a Presbytery sponsored or cosponsored event:

1. Tell adults where you will be at all times. Do not leave the grounds without adult supervision.
2. Do not bring tape players, walkmans, CD players, electronic games, cell phones, etc. with you to an event unless they come with your parents.
3. Alcohol, illegal drugs, firearms and weapons are not permitted at any Presbytery event. Violation can result in immediate expulsion from the event at parents' expense, based on the discretion of the Event Staff. All prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications must be turned over to the Event Staff unless parents are present to be responsible.
4. Be careful in your use of the property and equipment provided for the event. If anything does get broken, or you notice anything on the grounds that needs attention, please tell your teachers or the Event Staff. Participants will be held responsible for reimbursing the Presbytery for any property damaged as a result of misbehavior.
5. Children and Youth are expected to follow the daily schedule for the event in which they participate. This includes lights out and curfew times.

D. Guidelines for Dealing with Misbehavior

1. Define the Misbehavior
 - a. Gather information concerning the incident. Give everyone involved the opportunity to explain the situation.
 - b. State explicitly the misbehavior.

DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES

2. Determine Possible Causes or Reasons for Misbehavior
 - a. Discuss with the child/youth possible reasons for misbehavior, separating emotions from actions.
3. Options for Action
 - a. Consult and advise Supervisor or Event Staff.
 - b. Try to establish and maintain an understanding relationship with the child/youth.
 - b. Recognize that there are usually specific reasons why a child misbehaves. Try to discover what his/her reasons are. Keep it private, if possible.
 - c. Attempt to determine if behavior occurs at home and school as well to see how it is handled in these settings.
 - d. Try to determine if the child/youth behaved in this manner because he/she wishes to be caught, reprimanded or punished.
 - e. Keep others informed of the incident as necessary, upholding confidentiality when appropriate.
 - f. Make every effort to get the misbehaving child/youth to develop greater self-control.
 - g. Approach the child/youth with kindly firmness, justice and mercy.
 - h. In serious situations, after consultation with the Supervisor and/or Event Staff, contact parents to discuss the matter in a sense of cooperation.
 - i. Be sure to conform to the basic principle of discipline and control: consistence, suitability, flexibility.
 - J. Create meaningful and just consequences for misbehavior. Be sure to not create a greater sense of resentment on the part of the child/youth.
4. What to Avoid
 - a. Disciplining in anger.
 - b. Public condemnation of the child/youth.
 - c. Use of derogatory terms
 - d. A defensive approach
 - e. Driving the child/youth away from the group
 - f. Loss of communication and contact with the child/youth
 - g. Threatening punishment that cannot or will not be enacted
 - h. Striking a child/youth
5. Specific Steps to Prevent Occurrence or Reoccurrence of Misbehavior
 - a. Discuss and establish standards, policies and practices for issues such as personal property, appropriate language, respect for one another (and staff) and use of facilities.
 - b. Reaffirm individual's rights to privacy.
 - c. Reaffirm rights of the group
 - d. Create covenants for the group

DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES

E. Suggestions for Being a Good Disciplinarian

1. Begin with yourself. Set a good example by following all the rules and policies. Keep a positive attitude.
2. Be consistent and fair. Get help when you need it.
3. Do not "label" children.
4. Do not assume the worst.
5. Reward the good.
6. Catch behavior problems at the beginning.
7. Change the arena or atmosphere.
8. Avoid defensive confrontation.
9. Use modification to change behavior.
10. Allow for restitution when needed.
11. Think before you react.
12. Keep a sense of humor.

Adapted from Calvin Crest's "Discipline Guidelines", 1997.

INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Reason for report _____

Date of Incident Time

Event/Activity _____

Name of Reporter _____ Class/Group _____
Title

Name(s) of Child(ren) _____ Age(s) _____

Quote the child's/youth's first words verbatim: _____

Briefly describe child's/youth's demeanor/appearance: _____

Briefly describe what happened: _____

What action did you take? _____

Has the incident been resolved? Yes No Explain: _____

Were there any witnesses? Yes No

Names:

Signatures of witnesses (if possible): _____

Report submitted to: _____

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

Bless Our Children: Preventing Sexual Abuse. Video. Seattle, WA: Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence. (\$99 to purchase; rental also available. Contact Ellen at 206-634-1903.)

Hear Their Cries: Religious Responses to Child Abuse. Video. Seattle, WA: Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence. (\$129 to purchase; rental also available. Contact Ellen at 206-634-1903. [available to borrow from MRV Resource Center])

Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church. Video, study guides, and resource booklet for policy development including models for forms and policy statement. Church Law and Tax Report, Christian Ministry Resources, PO Box 1098, Matthews, NC 28106. [May be borrowed from MRV Resource Center]

Striking Terror No More: The Church Responds to Domestic Violence, edited by Beth Basham and Sara Lisherness. Resource book on issue of domestic violence. Louisville, KY: Bridge Resources, Presbyterian Church (USA), 1997.

We Won't Let It Happen Here! Preventing Child Sexual Abuse in the Church. Prepared for the Presbyterian Church (USA) by Lois Rifner, Susan Keil Smith, and the Presbyterian Child Advocacy Network. Resource book for policy development including models for forms and policy statement. Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Church (USA), 1997. To order call 1-800-524-2612 and ask for PDS #72-650-97-002.

The Presbytery of Missouri River Valley acknowledges the Synod of Lakes and Prairies which developed this policy using the following resources: the presbyteries of Grace, Pueblo and Homestead and the Presbyterian camps at Calvin Crest (Fremont, Nebraska) and Clearwater Forest (Deerwood, MN).