

Lookout Mountain Presbyterian Church

Child Protection Policy

(This policy was adopted by Session on 5/21/2012 and replaces all other existing child protection policies before this date.)

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them." Mark 10:14, 16

"Now it is required that those who have been given trust must prove faithful." 1 Corinthians 4:2

1. PURPOSE OF POLICY

This policy is intended to protect children participating in events sponsored by Lookout Mountain Presbyterian Church (LMPC). This policy applies to LMPC staff compensated or volunteer, who have the responsibility of supervising the activities of minors age 18 and below. This policy does not constitute a contract between LMPC and its employees/volunteers or any other party. It is merely a statement of policy and general guideline which LMPC will seek to follow. LMPC makes no guarantee to any party that all aspects of this policy will be followed in any given situation. LMPC is not responsible for the individual acts of any employee/volunteer.

2. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Child abuse shall be defined as any action (or lack of action) which endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- a) **Physical abuse:** any physical injury to a minor which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, biting.
- b) **Emotional abuse:** emotional injury occurs when the minor is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling, persistent teasing.
- c) **Sexual abuse:** any sexual activity between a minor and an adult or between minors, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, pornography. Other forms of sexual abuse can include verbal comments, exposure to pornographic materials, obscene phone calls, allowing minors to witness sexual activity.

Employee shall be defined as any individual who is paid by LMPC on a full or part-time basis, and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors.

LMPC shall be defined as Lookout Mountain Presbyterian Church.

Child, children, youth and minor shall be defined as any individual age 18 and under.

Screening Committee shall be defined as those individuals appointed by the executive committee of the Session who will be responsible for approving all employees and volunteers who serve in a LMPC ministry to minors.

Volunteer – any individual who is not paid by the church, and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors.

3. SELECTION AND SCREENING PROCESS

LMPC believes that appropriate personal relationships between adult employees/volunteers and minors of the church foster the community of Christ. LMPC will seek to prevent the abuse of minors when they are participating in church programs. Preventive measures include screening, training and supervision of all employees/volunteers and a commitment to eliminating opportunities for abuse within church programs. This screening includes the following:

- a) Six month rule
No applicants will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until they have been involved with LMPC for a minimum of six months. This time of interaction between LMPC and the applicant allows for better evaluation of suitability of the applicant for working with minors. Exceptions to this policy must be approved by the screening committee. Due to the nature of the school year cycle, the MDO program is exempt from this provision.
- b) Written application
All individuals seeking to work with minors must complete a confidential application form; read, be in agreement with, and sign the LMPC Covenant to Teach and Nurture; and give written permission for a criminal records check and have references reviewed. In addition the individual may be interviewed by a member of the screening committee. Approval to work with minors must be granted by the LMPC Screening Committee and the Session. The application will be maintained in confidence on file at LMPC.
- c) Training
Instruction and review of the LMPC child protection policy will be offered annually during scheduled training sessions.

4. EMPLOYEES/VOLUNTEERS WHO ARE MINORS

Employees/volunteers, who are themselves under age 18, are a valuable resource in the care and nurture of our covenant children. The following guidelines apply to this employee/volunteer.

- a) Volunteers must be at least 12 years old; employees must be at least 14 years old.

- b) Minor employees/volunteers will be screened and trained as specified above with the exception of a required criminal records check.
- c) Applications submitted by a minor employee/volunteer must be signed by their parent/guardian where indicated.

5. SUPERVISORY REQUIREMENTS

LMPC has a zero tolerance for abuse in its programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every employee/volunteer in children and youth ministries to act in the best interest of all minors in every program. The following requirements shall be applicable to all employees/volunteers who have contact with minors participating in any program at LMPC.

a) Safety of children

It is the responsibility of employees/volunteers to promote the emotional and physical safety of minors giving regard to all factors and circumstances known to them. If in their opinion, an unsafe condition exists, they shall immediately take appropriate precautions to protect all minors.

b) Two-deep leadership

A reasonable effort will be made to have two non-related employees/volunteers present in the room, or nearby, with minors during church activities.

One-on-one contact between minors and employees/volunteers should be avoided. LMPC recognizes that there will be times when an unaccompanied employee/volunteer may be present with a group of minors or with a single minor. In those circumstances, (such as Sunday school or counseling) doors to the room will be open and windows uncovered or the activity will be conducted in a public space, in view of other adults or minors. Written parental consent should be obtained and on file in the program director's office before the contact if possible; if not, a report of the meeting should be conveyed to the supervisor following the meeting.

Meetings that regularly occur between one employee/volunteer and a group of minors or with a single minor (junior or senior high small groups; private music lessons, counseling, etc) shall have written parental consent from each participant on file in the program director's office before the meeting occurs.

LMPC recognizes that a fundamental goal of the junior and senior high philosophy of ministry is to build relationships with students and families and to have regular, intentional contact with students. Meetings that spontaneously occur between one employee/volunteer and a group of minors or with a single minor are to be encouraged rather than thwarted by the scope of this policy. Therefore, employees/volunteers will be responsible to conduct these meetings in view of other adults and/or minors, to phone parents to receive verbal permission before the meeting occurs and to file a report of the meeting with their supervisor following the meeting.

c) Ratio of employee/volunteers to minors

When supervising minors, it is required that a reasonable ratio of employees/volunteers to minors be maintained at all times. The supervisor overseeing the age group shall be primarily responsible for setting and maintaining a reasonable ratio of employees/volunteers to minors giving due regard to all factors present, including the number and age of the participants, the nature of the activities and the location where the activities are taking place.

d) Overnight procedures

Overnight activities will require a signed permission statement from the parent/guardian of the minors participating and must have a minimum of two employees/volunteers and maintain a ratio of one employee/volunteer per nine minors. An employee/volunteer may never sleep in the same bed as a minor. There must be both male and female employees/volunteers present at all co-ed overnights and at least two same-gender employees/volunteers on same-gender overnights. On campouts, no employee/volunteer may ever be in or sleep in a tent with minors.

e) No confidentiality

Employees/volunteers can never promise confidentiality to a minor. Employees/volunteers must report to the Associate Pastor of Children and Youth if a minor discusses harming himself or others, committing a crime or being abused.

f) Digital privacy

Inappropriate use of cameras, imaging, or digital devices is prohibited. It is inappropriate to use any device capable of recording or transmitting visual images in areas where privacy is expected by participants. Posting ANY images on the internet is not allowed unless permission has been granted by the parents and approved by your supervisor.

g) Hazing and bullying

Physical hazing and initiations are prohibited. Verbal, physical, and cyber bullying are prohibited.

h) Controlled substances

The use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs and/or mind altering substances with minors is prohibited.

6. PHYSICAL/NON-PHYSICAL CONTACT

I. Permissible Contact

- a) Limited physical contact with minors, such as a pat on the back or on the head, or a handshake, is permissible. Brief hugs are permissible within sight of others. Employees/volunteers must avoid any prolonged hugs and must stop a hug immediately upon request of the minor. Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms, placing an arm around the shoulders, sitting beside minors, holding hands during prayer, high fives and hand slapping are all appropriate.
- b) Gift giving
Accepting and giving gifts from/to minors is permissible when appropriate (Christmas, birthday) but is discouraged as a frequent practice. Report to your supervisor any gifts you receive that seem inappropriately given.
- c) Close emotional relationships
Employees/volunteers need to avoid developing close emotional relationships with minors of the opposite sex and exercise extreme caution in dealing with minors of the same sex.

II. Prohibited Contact

- a) Sexual abuse
Any physical contact between an employee/volunteer and a minor that would provide, or is intended to provide, any form of sexual gratification.
- b) Physical contact
physical contact between an employee/volunteer and a minor that includes giving massages, kissing, prolonged embracing, and so forth
- c) Physical abuse
striking, spanking, shaking, slapping or other violent behaviors towards a minor
- d) Pornography
Showing minors images that are pornographic is prohibited. Accidental viewing of pornography when in the presence of minors should be reported to your supervisor immediately. If employees/volunteers become aware of the existence of child pornography in the hands of a minor, they should immediately report this to their supervisor.
- e) Verbal/mental abuse
Language that is humiliating, degrading, threatening, sexual, personally intimate, related to body development or physique, or crude, regardless of how the communication was conveyed (e.g. text messages, email, phone calls, social networking sites, etc.)
- f) Dating
At no time shall any employee/volunteer pursue a dating relationship with a minor and should be sensitive to minors with "crushes."

III. Reporting

All employee/volunteers are to be responsible to immediately discuss with their supervisor any signs of possible violations of the above and/or victimization.

7. DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

- a) No form of punishment that involves pain or physical discomfort may be used. Minors may be restrained if they are in danger of hurting themselves or others. Disruptive minors may be removed from the group to another part of the room.
- b) Complete discipline procedures are available in the employee/volunteer training guide for working with minors.

8. TRANSPORTATION PROCEDURES

- a) All drivers should be licensed and have proof of insurance with limits that meet or exceed requirements of the state in which the vehicle is licensed.
- b) Complete transportation procedures are available in the employee/volunteer training guide for working with minors.

9. CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION OF CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Any employee/volunteer accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by LMPC to be harmful to a minor, may be immediately suspended from participation in any LMPC ministry for minors. Any employee/volunteer found in violation of the LMPC Child Protection Policy may be prohibited from future participation as an employee/volunteer in all LMPC ministries for minors. If the person is an employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from LMPC.

10. REPORTING ALLEGED CHILD ABUSE

a) Reporting obligation

Tennessee state law mandates that anyone who has knowledge of or suspects abuse or neglect of a child must report it. The law makes no distinction between professional and non-professionals on the issue of reporting. Employees/volunteers involved in LMPC ministries to minors must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any good faith suspicion or belief that a minor is or has been physically or sexually abused, physically or emotionally neglected, exposed to any form of violence or threat, exposed to any form of sexual exploitation including the possession, manufacture, or distribution of child pornography, online solicitation, enticement or showing of obscene material. Failure to report a prohibited act to the designated person is a violation of this policy and grounds for an employee's termination of employment. Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act witnessed or suspected by them may be restricted from participation in any activity involving minors. Minors, whether employees or volunteers, are exempt from this reporting requirement.

b) To whom to report

Nothing in this policy negates the right or responsibility of LMPC employees/volunteers to report suspicions of abuse to the appropriate law enforcement agency, the Department of Family and Protective Services or Child Protective Services.

An employee/volunteer may report to an immediate supervisor, the Associate Pastor of Children and Youth or the Senior Associate Pastor and allow supervisory personnel to make the appropriate report to law enforcement agencies. The employee/volunteer should confirm that supervisory personnel have reported the matter to law enforcement agencies and do so him- or herself should he or she have any doubt as to whether the matter has been so reported.

c) How to report

An employee/volunteer is required to report an incident to supervisory staff as soon as possible after the incident. The reporter will be asked to fill out a *LMPC Report of Child Abuse* form which is available from your supervisor and attached to this policy. The reporter may also directly contact the TN Department of Children's Services (DCS), the sheriff in Hamilton County or the chief law enforcement officer in Hamilton County. (423) 209-7000

The TN DCS Hotline number is 1-877-542-2873. Someone is available 24/7.

Resource regarding reporting information: <http://www.state.tn.us/youth/dcsguide/policies/chap14/14.1.pdf>

11. RESPONSE PLAN

In the event that an incident of child abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred on the premises of LMPC or during a sponsored program or activity, the following procedure shall be implemented by the Associate Pastor of Children and Youth or the Senior Associate Pastor, unless he is alleged to be involved.

1. The parent or guardian of the minor will be notified.
2. The employee/volunteer alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with minors pending an investigation.
3. LMPC will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists.
4. LMPC's attorney and insurance company will be notified.
5. If the alleged abuse involves an ordained pastor at LMPC, the Tennessee Valley Presbytery will be notified and the Stated Clerk's office made aware of the situation.
6. LMPC will cooperate fully with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities.
7. One person will be selected to act as the official spokesperson for LMPC, who will be available to the media to answer questions and to interpret the child protection policy. The use of a prepared statement with the advice of legal counsel shall be the means by which the child protection policy will be described to the public.
8. All reports of child abuse or neglect shall be held in absolute confidence. No person shall communicate any information concerning the alleged event to any person except as necessary to cooperate with an official investigation. Any breach of this confidentiality by a LMPC employee/volunteer may be cause for immediate dismissal. The pastor, in consultation with the official conducting the investigation, may authorize limited additional disclosure if necessary to protect other minors from harm in the near future, particularly where the person responsible for the abuse cannot be identified. But in no case shall the identity of the victim or the accused person be disclosed except as required by law. Any person who is found guilty of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position with minors.

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 Report of Suspected or Observed Child Abuse

name of minor	date of report
address/city/state/zip	date of birth of minor or approximation
phone of minor	race
name of parent/guardian of minor	

INCIDENT INFORMATION

date of incident	location of incident
time of incident	
parties involved	additional witnesses with contact information
Description of incident: Where did the incident occur?	
What is the physical evidence of abuse? If possible, this evidence should be preserved and turned in with this report.	
Name of alleged perpetrator including name, address, phone and date of birth:	
Describe the incident.	

REPORTER INFORMATION

reporter's name	reporter's position
reporter's signature	
Name/position of individual receiving this report:	