

Pleasant Valley Church of Christ

Child and Youth Protection

Policy and Procedures

Introduction

Pleasant Valley Church of Christ is committed to children and youth and their care. In order to promote a safe environment for children, the following policy has been developed for all church planned events on and off campus. Adoption of these provisions will enable Pleasant Valley Church of Christ to provide a safe and secure environment for both members of our church family and guests.

Definitions

Child – Person in 7th grade or younger

Youth – Person in 8th grade through 12th grade

Adult – Person 18 years or older, no longer in H.S.

Member – Person who has placed membership at Pleasant Valley Church of Christ

Worker – A paid individual who serves in a position at the church that requires them to be in contact with children or youth during a planned church event on or off campus

Volunteer – A non-paid individual who serves in a position at the church that requires them to be in contact with children or youth during a planned church event on or off campus

Guardian – the legal guardian of a child or youth

Shepherd(s) – Person or Group appointed to serve the Pleasant Valley Church of Christ as a shepherd or a leader

Administrative Minister – Person appointed by the Shepherds to carry out administrative oversight within the Church.

Screening and Selection of Volunteers

To establish a safe and equitable care-giving environment, Pleasant Valley Church of Christ will conduct a screening process for any adult interested in working with children or youth in any capacity. Any adult seeking to work with children or youth at Pleasant Valley Church of Christ must comply with the following screening procedures.

Application: Any adult seeking to work with children or youth at Pleasant Valley will fill out an application prior to serving. The information gleaned from the application will be treated as confidential. The application could be seen by the Executive Minister and/or Youth Ministers, Children’s Ministers, and/or Shepherds.

Criminal History Check: Any adult seeking to work with children or youth at Pleasant Valley Church of Christ will undergo a criminal history check through an authorized service selected by Pleasant Valley Church of Christ. The criminal history check will be conducted at the church’s expense, and results will be treated as confidential.

The information from the criminal history check could be seen by the Pleasant Valley Church of Christ Executive Minister, Youth and Children’s Ministers and/or Shepherds. Previous convictions, misdemeanors and felonies, as well as ongoing court cases, are public information and Pleasant Valley Church of Christ cannot promise complete privacy relating to a criminal history check.

Notes:

- Any applicant who has been convicted of either child abuse or physical abuse cannot serve in any capacity that might bring him/her into contact with children or youth.
- The leadership at Pleasant Valley Church of Christ retain final discretion and have exclusive authority to approve or disapprove for any reason or no reason any applicant, volunteer or worker.
- Any applicant who refuses to consent to a criminal history check will be disqualified from serving either as a volunteer or worker.
- Criminal history checks may be reviewed and renewed at the discretion of Pleasant Valley Church of Christ and are expected to be reviewed and renewed every three years.

Waiting Period: Volunteers will be permitted to work with children and youth in leadership volunteer areas after being a member of Pleasant Valley Church of Christ for three months but can be added as non-leader helpers immediately if so desired. This policy allows people to become familiar with the church and its ministries. The waiting period may be waived on a case-by-case basis by the Children’s or Youth Ministers, with notification to the Shepherds.

Qualifications for any adult wishing to serve as a worker or volunteer in the Pleasant Valley Church of Christ Children’s and Youth Ministry:

- Must be 18 years of age or older
- Must fill out an application
- Must undergo criminal background check
- Must be a member at Pleasant Valley Church of Christ for 3 months

Special Events: If an adult or youth wishes to volunteer at a special event or program that does not put them in direct supervision of children or youth but will include large numbers of children or youth, the screening and selection process may be waived. These volunteers will be asked to not be alone with children or put in direct supervision over children or youth.

Church Sponsored Babysitting: Trained youth volunteers or paid babysitters may supervise at church sponsored events or meetings. They should be under the direct supervision of an adult. That adult must be available on campus for the entire event. Youth volunteers may be asked to lead or supervise a group of children during such an event but should not be placed in a one on one situation with a child.

Expectations of Volunteers

- All volunteers will adhere to policies and procedures.
- All volunteers will be made aware of and will have access to these Policies and Procedures.
- All volunteers will have the opportunity to attend a safety training and general meeting explaining all policies led annually by the Children’s and/or Youth Ministers.

Supervision Guidelines

To maximize the safety and well-being of children and youth at Pleasant Valley Church of Christ, all workers and volunteers will follow the supervision guidelines.

Supervision Guidelines for Children:

- All volunteers must complete the above screening process before serving as a worker or volunteer at children/youth events.
- Pleasant Valley Church of Christ may determine in its discretion the appropriate age for youth workers for each ministry program (for example: minimum worker age may be higher for infants than for preschoolers)
- Two adults will be assigned to all classrooms. Youth workers may help, but do not count toward the two-adult rule.
- If two adults are not available for a classroom, the door will remain open, or the class will be held in a classroom with windows in the doors provided that a single adult should not be in an isolated situation with a single child. Should that situation present itself then the solution will be left to the discretion of a Children's Ministry Leader. A suggested solution would be to combine with another group or class.
- Every attempt should be made to follow appropriate volunteer/child or youth ratios as set out below. However, as these are only goals, flexibility is allowed. Children should not be turned away from an event or class but an attempt should be made to secure additional workers should the ratio be exceeded by more than 2 children. Preferred adult/child ratios are:

Age Level	Volunteers/workers	Children
Infants – 0-9months	1	4
Toddlers-10-23months	1	6
Two Year Old's	1	8
Three Year Old's- Kindergarten	1	9
First-Fifth Grade	1	10
Fifth – Seventh	2	Per Classroom

Events and special activities will not follow these ratios.

Bathroom Supervision

- Workers and volunteers in the nursery should observe the nursery guidelines when changing diapers.
- Elementary children (Kinder-5th grade) may be sent to the restroom alone if a hall monitor is present at the end of the hallway. If no hall monitor is present, then children should be escorted to the restroom and volunteers or workers should wait outside the restroom door. The worker or volunteer should not enter the stall or enter restrooms of the opposite sex.
- Preschool children must be escorted to the bathroom by a volunteer or worker. Bathroom doors should remain propped open if possible when a volunteer or worker is inside with a child.

- Potty Training – Many preschoolers are potty training. Often, guardians ask workers and volunteers to help children as they develop their restroom skills. Workers and volunteers should assist children in a caring manner by:
 - Escorting the child to the bathroom. If possible, take more than one child so the worker/volunteer is not in a one on one situation with a child.
 - Using every effort to ensure the bathroom door remains propped open while you are inside the restroom with a child.
 - Encouraging the child to accomplish as much of the bathroom tasks as possible on their own.
 - For young children, just beginning to potty train, be available to help the child wipe and dress.
 - If you must enter the stall to assist a child, use every effort to ensure the stall door remains open.
 - Using every effort to ensure to inform parents if their child has visited the restroom.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures for Children:

- All children through 4th grade will be checked in for class and children’s church through the computer check-in system and given a name tag. A matching tag will print for guardians for identification purposes.
- Children through 4th grade require parent pick-up. Children in 5th – 7th grade may be released at the end of class if parent has filled out prior permission form and “self-release” is written on their tag.
- Children may be picked up by older siblings if the sibling has the matching parent tag.

Supervision Guidelines for Youth

- Two adults should be assigned to every classroom.
- If two adults are not available for a classroom, the class should be held in a room with windows and/or windows in the doors.
- Workers that are Youths may counsel children/youth in a one-on-one situation so long as the counseling is done in plain view of others. If counseling must be done off campus, the meeting must be in a public place.
- Workers that are Youths may counsel children/youth in the presence of another adult.

Social Media Policy

Pleasant Valley Church of Christ will ask volunteers and workers to post PVkids Ministry photos taken at Pleasant Valley Church of Christ activities; on campus meeting times and/or off Pleasant Valley Church of Christ off campus events to our closed Facebook group PVkids. We will ask that they not post photos of PVkids ministry events to public social media domains. When we are notified that there is a conflict with this policy; we will contact the person and ask for them to remove the post from the public domain.

Emergency Precautions and Procedures

Precautions

- Evacuation route (fire and tornado) maps will be posted in each classroom near the door.
- Each classroom will be equipped with an Emergency Procedures Bag containing written emergency evacuation procedures, flashlights, walking ropes (for rooms with younger children), a class list, and any other emergency supplies deemed necessary by the Children's and/or Youth Ministers.
- Workers and Volunteers will be trained annually in emergency evacuation procedures.

Evacuation of Main Building - All children's/youth classes Evacuation Procedures (excluding nursery)

- Guardians should not attempt to come pick up children/youth. Workers and volunteers will assume responsibility for safely evacuating each child/youth in their class.
- Before leaving the room, workers and volunteers should have already marked the children/youth present in class, adding any names not listed on the class list and names of workers and volunteers on the class role provide on the classroom clipboard. Workers and volunteers should take the clipboard/classroom bag with them.
- Workers and volunteers will count the children/youth before leaving the room and upon arriving at the evacuation location.
- Workers and volunteers will evacuate their group to the west parking lot, using the route on the relocation plan that is listed near the door in each room. Youth's will evacuate to the east parking lot to the shared corner by Trellis Square.
- Once on the designated place, workers and volunteers will count their children/youth and ensure that all children/youth from their group are accounted for.
- Workers and volunteers will use the class roster from the class bag/clipboard as a sign out sheet once all are safely evacuated. Parents may find and sign out their child/youth from the class worker or volunteer only AFTER all classes are safely out of the building.
- 911 will be contacted by a church staff member or other designated worker or volunteer.

Evacuation of Main Building - Nursery Evacuation Procedures

- Guardians should not attempt to pick up children from the nursery once an evacuation is ordered. Nursery workers and volunteers will assume responsibility to safely evacuate every child in the nursery.
- Nursery workers and volunteers will use the sign in sheet for the morning, checking to make sure they have an accurate list of the children present and include the names of workers and volunteers. Nursery workers will keep this list as a sign out sheet upon completion of the evacuation.
- All nursery workers and volunteers from the nursery will count the number of children they are evacuating and then will evacuate children by means of rolling cribs and walking ropes to the far west area in the west parking lot.
- All nursery workers and volunteers will count the children upon arrival to the far west parking lot to ensure all are present and accounted for.
- Guardians may find the nursery group and sign out their child with a nursery worker or volunteer once the entire group is safely out of the building.

Evacuation of Main Building in case of a Tornado

- Children on the first floor will be evacuated to the nursery classrooms. Children on the 2nd floor will be evacuated to the balcony stairwells. Workers and volunteers will assume responsibility to safely evacuate every child to their designated area.
- Guardians should not attempt to pick up children from the designated location until the tornado sirens have stop sounding once the sirens have been activated. Workers and volunteers will assume responsibility to safely evacuate every child to their designated area.
- Workers and volunteers will use the sign in sheet for the classroom, checking to make sure they have an accurate list of the children present and include the names of workers and volunteers. Workers and volunteer workers will keep this list as a sign out sheet upon completion of the evacuation.
- All workers and volunteers from will count the number of children they are evacuating and then will evacuate children by means of walking ropes, and orderly lines to the areas designated in the building.
- All workers and volunteers will count the children upon arrival to ensure all are present and accounted for.
- Guardians may find the group and sign out their child with a worker or volunteer once the sirens have stop sounding and the threat is gone.

Active Shooter in the Building

- All entry doors on the first floor to the children will be triggered to close and lock.
- Guardians should not attempt to pick up children from the classroom until the first responders give us an all clear.
- Workers and volunteers will use the sign in sheet for the classroom, checking to make sure they have an accurate list of the children present and include the names of workers and volunteers. Workers and volunteer workers will keep this list as a sign out sheet upon release.
- All workers and volunteers from will count the number of children and move them to the farthest corner of the classroom from sight.
- All workers and volunteers will close all blinds/shades in the classroom on windows and door and lock the door.
- Guardians may find their children in their appropriate classroom and sign out their child with a worker or volunteer once all clear has been given and the threat is gone.

Transportation

Vehicle Requirements

- All vehicles used to transport children/youth to a church sponsored function must be in good running order and possess a current Arkansas license plate and appropriate passenger restraints.
- All vehicles will have insurance coverage as required by Arkansas law.

Qualification of Drivers for church sponsored events

- Drivers for any church function must be 25 years of age or older.

- Drivers may be required to submit to a Motor Vehicle Report.
- Drivers should have appropriate class license for driving vans, school buses or larger trucks.
- Drivers will have a minimum of \$100,000 liability insurance.
- Drivers will obey all traffic laws.
- Drivers will supply the church with a photo copy of their driver's license and car insurance.

General Rules

- For any church sponsored event that a child/youth will be off church property, a parental permission form including emergency contact information, pertinent medical history and insurance information must be completed for each child and be in the hands of the worker or volunteer chaperoning the child/youth.
- Youth may ride with youth workers or volunteer guardians as long as this does not create a one-on-one situation except for special circumstances, for which parent permission can be obtained through text or email.
- If youth are driven to or from an event by a driver other than a church sponsored driver, they do so at their own risk. Church workers will not arrange carpools with any drivers that are not approved drivers of Pleasant Valley Church of Christ and meet the qualification guidelines.

Over Night Trips

- All persons are to follow by the Pleasant Valley Church of Christ Safety Policy and Procedures at all times, including the two adult rule.
- None of the children/youth will be allowed away from the designated overnight area without prior permission of the group leader and the guardians' signed permission.
- No child/youth is to be left alone in a room except the restroom.
- No two children/youth of the opposite or same sex are to be left unsupervised.
- No child/youth of the opposite sex will be allowed to sleep in the same room
- Spouses will not be allowed to share a room with a nonrelated child or youth without written consent.

Compliance

Each member assigned to serve in the areas of children and/or youth ministry is responsible for implementing the provisions set forth in this policy during all church sponsored/planned events either on or off campus. This policy further applies to all paid church personnel, regardless of whether or not they are specifically assigned to children or youth ministries. Volunteers and workers will be given a copy of the policy. Copies of the policy will be available for any person to view upon request.

Responding to allegations of child abuse

Suspected or observed child abuse: Under the Arkansas Child Maltreatment Act, including Ark. Code 12-18-402, if a worker or volunteer suspects or observes child abuse or neglect, the worker or volunteer is legally compelled to report his/her observations or findings to the proper authorities according to the requirements set out in the Arkansas Child Maltreatment Act. Any allegation of child abuse will be investigated immediately by Child Protective Services. Any such situations will be handled promptly, with due respect for privacy and confidentiality, and with due process considerations.

Response procedure to allegations of child abuse made against a volunteer, worker or member:

Members of the church community, including volunteers working with children and youth, are obligated to report reasonable suspicions of child abuse.

1. Allegations of child abuse will be promptly reported to Child Protective Services (CPS) by the volunteer, worker or member who suspects the abuse.
2. After reporting to CPS, the volunteer, worker or member who suspects the abuse will notify the Children's and/or Youth Ministers and will fill out an Incident Report form provided by Pleasant Valley Church of Christ.
3. The Children's and/or Youth Ministers will notify the Executive Minister and Shepherds of the suspected abuse.
4. The Shepherds and/or Children's/Youth Ministers will notify the congregation's legal counsel; and
5. The accused will step down from service until Child Protective Services completes the investigation.
6. The Shepherds or appointed administrative staff leader will appoint a representative to manage all discussions regarding the suspected abuse. The appointed representative will be the only one to speak authorized to speak on behalf of Pleasant Valley Church of Christ to any third party regarding the suspected abuse, except as is required by applicable law or as required to comply with the investigative process. Volunteers, workers and members will not make comments to the media or on social media regarding the suspected abuse.

Response Procedure after an investigation by CPS

If the investigation by CPS reveals that the allegation involves inappropriate conduct but is not considered child abuse by Arkansas law, then the Children's and Youth Ministers along with the Executive Minister and Shepherds will have the sole discretion to determine a course of action for the accused. This action may range from counseling the accused and re-education of proper conduct for a first offense, to removal from serving in the ministry. The guardians involved will be informed of the plan of action by the Children's and/or Youth Ministers and Shepherds before it is implemented. If the decision rendered is to not remove the accused, he/she will receive special monitoring to ensure the inappropriate conduct will not be repeated. Repeated offenses will be grounds for removal from serving in the Children's/Youth Ministry. The Children's and Youth Ministers, Executive Minister, and Shepherds will decide what kind of special monitoring will be needed in their discretion.

Response to child abuse alleged or suspected in a non-church context

The volunteer or worker who suspects the abuse or in whom a child or youth confides abuse will:

1. Call CPS with their concerns; and
2. Notify the Children's and/or Youth Ministers; and
3. Fill out an Incident Report Form.

Notice that policies and procedures may be changed at any time by Pleasant Valley Church of Christ in discretion.