



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN

Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

Adopted by Session: April 26, 2026

Next Review: August 2026

Statement of Purpose

Westminster Presbyterian Church believes that we are called by God to create a safe haven for all the children, youth, and vulnerable adults in our care, protecting those who are powerless and empowering them through faith and trust. During each baptism of an infant, child, or adult into this covenant community of faith, the members of Westminster pledge to uphold that person in Jesus Christ and to teach, strengthen, and support their relationship with the Body of Christ.

Therefore, the members of Westminster are committed to the safety, welfare, and protection of all children, youth, and vulnerable adults participating in this church's activities and programs, as well as those adults, whether volunteers or staff, involved in their care and nurture.

Westminster recognizes that some people have particular gifts for teaching and supporting the growth of children, youth, and vulnerable adults, and wants to encourage them to use those gifts. At the same time, the church places certain criteria on those who choose to serve in this capacity.

The Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy outline best practices to reduce the risk of abuse by any adult or participant during any child, youth, or vulnerable adult (CYVA) program or activity. We are called to stand not in judgment but in compassion. We believe any person who has been involved in an accusation of committing an act of abuse can expect fair treatment and our prayers, as a child of God.

The Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy should be reviewed annually by the Children and Youth Committees, with any recommended revisions included in the report to the Session prior to the Session meeting, when the Plan will be reviewed by the Session. The Session will adopt amendments as necessary as part of this annual review/report process.

Annual training for volunteers and staff should take place before fall programming begins. This policy will be distributed to all Westminster staff, volunteers, and Session members, and posted digitally on Realm or other appropriate sites.

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Page numbers are approximate and may vary by printer settings. Any changes to this plan require Session approval.

Definitions

As used herein, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

Abuse: neglect, abuse, or harassment, whether physical, mental, sexual, or verbal, of any child, youth, or vulnerable adult, or any other behaviors prohibited by this Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy.

Child: any minor from birth through 5th grade.

CYVA: child, youth, or vulnerable adult.

CYVA Program or Activity: any church-sponsored program or activity that involves children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults, at any location, including programs occurring at the church; overnight lock-ins; off-campus service, field, or mission trips; off-campus fellowship activities; choir programs; VBS; or other church-sponsored activities on or off campus.

Grooming: A pattern of behavior by which an individual builds trust and emotional connection with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, and often with their family or community, for the purpose of gaining access to that person and reducing their resistance to abuse. Grooming behaviors may appear benign or caring in isolation and often occur over time. Grooming may be carried out by strangers, acquaintances, family members, or trusted community figures, including those in positions of religious authority.

Interpersonal Boundary Issues: any behavior in which a minor is testing, pushing against, or violating the personal boundaries of a peer, including unwanted touch, persistent invasion of personal space, coercive language, or attempts to isolate another child or youth from the group.

Minor: any person from birth to 18 years of age.

Problematic Sexual Behavior (PSB): sexual behavior between or among minors that is outside the range of developmentally typical behavior, considering age, developmental stage, and the presence or absence of coercion, significant age difference, or power imbalance.

Significant Age or Developmental Difference: a difference of three or more years between children, or a meaningful difference in developmental capacity. Behaviors involving a significant age or developmental difference are more likely to constitute reportable abuse.

Vulnerable Adult: any person eighteen years or older without the developmental or cognitive capacity to consent.

Adults: any church staff (including pastors, employees, and contractors) or volunteers who participate or seek to participate in any CYVA program or activity.

Youth: any minor from 6th grade through age 18.

Part I: Eligibility and Screening

A. Eligibility Requirements

All adults must meet the following eligibility requirements before serving in any CYVA program or activity:

- Be an active member or regular attendee of Westminster for a minimum of six months, or be able to provide a prior church or employer reference.
- Be 18 years of age or older. Adult volunteers in youth programs must be 22 years of age or older.
- Complete a background check.
- Complete annual CYVA training.
- Sign the CYVA Covenant annually.

In emergency situations, a person who has not fulfilled all eligibility requirements may serve if approved by the Pastor for Formation and the Senior Pastor. This person must not be alone with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.

Guest speakers approved by the Session and/or staff are exempt from background check and training requirements. A guest speaker shall not be with minors without an approved adult present.

B. Background Checks

1. Security background checks for all adults will be facilitated by the Director of Church Administration.
2. Background check results will be maintained in a secure, confidential electronic file by the Director of Church Administration.
3. The following convictions automatically disqualify a person from serving in any CYVA program or activity: sexual abuse (rape); aggravated sexual assault; injury to a child; incest; indecency with a child; inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance of a child; possession or promotion of child pornography; the sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a minor; employment harmful to a child; or abandonment or endangerment of a child.
4. All other convictions or charges not listed above will be reviewed by the Pastor for Formation and the Senior Pastor to determine eligibility.
5. In the event of a disqualifying background check result, the adult will be notified by the Senior Pastor.
6. Active adults will be rescreened annually. Additional checks may be requested at any time by the Pastor for Formation or the Senior Pastor.

C. Annual Training and Recommitment

All adults who volunteer in any CYVA Program or Activity and all WPC staff (regardless of position) must complete training annually. In-person training will be offered before the start of fall programming. Anyone who cannot attend an in-person session must complete an approved online course. In no event will anyone be permitted to participate in Faith Formation, Youth

Group, or any retreat or trip that involves supervising minors without having completed a training and a background check within the previous twelve months.

Additionally, all new WPC employees must complete training within their first week of employment.

Training will cover:

- The purpose and requirements of the Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy
- Definitions of abuse and prohibited conduct
- Preconditions for abuse to occur, grooming definition
- Westminster's supervision and environmental standards
- Electronic communication and social media policies
- Recognizing interpersonal boundary issues and problematic sexual behavior
- Reporting and response procedures
- NC mandatory reporting obligations (G.S. 7B-301)
- Incident reporting procedures

All adults who volunteer in any CYVA Program or Activity and all WPC staff (regardless of position) will review and sign the CYVA Covenant at the beginning of each program year.

Background check results, volunteer applications, and completed CYVA Covenants shall be retained for a minimum of three years following the end of the adult's service. All records shall be stored securely and destroyed in a manner that protects confidentiality. The Director of Church Administration will maintain a current list of approved Volunteers, available to program directors at any time.

D. Youth Volunteers

To serve as a Youth Volunteer, a minor must:

1. Be at least 13 years of age. Youth Volunteers assisting in nursery or any program serving infants or toddlers must be at least 15 years of age.
2. Be at least three years older than the children with whom they are working. This age gap requirement always applies and is not subject to exception.
3. Be a member of Westminster, or a child of an active Westminster member, or a regular attendee.
4. Complete CYVA training before beginning service and again annually. In-person training is preferred, but participation in an approved online program will also suffice.
5. Have a parent or guardian sign the CYVA Covenant on the Youth Volunteer's behalf before the Youth Volunteer begins service and before fall programming begins for each subsequent program year.

Youth Volunteers are not subject to a background check. However, because Youth Volunteers are minors themselves, their participation is subject to all the protections and supervision standards of this Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy, not only those applicable to workers.

Supervision

Youth Volunteers must be under the direct, active supervision of an approved adult at all times. A Youth Volunteer may never be left alone with a child or group of children, even briefly. The adult responsible for the program is responsible for the conduct and safety of both the children in the program and the Youth Volunteer.

Youth Volunteers do not count toward the Two-Worker Rule. A Youth Volunteer's presence does not satisfy the requirement for two approved adults in any program or activity. At least two approved adult workers must always be present in addition to any Youth Volunteers.

Scope of Role

Youth Volunteers may assist with activities, supervision, support, and care tasks under the direct supervision of an adult. They may not make independent decisions about program activities, discipline, or any matter covered by this Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy. They may not serve as a Trip Leader or in any leadership capacity on overnight events. They may not be assigned responsibility for any child's check-in or check-out of programming events or nursery care.

Application

A Youth Volunteer Application must be completed and signed by both the Youth Volunteer and their parent or guardian before service begins. Applications are submitted to the Pastor for Formation and are valid for one program year. The Director of Church Administration must maintain a current list of approved Youth Volunteers, which will be available to program directors at any time.

If a Youth Volunteer Observes or Experiences Concerning Behavior

Youth Volunteers share the same obligation as adult workers to report any concerning behavior they observe to an adult worker immediately. If a Youth Volunteer discloses to an adult worker that they have experienced or observed inappropriate behavior from another adult or youth in connection with Westminster programming, that disclosure shall be treated with the same seriousness as any other report of abuse and shall follow the reporting procedures in Part VII of this Plan.

Part II: Supervision Standards

A. The Two-Worker Rule

At all times, a minimum of two approved adults must be assigned to supervise or lead any CYVA program or activity. This rule applies on campus, off campus, in vehicles, and during overnight events. It applies during structured programming and during unstructured time, including breaks, transitions, and free time.

- If the two adults are married to one another or members of the same household, a third approved adult must always be present.
- Non-approved adults do not count toward the Two-Worker Rule.
- Adults must actively supervise minors, not merely be present in the same general area.
- If it is not possible to have two adults per vehicle, there will be at least two children/youth in the vehicle, and all vehicles must stay within sight of each other.
- If the adult driver is related to one of the minors in the vehicle, at least two additional minors unrelated to the adult driver must be present.

B. Open Door and Observable Space

Whenever possible, classroom doors will be kept open. In rooms with Dutch doors, the top half will remain open. Doors may be closed only if there is a window from the room into the hallway with an unobstructed view. No decorations or signs may cover door windows.

If an adult is unexpectedly alone with a CYVA, they shall immediately move to a visible location, keep the door open, and avoid physical contact until a second adult arrives.

One-on-one meetings between an adult and CYVA must be conducted with the door open or in a room with an unobstructed window, and a parent or staff member must be notified. One-on-one lunches or meetings must be held in public places with parental approval and notification to the Pastor for Formation or the Senior Pastor.

C. Supervision Ratios

Westminster strives to maintain the following adult-to-CYVA ratios:

- On-campus classroom settings: at minimum 1:10 for children's ministry.
- Outdoor, gym, or open-campus settings: at minimum 1:6.
- Off-campus day trips: at minimum 1:6, with 1:4 recommended.
- Overnight and mission trips: at minimum 1:6, with 1:4 recommended. Gender representation should match the gender(s) of the participating CYVAs.

D. Restroom Supervision

1. Adults will verify that no unknown individuals are occupying the restroom before allowing children to use the facilities.
2. Adults will stand in the doorway while children are using the restroom, protecting children's privacy and adults' safety. Whenever possible, children should be sent in pairs.
3. If adults are assisting younger children, restroom doors must remain open.
4. Adults will always provide proper supervision when children use public bathrooms.
5. Adults may change diapers only in an open space.

E. Check-In and Check-Out

Children left in the care of adults for classes or activities must be checked in and out by a parent, guardian, or other person designated in writing by the parent or guardian. All guests must be signed in.

Parents and guardians are expected to remain on the church campus while their children are in Westminster's care. If a parent leaves campus during an event, they must sign in their child upon arrival and provide their location and contact information. Parents shall leave a cell phone number at drop-off in case of an emergency.

Youth and Vulnerable Adult events during non-worship hours are typically drop-off situations. Parents should still ensure that a volunteer or WPC staff member has parent/guardian contact information in the event of an emergency.

F. Private Homes

CYVAs are not permitted to enter the private home of any adult or volunteer for a church-sponsored activity without at least two approved adults who are not related to one another and are not related to any CYVA in the activity present at all times. Supervision ratio requirements apply in private home settings.

G. Gift Giving

Because gift-giving can be used as a means of grooming, individual gifts from adults to children or youth are not permitted without the knowledge and written permission of the child's parent or guardian, the Pastor for Formation, or the Director of Children and Youth Ministries. Group gifts for recognized milestones (baptism, 3rd grade Bible presentation, confirmation, graduation) are permitted, as are group gifts from volunteers, such as a special treat or token from a youth leader as part of a lesson.

Part III: Prohibited Behavior

The following behaviors are prohibited for all adults in any CYVA program or activity. This is not an exhaustive list:

- Threatening or intentionally inflicting physical injury on a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
- Committing any sexual offense against, or engaging in sexual conduct with, a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
- Making any sexual advance, requesting sexual favors, or engaging in verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature.
- The presence or possession of obscene, illicit, or pornographic materials at any CYVA program or activity.
- Providing, showing, or forwarding obscene, illicit, or pornographic materials to any child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
- Being under the influence of, or in possession of, alcohol or any illegal or illicit drug while leading or participating in any CYVA program or activity.
- Carrying any type of weapon at any CYVA program or activity.
- No volunteer shall engage in private, one-on-one electronic communication with a CYVA.
- Using platforms designed to prevent message retention (such as Snapchat) to communicate with minors.
- Photographing or recording CYVA in any area where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy.
- Giving individual gifts to a CYVA without parental permission and ministry director approval.

Part IV: Electronic Communication and Social Media

Why This Policy Matters

Research on grooming behavior consistently shows that digital communication is among the most common pathways through which inappropriate adult-minor relationships develop. Policies that keep communication visible and group-based are among the most effective structural safeguards a church can maintain.

A. Core Principle: No Private One-on-One Communication with Minors

No volunteer shall engage in private, one-on-one electronic communication with a CYVA. This rule mirrors the Two-Worker Rule in physical settings. All electronic communication between a volunteer and a CYVA shall include at least one staff member or the CYVA's parent/guardian. This policy applies regardless of the content or platform.

If a CYVA initiates a private communication, the volunteer shall redirect the conversation to a group channel or bring in a staff member or parent/guardian. In genuine emergencies requiring private contact, the volunteer shall notify a staff member as soon as possible and document the exchange.

B. Approved Channels

Text Messaging

1. Group text threads to minors must include at least one parent or guardian and one additional staff member.
2. Volunteers may text or call a parent or guardian. This is distinct from texting the minor.
3. Non-emergency communication should occur between 7:00 am and 9:00 pm, where possible.

Email

1. Email to minors must include at least one parent or guardian and one additional staff member in the To or CC field.
2. Employees should use their Westminster-provided email address for ministry communication.
3. Non-emergency communication should occur between 7:00 am and 9:00 pm, where possible.

Social Media and Direct Messaging

1. Volunteers shall not follow, friend, or connect with individual CYVA on personal social media accounts.
2. Communication through social media direct message functions (Instagram DMs, Snapchat, Facebook Messenger, Discord, etc.) between a volunteer and an individual CYVA is prohibited.
3. Westminster-administered group pages may be used for ministry communication and must have at least two adult administrators.
4. Volunteers shall not add CYVA to personal social media groups or group chats that are not church-administered.

Video Calls

1. One-on-one video calls between a volunteer and a CYVA are subject to the same rules as one-on-one in-person meetings.
2. Group video calls for youth/vulnerable adult programming are permitted with at least two adult cohosts or participants. The adults may not be married to each other and should have completed the mandatory annual background check and CYVA training.
3. Recording video sessions is strongly discouraged. Video sessions shall not be recorded without the prior knowledge and consent of all participants and their parents or guardians.

Gaming and Emerging Platforms

1. Volunteers shall not communicate with CYVA through gaming platforms or any platform not identified as an approved channel in this policy.
2. Any new platform proposed for use in youth ministry must be approved by the Pastor for Formation and the Senior Pastor. The platform must have at least two approved adult administrators, and operate under the same visibility requirements as other approved channels.

C. Content Standards

Regardless of platform, all electronic communication between adults and CYVA must be professional, ministry-related, and appropriate to the relationship. Adults shall not share personal details of their private lives with CYVA, use language that is sexual, romantic, or inappropriate, communicate with a CYVA late at night without necessity, send or request photos or videos of a personal nature, or ask a CYVA to keep a conversation private from their parents/guardians.

Adults should be aware that all digital communication is a permanent record, even when a platform appears to offer ephemeral or disappearing messages. The use of platforms designed to prevent message retention is prohibited for communication with minors.

D. Photography and Video

1. Adults may photograph or video-record CYVA during Westminster-sponsored activities only in group settings and for ministry purposes.
2. Adults shall not photograph or record CYVA in any area where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy, including sleeping areas, bathrooms, or changing areas.
3. Adults shall not share photographs or videos of CYVA on personal social media accounts without confirmed parental consent.
4. If an adult receives an unsolicited, inappropriate photograph or video from a CYVA, the adult shall not respond directly, shall preserve the communication, and shall notify the Pastor for Formation and the Senior Pastor the same day.

E. Concerning Communications

Adults shall report to the Pastor for Formation or the Senior Pastor any communication, electronic or otherwise, from a CYVA suggesting abuse or neglect at home, suicidal ideation or self-harm, romantic or sexual interest directed at the adult, unsafe behavior, policy violations by another adult, or serious personal distress. When an adult receives a concerning

communication, they shall preserve it, not promise confidentiality, and notify the Pastor for Formation and the Senior Pastor the same day.

F. Adult Responsibilities

1. All volunteer adults shall comply with the CYVA Policy's annual training requirements.
2. Adults who are uncertain whether a particular communication is appropriate shall consult the Pastor for Formation before sending it. When in doubt, do not send.
3. Adults who become aware that another adult is communicating with a CYVA in violation of this policy shall immediately report it to the Pastor for Formation and the Senior Pastor.
4. Violations of this policy are subject to the same consequences as other violations of the Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy.
5. When an adult's volunteer role ends, their access to church-administered platforms and communication channels shall be removed promptly by the Pastor for Formation.

Part V: Overnight and Mission Trip Protocols

A. Pre-Trip Requirements

1. Every overnight event must have a designated Trip Leader who is a Westminster staff member or a volunteer approved by the appropriate program director.
2. All adult chaperones must be approved adults, including completion of a background check, training, and CYVA Covenant. This applies to parent volunteers.
3. No exceptions to adult eligibility requirements shall be granted for overnight settings.
4. An Adult Leadership Form must be submitted to the Pastor for Formation at least 30 days before the event.
5. A pre-trip chaperone orientation meeting must be conducted before departure, ideally at least a month in advance of the trip.

B. Required Forms

The following forms must be collected for every CYVA before departure:

- Parent/Guardian Permission Form (event-specific)
- Medical/Insurance Form (parent-signed, including medications, allergies, and emergency contacts)
- Emergency Contact Form (minimum two contacts reachable at any time during the event)
- Photography and Social Media Consent Form

Medical forms must accompany the group and always be accessible to the Trip Leader and the designated Medical Contact.

C. Chaperone Ratios and Gender Representation

Overnight events require a minimum of a 1:6 adult-to-CYVA ratio, with 1:4 recommended. At a minimum, adult chaperones must be present throughout the event, with gender representation matching that of the CYVA participants. No overnight event shall proceed without meeting this requirement. Volunteer leaders on overnight trips must be at least 22 years of age, with at least half being 25 or older.

D. Rooming and Sleeping Arrangements

1. Rooming arrangements shall generally group CYVA of the same gender expression together. This is a logistical baseline, not a safety guarantee. The Two-Worker Rule and room check requirements apply within same-gender sleeping areas with equal force.
2. Adults and CYVA shall not share sleeping rooms except for related parent/child pairs, with written parental acknowledgment, or approved intergenerational mission trip arrangements.
3. No adult shall share a bed with a CYVA under any circumstances.
4. No CYVA shall be assigned to a sleeping room containing fewer than three CYVAs. A minimum of three youth or vulnerable adults must be present in any youth/vulnerable adult sleeping areas at all times after lights-out. The medical isolation exception in Part V.H applies.

5. Middle school and high school youth shall be housed separately, where the facility allows.
6. Adult chaperones shall be roomed in close physical proximity to CYVA sleeping areas. At least one adult of each gender represented among the CYVA shall be in this proximity role.
7. Room assignments shall be made by the Trip Leader. CYVA shall not self-select room assignments.

E. Lights-Out and Overnight Supervision

1. The Trip Leader shall establish a lights-out time and communicate it to all chaperones and CYVAs at the start of the event.
2. Two adults shall conduct a room check of all CYVA sleeping areas at lights-out. The chaperones conducting each check shall document the time and their names.
3. CYVAs are not permitted to leave their assigned sleeping areas after lights-out without permission from a chaperone and an escort or buddy, other than to use the bathroom.
4. CYVA shall not enter the sleeping area of other CYVA without explicit permission from a chaperone, regardless of gender.
5. Chaperones shall not enter a CYVA sleeping area after lights-out alone. Entry shall be by two adults, or by one adult with immediate notification of a second adult.

F. Daily Supervision

1. The Trip Leader shall conduct a headcount at a minimum at: departure from sleeping quarters; arrival and departure from each activity site; meal times; return to sleeping quarters; and lights-out.
2. CYVAs shall travel in groups of three when not under the direct supervision of an adult chaperone.
3. No CYVA shall leave the event site without explicit written pre-authorization from a parent and the Trip Leader's approval.
4. Adults shall not use personal devices for personal purposes while actively supervising youth.
5. Trip volunteers may not bring partners, spouses, or significant others unless those individuals have completed all adult eligibility requirements and received advance written approval from the Pastor for Formation.

G. Bathroom and Changing Facilities

1. Chaperones shall inspect the bathroom and shower facilities on arrival to confirm adequate privacy.
2. Chaperones shall establish scheduled bathroom and shower times where facilities are shared. Every effort will be made to establish separate shower facilities for adults and CYVAs.
3. Adults shall not enter a single-use bathroom or changing areas occupied by CYVAs except in a documented emergency. If entry is required, the adult shall announce their presence, be accompanied by another adult wherever possible, and document the entry.
4. No photographs or videos may be taken of CYVAs in bathrooms, changing areas, or sleeping areas.

H. Medical and Emergency Procedures

1. A designated Medical Contact shall carry all medical forms, administer medications per parental instructions, and serve as the primary point of contact for health-related matters.
2. If a CYVA requires medical isolation due to illness, they shall be housed separately with regular check-ins by two chaperones. No chaperone shall be alone with the isolated CYVA. Parents or guardians shall be notified promptly.
3. In a serious medical emergency, the Trip Leader shall call 911 immediately, then notify the CYVA's emergency contact and the Pastor for Formation and the Senior Pastor.
4. A written report shall be completed for any accident, medical emergency, or injury. This report is either the internal WPC form or a medical report received by the urgent care/hospital.

I. Policy Violations During Overnight Events

1. The Trip Leader has full authority to implement the Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy during the event and shall do so without waiting for direction from church leadership when immediate action is required.
2. The Trip Leader shall contact the Pastor for Formation and Senior Pastor by phone the same day any policy violation, suspected abuse, or CYVA-on-CYVA inappropriate behavior is observed or reported.
3. If an adult is suspected of a policy violation, the Trip Leader shall immediately separate the adult from all CYVAs.
4. Reports to DSS or law enforcement shall be made in the jurisdiction where the event is occurring, not only upon return to North Carolina.
5. All incidents shall be documented on the day they occur using the Suspected Abuse Incident Report or general incident report form.

J. Transportation

1. The Two-Worker Rule applies in vehicles unless parental permission for an exception has been obtained. The two workers may not be related/married.
2. All drivers must have a valid driver's license, current vehicle insurance, and a Motor Vehicle Record check on file.
3. Drivers shall not use personal electronic devices while transporting youth.
4. The number of passengers shall not exceed the number of functioning seatbelts.
5. CYVAs shall not be left alone in a parked vehicle at any time.
6. If it is not possible to have two adults per vehicle, there will be at least two CYVAs in the vehicle, and all vehicles shall stay within sight of each other.
7. If the adult driver is related to one of the CYVA in the vehicle, there must be at least two additional CYVAs unrelated to the adult driver present.

Part VI: Child-on-Child, Youth-on-Youth, and Vulnerable-Adult-on-Vulnerable-Adult Inappropriate Behavior

A. Purpose and Framing

Westminster recognizes that harmful interactions are not limited to adult actions. CYVAs can engage in behaviors that cause harm to peers, and the church has a responsibility to prevent such behaviors, respond appropriately when they occur, and care for all persons involved.

Child protection research identifies three overlapping factors that must be managed to reduce the risk of harmful peer behavior: intent, opportunity, and access. Westminster cannot control intent. Westminster can, however, significantly reduce opportunity and access through deliberate supervision, environmental design, and adult training. The prevention measures in this section are designed so that adults, families, and the church community clearly understand who holds supervisory responsibility in each situation.

B. Prevention

Supervision

1. The Two-Worker Rule always applies, including during unstructured time. Those two adults must not be related/married.
2. Adults shall be alert to interpersonal boundary issues, which are the earliest observable indicators warranting closer supervision and documentation.
3. Adults shall be positioned throughout activity spaces so that all areas with CYVAs are within sight of an adult at all times.
4. On overnight events, a minimum of three CYVAs must be present in any CYVA sleeping area at all times after lights-out.
5. The “Rule of Three” must always be followed: there must be groups of three people: two adults and one child, one adult and two children. In circumstances where only one adult is present with two children, that adult shall immediately seek a second adult.. In appropriate circumstances, the “Rule of Three” may refer to three youth or vulnerable adults. CYVA should stay in groups of at least three during unstructured times.

Training

1. Adults shall receive annual training on recognizing the difference between age-appropriate behavior and PSB, including practical examples appropriate to the age groups they serve.
2. Adults shall be specifically alert to interpersonal boundary issues and shall understand that they do not need to assess severity before acting on what they observe.
3. Westminster shall periodically offer age-appropriate education for CYVAs on personal boundaries, consent, and safe touch. Parents and guardians shall be notified prior to any such sessions.

Environmental Risk Reduction

1. Programming shall group CYVAs by similar age where possible. Middle school and high school youth shall be housed separately at overnight events.

2. Bathroom and changing facilities shall be supervised to prevent unsupervised peer interaction.

C. Immediate Response

Non-Sexual Inappropriate Behavior (Hazing, Bullying, Physical Aggression)

1. Calmly intervene and separate the CYVAs involved.
2. Communicate clearly that the behavior is not permitted and is inconsistent with Westminster's covenant.
3. Ensure CYVAs remain supervised. Do not leave unattended.
4. Report to the Pastor for Formation as soon as possible. Complete a Suspected Abuse Incident Report if physical harm or a pattern of behavior is involved.
5. The program director or Pastor for Formation shall determine next steps, including parent notification, Senior Pastor notification, and any safety planning.

Problematic Sexual Behavior

1. Immediately and calmly separate the CYVAs involved. Do not leave anyone without supervision.
2. Do not question the CYVAs beyond what is needed for immediate safety. Avoid leading questions. Document the exact words spoken by any child who makes a disclosure.
3. Report immediately to the Pastor for Formation and the Senior Pastor. If the incident occurs off campus, contact by phone the same day. A pastor will contact the parents.
4. Complete a Suspected Abuse Incident Report.
5. The Senior Pastor, in consultation with the Pastor for Formation and the church's attorney, shall determine whether a report to Guilford County DSS or law enforcement is required under NC G.S. 7B-301. When in doubt, a report shall be made. Adults shall not make this determination independently.

D. Documentation of Concerning Behaviors

Westminster maintains two tiers of documentation for peer behavior concerns:

Tier 1: Concerning Behaviors Below PSB Threshold

1. Every adult-observed CYVA peer behavior shall be documented, even if it does not rise to the level of PSB. The purpose is pattern identification, not immediate escalation.
2. The adult shall complete a brief written note with the date, time, location, names involved, factual description, and any action taken, and submit it to the Pastor for Formation and Director of Children and Youth Ministries within 24 hours.
3. The Pastor for Formation and Director of Children and Youth Ministries shall review documented concerning behaviors annually with the Safeguards Committee and flag any patterns for review. The Pastor for Formation will also loop in the Senior Pastor on documented concerns regarding CYVA peer to peer behaviors.

Tier 2: Formal Incident Documentation

1. A Suspected Abuse Incident Report shall be completed for all PSB incidents and for non-sexual incidents involving physical harm or a pattern of conduct.

2. Documentation shall include date, time, location, names of all children involved and adult witnesses, a factual description using the child's own words where a disclosure was made, all actions taken, and whether a DSS or law enforcement report was made.
3. All documentation shall be maintained in a secure, confidential file by the Senior Pastor and/or Director of Church Administration for a minimum of seven years or as required by law, whichever is longer.
4. All reports will be shared with the Senior Pastor.

E. Notification of Families

1. The Senior Pastor or Pastor for Formation shall contact the parents or guardians of all children involved, including both the child who engaged in inappropriate behavior and the child who was harmed, as promptly as possible.
2. Notification shall be conducted separately for each family.
3. Adults shall not independently contact the families of other children involved. All family communication shall be coordinated through the Senior Pastor and Pastor for Formation.

F. Follow-Up and Pastoral Care

1. The Senior Pastor shall assess whether any CYVA involved requires pastoral care or counseling referral and offer those resources to the families.
2. The Senior Pastor shall determine, in consultation with the Pastor for Formation and the church's attorney, what safety planning is necessary before any involved CYVA returns to Westminster programming.
3. When communicating with the family of a CYVA who has exhibited PSB, resistance and denial are normal expected responses. Staff shall approach these conversations prepared for resistance rather than treating it as a barrier to resolution. The focus shall be on behavior and safety rather than on the CYVA's character.
4. The Senior Pastor shall review whether the incident reveals a gap in supervision, environmental design, or adult training, and bring recommendations to the Safeguards Committee.

Part VII: Reporting Procedures

A. Individual Reporting Obligation

All church staff, teachers, parents, volunteers, and adults must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstances, observations, acts, omissions, or situations that they believe violate this Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy.

North Carolina law (G.S. 7B-301) requires any person who has cause to suspect that a juvenile has been abused or neglected to report that suspicion to the county Department of Social Services or law enforcement. This is an individual legal obligation that no church policy or supervisor can override.

Westminster's reporting obligation also flows from PCUSA polity. As provided in G-4.0302 of the Book of Order, any member of the church engaged in ordered ministry and any certified Christian educator employed by this church shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor.

B. When Abuse Is Suspected: Required Steps

Anyone personally witnessing or receiving a report of suspected abuse shall take the following steps:

- Personally secure the safety of the minor or vulnerable adult.
- Report the incident immediately to the Pastoral and/or Education Staff.
- Do not leave the minor or vulnerable adult unsupervised while reporting.
- Under no circumstances should the accused be allowed access to the alleged victim.
- Do not personally confront the individual suspected of abuse.
- Allow the Senior Pastor or Pastor for Formation to provide instructions for reporting the incident to parents or guardians.
- Complete a Suspected Abuse Incident Report documenting the incident in the child's or youth's own words.

C. Tiered Reporting Pathways

Allegations (Suspected Abuse)

1. Every adult is required to report any situation presenting suspicion of abuse to the Pastoral and/or Education Staff no later than 24 hours after the occurrence.
2. Any report of abuse made by a minor about their care, regardless of how unlikely it may seem, must be relayed to the Senior Pastor and Pastor for Formation immediately.
3. The Senior Pastor and Pastor for Formation shall, as required by NC law, report the situation to the Guilford County Department of Social Services (336-641-3000) or law enforcement (911) the same day the reporting threshold is met. The NC Child Abuse Hotline is 1-800-422-4453.
4. All reporting shall be kept confidential. The Senior Pastor is solely responsible for all communications on behalf of Westminster.

Concerns (Lower-Level Issues)

1. Issues that do not clearly constitute abuse but raise concerns about child or vulnerable adult safety or adherence to this plan may be reported orally to the responsible adult leader during the observation, or in writing to the Pastor for Formation or the Senior Pastor.
2. All concerns reported shall be documented and retained by the Pastor for Formation and the Director of Children and Youth Ministries. The Safeguards Committee shall review documented concerns each year to identify patterns. The Pastor for Formation will alert the Senior Pastor of documented concerns, as well.
3. If a documented pattern suggests a risk to children or youth, the Safeguards Committee shall determine appropriate action.
4. The existence of the Concerns pathway does not affect any adult's individual mandatory reporting obligation.

D. Safeguards Committee

The Pastor for Formation, Director of Children and Youth, Assistant Director of Children and Youth, at least one member of the Children's Ministry Committee, and at least one member of the Youth Ministries Committee serve as the Safeguards Committee, along with other committee members designated by the Pastor for Formation. The Safeguards Committee works with appropriate persons to ensure compliance with this Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy, oversees recordkeeping, reviews concerns for patterns, and brings recommended policy changes to Session.

Part VIII: Allegation Response Protocol

Insurance Notice

Westminster maintains liability insurance coverage governing sexual acts and related claims. Specific coverage provisions and carrier notification requirements are addressed separately and are available from the Senior Pastor.

A. Response to Allegations Against Adults, Volunteers, and Staff (Non-Pastoral)

The following procedures apply when the accused is not an ordained pastor of Westminster. When the accused is an ordained pastor, Section B of this Part governs.

Immediate Response

1. Secure the safety of the CYVA. Separate the accused from all CYVAs immediately, regardless of the accused's role or seniority.
2. Notify the Pastor for Formation and the Senior Pastor the same day.
3. Complete a Suspected Abuse Incident Report.
4. Do not confront the accused. Do not investigate independently or question the CYVA beyond what is necessary for immediate safety.
5. Do not disclose information to other adults, volunteers, parents, or congregation members. All communications shall be made by the Senior Pastor.

Internal Notification and Response Team

1. The Pastor for Formation and Senior Pastor shall be notified the same day the allegation is received.
2. The Senior Pastor shall convene the Response Team, which shall include at a minimum: the Senior Pastor or designee; the Pastor for Formation; the Clerk of Session; and the church's attorney. The Response Team may also include a licensed counselor and an Elder from Session.
3. The accused shall be relieved of all duties involving CYVAs immediately and without exception, pending investigation. For paid staff, this shall be with pay unless legal counsel advises otherwise.
4. All documentation related to the allegation shall be collected and maintained in a secure, confidential file by the Senior Pastor. No documents shall be destroyed.

Legal Counsel

1. Westminster's attorney shall be contacted by the Senior Pastor as early as possible, ideally before any external reporting, where circumstances permit.
2. Westminster's attorney shall guide all public communications. The Senior Pastor is the sole authorized spokesperson for Westminster.

Mandatory Reporting

- A report to Guilford County DSS or law enforcement shall be made the same day the reporting threshold under NC G.S. 7B-301 is met. Adults who are uncertain whether a report is required shall err on the side of reporting. Westminster's insurance includes Improper Reporting coverage for good-faith reports that prove unfounded.

Insurance Carrier Notification

1. The Senior Pastor must notify Brotherhood Mutual Insurance within 30 days of the incident or when Westminster first learns of it (1-800-333-3735, Policy No. 32M5A0423395).
2. Westminster shall cooperate fully with Brotherhood Mutual during any claim investigation. No payment or obligation shall be assumed without prior carrier authorization.

Family Notification and Counseling

1. The Senior Pastor or Pastor for Formation shall notify the parents or guardians of the alleged victim as promptly as possible and before the CYVA is returned to their care, where circumstances allow.
2. Westminster's insurance provides Outside Counseling Reimbursement of up to \$5,000 per person for counseling expenses. The Senior Pastor shall promptly inform the victim's family of this benefit. Counseling must be incurred and submitted within one year of Westminster's awareness of the act.

Media and Public Statement

1. If media coverage begins, the Senior Pastor shall immediately notify Brotherhood Mutual to activate the Image Restoration Extension (up to \$10,000 for PR costs, if incurred within 120 days of the allegation becoming public through a media report).
2. Only the Senior Pastor or their designee may speak publicly on behalf of the church.
3. Westminster's prepared public statement is: 'Westminster Presbyterian Church has been made aware of a concern regarding the safety of a person in our care. We take this matter with the utmost seriousness. We are cooperating fully with the appropriate authorities and are committed to the well-being of all involved. To protect the integrity of the ongoing process, we are not able to provide additional comment at this time.'

Investigation and Resolution

1. Westminster shall cooperate fully with any investigation by DSS, law enforcement, or Brotherhood Mutual.
2. If the allegation is substantiated, the accused shall be prohibited from all future CYVA programs or activities. Paid staff shall be subject to termination.
3. If the allegation is unsubstantiated, the Senior Pastor and Response Team shall determine in writing what conditions, if any, govern the accused's return to ministry.
4. Upon completion of the investigation, the Senior Pastor shall report to the Session. Session shall record its receipt of this report.

B. Allegations Against an Ordained Pastor

Critical Governance Note

When the accused is an ordained pastor, Westminster's standard response chain cannot function. This section governs exclusively in that circumstance. Section A above does not apply. All other sections of this Protocol apply as written.

1. Any adult who receives an allegation against a pastor shall immediately secure the safety of the alleged victim and report to the Clerk of Session. The allegation shall not be routed to any member of the Pastoral Staff as the first contact.
2. The Clerk of Session is the primary institutional point of contact for all matters governed by this section.
3. The Clerk of Session shall notify at minimum two additional Elders the same day and shall convene a quorum of Session within 48 hours.
4. The Clerk of Session shall notify the Stated Clerk of the Salem and the Chair of the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry (COM) the same day the allegation is received.
5. Westminster's attorney shall be notified by the Clerk of Session the same day, parallel to the Presbytery notification.
6. The Clerk of Session, not the Senior Pastor, is the sole authorized spokesperson for Westminster in all matters governed by this section.
7. The accused pastor shall be placed on administrative leave from all ministry responsibilities immediately. Leave shall be with pay unless Westminster's attorney advises otherwise. The accused pastor's access to church communication systems and records shall be suspended at the time of leave.
8. The mandatory reporting obligation under NC G.S. 7B-301 applies in full when the accused is a pastor. The Clerk of Session and Westminster's attorney shall determine whether the threshold is met and shall make any required report the same day.
9. Brotherhood Mutual Insurance shall be notified within 30 days, consistent with Section A above.
10. When the Presbytery's COM determines sufficient grounds exist, the Clerk of Session shall convene a Called Session Meeting with a COM-assigned moderator to outline a congregational response plan, communicate what to expect during the investigation, call the congregation to compassion and restraint, and plan for pastoral care for all parties.
11. Session shall ensure that its minutes reflect, at its next regular or called meeting, the actions taken under this section; the notifications made to the Salem Presbytery; and the outcome of any civil or ecclesiastical proceedings, once known.

C. Concealment

Any adult who willfully conceals knowledge of abuse or an allegation from Westminster's leadership is subject to immediate termination of employment or volunteer status, regardless of the outcome of any investigation. Concealment may also void individual insurance coverage under Westminster's Brotherhood Mutual policy. Adults shall never promise a minor confidentiality about a disclosure. All reports of abuse must be shared with the Senior Pastor.

D. Pastoral Care

Westminster is committed to pastoral care for all parties affected by an allegation, including the alleged victim and their family, the accused, the congregation, and adults who witnessed or reported the incident. Pastoral care and institutional accountability are not in conflict. The Senior Pastor shall ensure that different pastoral caregivers are assigned to the victim and the accused wherever possible.

Part IX: Consequences of Violations

When a person is accused of committing abuse under this Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy, the Senior Pastor (or, if the accused is a pastor, the Clerk of Session) shall notify the accused individual after the safety of the alleged victim is secured and in consultation with the church's attorney.

The accused shall be immediately and temporarily relieved of all duties until the allegation has been determined by the church, law enforcement, or a child/vulnerable adult protection agency.

If an act of abuse has occurred, the person shall be prohibited from all future CYVA programs or activities. If the person is a paid staff member, such conduct may also result in termination of employment.

In the event of an unsubstantiated allegation, the Senior Pastor will work with the individual to determine a course of action in the best interest of all parties involved.

Failure to timely report a Prohibited Act to the designated person shall be considered a procedural violation of this Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and shall be grounds for termination of a staff member's employment and dismissal from all CYVA programs or activities.

Any changes to the Child, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy shall be approved by the Westminster Presbyterian Church Session.