Woodland Hills Church of Christ
Child and Youth Protective Guidelines and Reporting Procedures
'CPGP'

Document Revisions

Version	Date
Initial Document	11/22/2025
Feedback Revisions	02/28/26
Feedback revisions	03/12/2026
Form additions	04/25/2026
From Revisions and Protect My Ministry link added	05/16/2026
Removed Actions Page	05/23/26
Changed screening language	10/05/26
Removed forms	10/16/26

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Purpose and Commitment

This procedures and guidelines document affirms the commitment of the staff, members, and leadership of Woodland Hills Church of Christ (hereinafter collectively referred to as "Woodland Hills") to providing a safe and nurturing environment for all children and youth that participate in any Woodland Hills led, attended, and/or sponsored events and/or activities (hereinafter referred to as "activity" or 'activities"). This procedures and guidelines document outlines our commitment to protect minors from abuse, neglect and inappropriate interactions, and the steps to respond appropriately if concerns arise.

Mission

- To teach children about God, His love and Scripture;
- To create an environment of love and compassion for children to feel safe;
- To be welcoming to visitors;
- To provide quality service and respect to our parents so that they trust the environment in which they are leaving their children;
- To protect children from harm; and
- To protect Woodland Hills from potential litigation.

Definitions/Terms

- Woodland Hills - The staff, members and leadership of Woodland Hills
- Staff – All that are employed full time by Woodland Hills, such as ministers, building and grounds personnel, office personnel, etc.
- Leadership – The Elders of Woodland Hills
- Volunteers – Any Woodland Hills staff, member, leader or parent that freely offers to take part in or undertake a task in activities that include the oversight and/or engagement with Children and Youth
- Non-member volunteers – Any person that is not a member of Woodland Hills but that freely offers to take part in or undertake a task in activities that include the engagement with Children and Youth
- Activity(s) – Any event and/or activity that Woodland Hills is leading, participating in, and/or sponsoring.
- Child(ren), Youth – Any person under the age of 18 years old
- Caregiver – Any relative or other person living, visiting, or working in the child's home who supervises or otherwise provides care or assistance for the child, such as a babysitter, or who is an employee or volunteer with the responsibility for any child at an educational, recreational, medical, religious, therapeutic, or other setting where children are present. For our purposes, "caregiver" and "caretaker" shall have the same meaning. (T.C.A. § 37-1-102 (2024))
- Abuse – Physical, emotional, and/or sexual harm
    - **Physical abuse**: Non-accidental trauma or physical injury of a child, or failure to protect a child from harm.
    - **Sexual abuse**: When a child is involved in intentional sexual acts that produce sexual arousal and/or gratification for the perpetrator or sexual behaviors/situations in which there is a sexual component.
    - **Psychological harm**: A repeated pattern of caregiver behavior or extreme incident(s) that convey to children they are worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted, endangered. May include both abusive acts against a child and failure to act.
    - According to TN Law (T.C.A. § 37-1-102), "Abuse" exists when a person under the age of eighteen (18) is suffering from, has sustained, or may be in immediate danger of suffering from or sustaining a wound, injury, disability or physical or mental condition caused by brutality, neglect or other actions or inactions of a parent, relative, guardian or caretaker. Abuse can be physical, verbal, emotional or sexual.
    - Reference document: Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect - Tennessee | Child Welfare Information Gateway
- Neglect – Failure to provide for a child's physical survival needs to the extent that there is harm, or risk of harm, to the child's health or safety.
    - Reference document: Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect - Tennessee | Child Welfare Information Gateway
- Inappropriate Interactions – Any actions or act of abuse and/or neglect and/or endangerment
- Mandated (mandatory) reporter – In Tennessee, "any person who has knowledge of or is called upon to render aid to any child who is suffering from or has sustained any wound, injury, disability, or physical or mental condition shall report such harm immediately if the harm is of such a nature as to reasonably indicate that it has been caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect, or that, on the basis of available information, reasonably appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect." (T.C.A. § 37-1-403 (a) (1))

General Guidelines for Child/Youth Interaction:

All Woodland Hills Elders, Deacons, and Staff must consent to a background check via the process and service selected by the Eldership of Woodland Hills.

All volunteers approved to lead/oversee child and/or youth activities must agree to serve under the direction of the Elders of Woodland Hills and the deacon(s) assigned to the youth and family ministry and children's education.

All volunteers that actively lead or oversee children and/or youth in activities must consent to a background check via the process and service selected by the Eldership of Woodland Hills and be approved to lead/oversee child and/or youth activities.

If information from a background check shows past offense(s), the Elders of Woodland Hills will determine the eligibility of the candidate to serve.

Anyone with violent behavior and/or child sexual abuse perpetration history cannot volunteer their services for any Woodland Hills activity involving children or youth that are 18 years of age or younger.

Anyone that has been convicted of either child physical, psychological or sexual abuse cannot volunteer their services for any Woodland Hills activity involving children or youth that are 18 years of age or younger.

Adult survivors of childhood physical, psychological or sexual abuse, or neglect need the love and acceptance of the Woodland Hills church family. However, individuals with such history should discuss their desires to work with the children or youth with the Elders prior to engaging in any volunteer service with our children and/or youth.

All volunteers approved to lead/oversee child and/or youth activities are expected to strive to live according to the Christian standards in accordance with the Holy Scriptures.

All volunteers approved to lead/oversee child and/or youth activities are expected to be aware of the mission and purpose of the ministry they are serving in order that they might effectively serve the mission and purpose of the ministry.

All volunteers approved to lead/oversee child and/or youth activities understand that leadership privileges can be revoked by the Eldership at any time.

All volunteers and non-member volunteers that **have not** completed a background check **must be overseen** by a Woodland Hills volunteer that has been approved to lead/oversee child and youth activities.

All Woodland Hills members and non-member volunteers that **have not** completed a background check should not be put in charge of or allowed to be alone with a child or youth without oversight by a Woodland Hills volunteer that has been approved to lead/oversee child and youth activities.

To be approved to lead/oversee child and youth activities, the volunteer must undergo child safety training established by the Woodland Hils congregation.
The safety training will be repeated every 3 years.
Background checks will be repeated every 5 years.

Parents and children will be educated on how to protect themselves and what to watch for in the event of abuse.

This training will be led by Woodland Hills and repeated every year, in quarter 1 of the year.

Parents and guardians will have the option of whether to allow their children to participate in Woodland Hills led training or handle the training at home.

All volunteers are encouraged to undergo CPR/First Aid/AED training.
There is an AED device in the foyer outside the auditorium available for use in the event of an emergency.

Parents are Primary…
Please consider child and youth oversight as a ministry to our families, and an opportunity to show parents and children the love of Christ in every situation.

It is important that we care for children in the best manner possible to allow the parents the opportunity to worship and fellowship without concern for their children. Because of this, parents should only be contacted if the deacon(s) assigned to the youth and family ministry and/or children's education, or the Woodland Hills volunteer that has been approved to lead/oversee child and youth activities deem the situation warrants it.

If the parent has requested that they be notified if the child is upset, then we should do so. Otherwise, if the child is content and can be re-engaged, parents should not be notified.

All adult volunteers regularly teaching children or youth must be members of the Woodland Hills church, or overseen by a Woodland Hills volunteer that has been approved to lead/oversee child and youth activities.

Woodland Hills volunteers approved to lead/oversee child and/or youth activities should strive to be on time and ready to receive children AT LEAST 10 minutes before the start time of a church activity.

Classrooms should be open and/or visually accessible for parents, unless more than 1 Woodland Hills volunteer that is approved to lead/oversee children and/or youth activities is in the classroom.

Try to have more than one adult volunteer present with children and youth. If that is not possible, no volunteer should ever be alone with a child or youth, especially in a closed or visually inaccessible room. If an adult volunteer is placed in a situation where only one child is left in the room waiting to be picked up by a parent, the adult should step out into the hallway to remain visible to others.

Parents and/or friends, including those of an approved volunteer, should be kept outside the classroom to prevent accidents and to help in keeping the room sanitary. Exceptions can be made for necessary actions of caregiving and feeding/nursing needs in designated areas only. All Woodland Hills members that have been approved to lead/oversee child and youth activities should stay in their assigned area for the duration of their class/event/activity. Always let another approved volunteer know if you need to leave the area or use the restroom so that your area can be overseen by an approved volunteer during your absence.

All volunteers should have a positive and energetic attitude towards the parents and children and always let them know that their child is loved here.

Staff and volunteers should **NEVER** give parenting advice, opinions, or judgments about a parent's instructions and/or a child's attitude or behavior (or that of the parents) unless it is explicitly requested by the parents. This does not apply to matters of safety. All parents are to be shown respect and courtesy - no exceptions.

Everything that transpires in the classroom is confidential, except for indications or suspicions of abuse as well as infractions of policies. This includes the emotional, physical, medical, spiritual and intellectual condition of every child, and should not be discussed inside or outside the classroom.

Cell phone use, including texting, e-mailing and any other activity on a cell phone, should be limited to necessity usage, or to contact a parent when you have an inconsolable child.

PC, laptop, tablet, and other electronic devices use should be limited to providing supporting Bible or class content.

If a parent needs to be contacted because of an inconsolable child, the first contact should be by sending a text message. If no response is received within a few minutes, then an available volunteer should discretely contact the parent and ask the parent for a next step to calm the child.

Staff and volunteers approved to lead/oversee child and/or youth activities who are 18 years of age or above are permitted to prepare bottles and change diapers.

When supervising or assisting private activities such as dressing or diapering infants or children, approved volunteers will remain in an area observable by other adults, or work in pairs.

Volunteers that are not approved to lead/oversee child and/or youth activities will be handed prepared bottles to feed babies and are not expected to change diapers.

Individuals who volunteer to assist in the children's and/or youth ministry must be at least 16 years old and must undergo the same safety and procedures training as adult volunteers. Exceptions can be requested and approved of by the Eldership. Student volunteers must get parental or guardian consent to a background check via the process and service selected by the Eldership of Woodland Hills, or be overseen by a Woodland Hills member that has been approved to lead/oversee child and youth activities.

Any contact with a child or youth outside of a Woodland Hills activity should follow the same guidelines and policies outlined for Woodland Hills activities.

If, after reading this, you feel there may be a reason not mentioned in this guideline that may disqualify you from serving as an adult volunteer to the children and youth of the Woodland Hills, please contact the church office and set up an appointment with the Eldership, the deacon(s) assigned to the youth and family ministry and children's education, or appropriate ministerial staff member at (901) 755-7709.

Policy and Procedures for Child/Youth Safety

General Guidelines

The following are the overall guidelines for children and youth at Woodland Hills in regard to appropriate and inappropriate touching:

The following are appropriate forms of touch and affection:

-Brief side hug
-Fist bump
-High five
-Comforting pat on the shoulder or back
-Hand shake
-Verbal praise
-Holding hands while walking with small children
-Sitting beside small children.

The following are inappropriate forms of touch and affection:

-Frontal hug
-Tickling
-Kissing (in any location of any manner)
-Spanking
-Touching of a student's body in any place covered by a swimsuit
-Aggressive horseplay
-Inappropriate or lengthy embraces.
-Holding children over three years old on the lap.
-Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers.
-Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff only areas or other private rooms.
-Occupying a bed with a child or youth
-Touching knees or legs of children or youth.
-Wrestling with children or youth.
-Piggyback rides.
-Any type of massage between a child or youth and an adult without parental approval.
-Any form of unwanted affection.
-Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development. Examples would be, "You sure are developing," or "You look really hot in those jeans."
-Snapping bras, giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear whether it is covered by other clothing.
-Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth, unless it is given to the parent to be passed to the child/youth.
-Private meals with individual children or youth, unless approved by the parent.

Child/Youth Behavior Issue Reporting Guidelines

The head of an organization is legally responsible for reporting infractions and suspicions of abuse to authorities. For Woodland Hills, the Elders are responsible for ensuring infractions are reported and documented.

If a problem with a child persists with each visit, inform the deacon(s) assigned to the youth and family ministry and/or children's education and he/they will address the issue with the parent.

If a staff member or volunteer has concerns with a parent/guardian who refuses to comply with the policies and procedures or has any other issue, the deacon(s) assigned to the youth and family ministry and/or children's education or an Elder should be contacted to handle the issue.

If a parent/guardian has an issue with how they were treated, whether their instructions were followed or how their child was cared for, they should contact the deacon(s) assigned to the youth and family ministry and/or children's education or an Elder.

Infractions on the part of a volunteer or non-member volunteer must be reported and documented. Incident reports will be filled out by the person who first learns of the issue/abuse, witnesses infractions or sees suspicious or inappropriate behaviors. Reports will include all persons involved and be detailed enough to recreate the scenario later.

Resolutions to incidents will also be filed. The person(s) charged with reviewing and maintaining child and youth safety procedures will utilize these to alter situations to ensure that these types of incidents do not happen again.

Major infractions, such as going to the bathroom with a child alone without another volunteer, walking away from a changing table with a child on it (even for a second), or allowing a child to leave with an adult that is not properly checked out with the proper security credentials, i.e. license or other government issued identification document matching the names(s) on the check-in sheet, will lead to an automatic suspension of the volunteer from working within the ministry. Time of suspension will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Child Safety Concerns Issue Reporting Guidelines:

Woodland Hills will report at any time there is reasonable suspicion of abuse.
Abuse and all legal matters must and will be reported to the proper authorities.

The head of an organization is legally responsible for reporting infractions and suspicions of abuse to authorities. For Woodland Hills, the Elders are responsible for ensuring infractions are reported.

Incident Reports for infractions will be documented and confidentially stored indefinitely.

If a child age 12 or younger, regardless of relationship, is suspected of sexual abuse, it will be reported to Tennessee Department of Child Services, (hereinafter collectively referred to as "DCS"), who investigates all instances of Sexual Abuse. DCS will also investigate all instances of Sexual Abuse when there is a relationship criterion met through the age of 18.

If a child age 13 or above is suspected of sexual abuse and the abuse occurred by someone with no relation or not in an authority figure, it will be reported to Law Enforcement. Reports of other forms of abuse will be made to DCS or the Child Abuse hotline, who will either investigate or direct Woodland Hills to the correct authorities for reporting in Tennessee.

It is not the role of anyone in the church to evaluate or investigate an allegation or suspicion of child sexual abuse. This is the appropriate role for authorities (although an Elder of Woodland Hills or the deacon(s) assigned to the youth and family ministry and/or children's education areas can ask a couple of clarifying questions to be sure false allegations are not being made unnecessarily).

Never agree to keep sexual abuse a secret. Never promise "not to tell" when you hear a report of sexual abuse.

Tennessee state law requires that anyone who has reason to believe that a child is being abused report the suspicion promptly to DCS. Failure to report suspected abuse is a crime. No person, regardless of their relationship, is exempt from reporting. A person reporting in good faith is immune from both civil and criminal liability. (T.C.A. § 37-1-613 (2024))

Failure to report abuse is a violation of the law and a Class A misdemeanor, carrying a sentence of up to three months imprisonment, a fine, or both. Those who report and "act in good faith" are immune from any civil or criminal charges, which may result. The reporter has the right to remain confidential and anonymous.

Some behaviors that do not meet the guidelines of abuse, neglect, or inappropriate activities will be reported internally to the deacon(s) assigned to the youth and family ministry and/or children's education, or an Elder, and a decision will be made on the steps to be taken. For example, telling an inappropriate joke will be reported internally.

For infractions on the part of the youth, the youth's guardian or caregiver will be informed. The perpetrator will be provided with guidance, redirection, and instruction, and an incident report filed.

However, events that require contacting the authorities, such as forced sexual contact with a child, will always be reported.

In the event of an incident, Woodland Hills will follow the state of Tennessee guidelines for what must be made public and what will be kept private.

In the event of an incident to be made public, the **Eldership will designate the sole spokesperson** for the press or others outside the organization. Others who are approached should decline to comment and refer those inquiring to the official spokespeople or church office. It is very important to remember that your words and actions can harm the case and the protection of the abused.

Woodland Hills will keep records of incident reports, including the category of child sexual abuse. An incident report will be completed by the employee or volunteer who first learns of the abuse. Reports will include all persons involved and be detailed enough to recreate the scenario later. These forms will be kept indefinitely. An Elder will review these and ask the proper questions of what went wrong and how to prevent this in the future. Resolutions will also be recorded.

Reporting

Woodland Hills Procedure

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at Woodland Hills or during an activity, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The Elders will be notified of the allegations.
2. The deacon(s) assigned to the youth and family ministry and/or children's education will be notified and document the incident details and allegations.
3. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified, unless they are suspected to be the abuser.
4. All allegations of abuse should be reported to the civil authorities, and the organization will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. Woodland Hills will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
5. The Woodland Hills staff, member, leader, volunteer or non-member volunteer alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on limited contact status pending an investigation, and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. He or she should be instructed to have no contact with the victim or with witnesses.
6. The insurance company will be notified, and the church will review/finalize the incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
7. The Elders will designate a spokesperson (see spokeperson guideline above) to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of the organization should refrain from speaking to the media.
8. Counseling and/or a minister's visit will be arranged for those who desire it. This should be for the purpose of providing support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.
9. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their ability to work/engage with children or youth.

If you observe ANY infractions or suspicious behavior, **immediately report it** to an Elder of Woodland Hills or to the deacon(s) assigned to the youth and family ministry and/or children's education.

Not only should suspicions of abuse be reported, but inappropriate behavior overall should be reported to an Elder of Woodland Hills or to the deacon(s) assigned to the youth and family ministry and/or children's education.
Infractions of these documented policies should also be reported to an Elder of Woodland Hills or to the deacon(s) assigned to the youth and family ministry and/or children's education.

Do NOT allow emotions about perceptions of events cloud your judgment. No one is above being reported, and inappropriate or suspicious behavior should not be dismissed.

Do NOT ignore suspicions of inappropriate behavior. Sexual predators are crafty. Even if the person is your close friend or family, please do not ignore these guidelines and refuse to report inappropriate or delinquent behavior.

All adult volunteers should immediately report behaviors that seem abusive or inappropriate to an Elder(s), deacon(s), and the Tennessee DCS as a "mandatory reporter" in the state of Tennessee. You do not need to disclose your name, only suspicion or concern of any degree. A person reporting in good faith is immune from both civil and criminal liability.

Any conduct or relationship between an adult volunteer and a child or member of the youth group should be reported to an Elder of Woodland Hills or to the deacon(s) assigned to the youth and family ministry and/or children's education and confronted/investigated by appropriate authorities immediately. The fewest number of individuals possible should be made aware of accusations before authorities are contacted. This prevents false allegations from being spread any further than necessary. It also prevents the child or youth from having to repeat the incident more times than necessary, which can be stressful.

Tennessee state law requires that anyone who has reason to believe that a child is being abused report the suspicion promptly to DCS. Failure to report suspected abuse is a crime. No person, regardless of their relationship, is exempt from reporting. (T.C.A. § 37-1-613 (2024))

Failure to Report:

- Failure to report abuse is a violation of the law and a Class A misdemeanor, carrying a sentence of up to three months imprisonment, a fine, or both. Those who report and "act in good faith" are immune from any civil or criminal charges, which may result. The reporter has the right to remain confidential and anonymous.

What if I am just concerned?

- You do not have to have proof that child abuse/neglect has occurred in order to report.
- The law speaks to making reports based on "available information" and in a situation that "reasonably appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse."

Allegations may include the following:

- Physical Abuse
- Drug Exposed Child
- Environmental Neglect
- Nutritional Neglect
- Medical Neglect
- Educational Neglect
- Lack of Supervision
- Abandonment
- Child Sexual Abuse
- Psychological Harm
- Abuse or Neglect Death

HOW SHOULD THOSE WHO APPROACH THE CHILD TALK TO THE CHILD SUSPECTED OF BEING ABUSED?

- Pick the time and place carefully.
- Stay calm. A child may not talk about abuse if he or she knows that it makes you feel angry, worried, uncomfortable, or scared.
- Avoid judgment and blame. For example: "I am concerned because I heard you say that you were afraid to go home. What is making you so afraid?" or "I noticed that there is a bruise on your arm today. What happened?"
- Listen to the child. Let the child talk to you about his or her worries and concerns. Don't ask a lot of questions.
- Reassure the child and make sure that the child knows that they are not in trouble and that they are not to blame. Let them know you are simply asking questions because you are concerned about them.

WHAT SHOULD BE SAID TO A CHILD WHO DISCLOSES ABUSE?

- Thank them for their bravery.
- Assure them they did the right thing to tell someone.
- Let them know that you believe them.
- Let them know what happened is not their fault.
- Tell them that you'll need to talk to someone whose job it is to keep them safe.
- Tell them you are here to support them.

Note: Your response can have a big impact on their ability to seek further help and recover from the trauma of their experience.

DURING A DISCLOSURE, IT'S IMPORTANT TO AVOID:

- Filling in the story. For example: giving them words or asking leading questions like "Did mom or dad hit you?" or "Do they make you afraid?"
- Asking too many questions. Leave the investigating and fact finding to trained professionals.
- Expressing anger about the alleged abuser. They may be an adult the child loves and cares about.
- Confronting the alleged abuser. It could make things worse or unsafe for the child.
- Making promises you can't keep, such as promising you will not tell anyone.
- Pressuring the child for information or asking for details beyond what they want to say.
- Questions that infer blame, such as "Did you try to stop them?" or "Did you scream or call out for help?"

WHY DO SOME KIDS NOT DISCLOSE THEIR ABUSE? Jacob Wetterling Resource Center

- Because threats have been made by their abuser
- They are afraid of the consequences that could come with disclosing
- There is a lack of opportunity (no one has ever asked!)
- There is a lack of understanding that they are being abused
- Despite the abuse, they have a relationship with and even love their abuser. Many children love their abuser but hate the abuse.

Possible Indicators of Abuse or Neglect

PHYSICAL ABUSE:

- ❑ Unexplained fractures or injuries
- ❑ Previous injuries in various healing stages
- ❑ Patterned injuries consistent with objects of abuse (cigarettes, belt, hands)
- ❑ Burns on extremities, buttocks or genitals
- ❑ Frightened of or shrink at approach of adult caregiver
- ❑ Emotional turmoil (anxiety, depressed, suicidal); developmental delays
- ❑ Self-isolation or undue aggression
- ❑ Fear of going home; many school absences
- ❑ Abuses animals or pets

NEGLECT:

- ❑ Poor growth, weight gain, or being overweight
- ❑ Poor hygiene
- ❑ Lack of clothing or supplies to meet physical needs
- ❑ Taking food or money without permission
- ❑ Hiding food for later
- ❑ Poor record of school attendance
- ❑ Lack of appropriate attention for medical, dental, or psychological problems, or lack of necessary follow-up care

EMOTIONAL ABUSE:

- ❑ Delayed or inappropriate emotional development
- ❑ Loss of self-confidence or self-esteem
- ❑ Social withdrawal, a loss of interest, or enthusiasm
- ❑ Depression
- ❑ Avoidance of certain situations, such as refusing to go to school or ride the bus
- ❑ Desperately seeks affection
- ❑ A decrease in school performance or loss of interest in school
- ❑ Loss of previously acquired developmental skills

SEXUAL ABUSE:

- ❑ Soreness or bruising, pain, or itching in genital or anal areas
- ❑ Sexually transmitted diseases
- ❑ Nightmares or bedwetting
- ❑ Unexplained loss of appetite
- ❑ Becoming isolated or withdrawn
- ❑ Excessive masturbation or sexual play
- ❑ Abuses children, animals, or pets
- ❑ Attaches very quickly to strangers or new adults in their environment
- ❑ Obsession with pornography or viewing sexually explicit photos
- ❑ Repeated runaway or suicide attempts
- ❑ Self-destructive behavior/self-injury/cutting, risky or delinquent behavior

Child Welfare Information Gateway

SIGNS OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF MINORS:

- -History or presence of emotional, sexual or other physical abuse
- -Sexually transmitted diseases
- -Evidence of homelessness; no identification and runaway
- -Inexplicable appearance of expensive gifts, clothing, or other costly items
- -Presence of an older boyfriend/girlfriend
- -Evidence of drug use
- -Possesses multiple phones and hotel room cards
- -Repeated statement of urgent need to leave or get back home

SEXUAL/PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIORS IN CHILDREN:

- -Behaviors cause physical or emotional pain or discomfort to self or others
- -Preoccupation with the behavior
- -Sexual behavior geared towards younger children/inappropriate age range
- -Forcing others (physically or through intimidation) to do sexual acts
- -Tricking others into sexual acts
- -Any penetration
- -Trying to have sexual intercourse with another child or adult
- -Putting mouths on genitalia
- -Manual stimulation, oral, or genital contact with animals
- -Unresponsive to redirection

Seeking help for children displaying problematic behaviors is crucial for their safety and the safety of other children around them.

Reporting to Tennessee Department of Children's Services:

- **In Case of Emergency and Life-Threatening Situation, Call 9-1-1**
- The Child Abuse Hotline Public line: 1-877-237-0004
- The Child Abuse Hotline School K-12 Line: 1-855-209-4226
- When making a report, it is important to call the Tennessee Department of Children's Services Child Abuse Hotline as soon as possible, as opposed to waiting until the end of the school day. 1-877-237-0004
- Make the report while in a private area.
- Avoid placing the child on the phone or having the child in the room with you as you make the report.
- Reports also can be made online on the tn.gov secure site.
    - Direct link: https://apps.tn.gov/carat/

CALLING THE CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE: WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

TN Child Abuse Hotline:

- Takes your information
- Screens the information to determine if the situation will require an investigation or assessment and the timeliness of response
- Assess for other services (i.e. resource linkage)
- All calls are recorded for Quality Assurance

WHAT REPORTERS CAN EXPECT FROM DCS:

- Any person who makes a report has the right to know if DCS will investigate/assess the report or screen out the report. When you call you will be asked if you want to receive information about whether or not DCS will investigate the information you provided. You will have the option to receive a letter giving this decision.
- If there is an investigation or assessment, you may be contacted by DCS staff to obtain additional information.

WHEN YOU CALL IN A REPORT, THE DCS HOTLINE ASSESSES FOR THESE DECISIONS:

- Is the child currently safe?
- Does the information meet criteria for a track assignment?
- Are other risk factors present in the family?
- What are the strengths of the family?
- How fast should DCS respond?

The case manager who takes your call will ask many questions about the situation. Do not be concerned if you do not know the answer to every single question.

INFORMATION THE CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE WILL ASK YOU:

- Demographic information on the child, including date of birth, address, and phone number
- Name of child's parents/caregiver
- Name of siblings of the child

- Details of the abuse or neglect -any physical evidence- injuries, behaviors, or environmental conditions
- Name of the alleged perpetrator/person and relationship to the victim who may have abused or neglected the child and if that person currently has access to the child
- Child's current whereabouts
- How did you come to know about the abuse/neglect?
- Is there any danger for the DCS investigator?
- Who else knows the circumstances?
- Are you aware of anyone or available resources for the child or family? (e.g. friend, relative, mentor, etc.)
- What is the non-offending parent or caregiver feelings toward the child and reaction to the abuse?

DCS follows a priority system in responding.
If you feel strongly that the child **MUST BE SEEN THAT DAY**, then be sure to discuss your specific concerns with the case manager at the Child Abuse Hotline when you make the report.

Trained case managers will guide Hotline callers through a series of questions. Callers do not have to know all the details of the abuse or neglect. The Hotline case managers use the information you provide to determine the severity of the situation and how best to intervene.

If children or youth are traveling to another state for an activity, reporting requirements for states where the group will be visiting will be researched and followed (see childwelfare.gov for information on different states). **Child Welfare Information Gateway**

Any person who knowingly and maliciously reports or encourages another to report a false accusation of child abuse or neglect commits a Class E felony (T.C.A. 37-1-413)

Safety and Security

Creating an environment where parents feel comfortable leaving their children is one of our highest priorities.

General Guidelines

Adults are not to toss or throw children in the air when playing with them.

Adults are not to lift a child up by holding their hands and lifting their arms in the air as this can cause shoulder dislocation in many children.

Adults are not to poke, prod, or tickle children. Many children do not like this and cannot communicate their dislike to an adult.

Children should not be taken out of the classrooms for any reason during their time of care, except in the case of an emergency, restroom visit, or as planned in the curriculum or lesson. These should always be done with more than one adult/volunteer.
Crying babies that need to be calmed may be walked in the hallway in view of another adult.

All cleaning supplies and harmful trash should be kept out of reach of children.

Any time a suspicious person or a stranger is found lingering, after they have been asked politely if they need any help, a deacon or a nearby security team member should be discreetly alerted. These individuals should cautiously and kindly direct the person where they need to go, judging the situation's threat level and acting appropriately. Go to the 'Suspicious Person/Threat' section.

The Sick Room outside the Auditorium and the Youth Activity Building will be stocked with first-aid kits available for teachers' use and will be kept out of reach of children.

When both boys and girls are participating in activities (except for Bible class), male and female adults must be present.

Woodland Hills staff are prohibited from dating or becoming romantically involved with a child or youth.

Woodland Hills staff, volunteers and non-member volunteers are prohibited from sleeping in the same beds, sleeping bags, or tent with children or youth unless the adult is an immediate family member of all children or youth in the bed, sleeping bag, or tent. A separate bed is required for any Woodland Hills staff, volunteers and non-member volunteers are required if they are supervising any children or youth overnight.

It is acceptable to have multiple adults sleep with all the children or youth participating in one open space such as a church room or camp lodge.

Woodland Hills staff, volunteers and non-member volunteers are prohibited from participating in or allowing others to conduct any hazing activities relating to children's or youth ministry or camp activities.

When you are leading/overseeing:

- Do not get distracted from your task
- Be alert and make sure that you know the activity, location, or specific children or students you are responsible for overseeing

Food

- Parents must write down feeding and nap instructions on the sign in / sign out form.
- Parents must label all bottles and sippy cups with the child's name.
- Bottles may be fed to babies by Woodland Hills members that have been approved to lead/oversee child and youth activities, and only according to the instructions given by the parents.
- If a child becomes inconsolable, their parent should be contacted before feeding the child at a time other than the time requested by the parent.
- Woodland Hills does NOT provide formula, bottles, or baby food for infants.
- Woodland Hills may provide snacks/food in different classroom settings. The snacks/food for the day will be communicated to the parents so that they are aware and can voice concerns or ask that their child not participate in snack time.
- If parents request dietary restrictions (for example, no sugar), these should be respected and followed without question or judgment. If the parents do not provide alternative snacks, the child should NOT be given any food in the classroom. Parents need to know that their requests are being honored even when they are not watching.

Medication

- The staff and volunteers WILL NOT administer any non-over-the-counter medications except in life-threatening situations when there is not enough time for a parent to come to the room and administer it.
- In a situation where a child has a known potentially life-threatening condition and medication may need to be given, a Medical Consent, Authorization & Liability Waiver form should be completed and signed by the parent.
- If a child or youth becomes ill and a parent approves via a phone call, text or email, a Woodland Hills staff, volunteer or non-member volunteer may provide over the counter medications.

Accidents and Incidents

- In the event a child is injured or injures another child (and the incident leaves a mark or bump or worse), the Woodland Hills member that has been approved to lead/oversee child and youth activities will contact the parents and file an Incident Report.
- A first-aid kit stocked regularly is kept in the Sick Room outside the Auditorium and the Youth Activity Building.
- There is an AED in the entry foyer, if needed.
- In the event of a physical emergency, the Woodland Hills member that has been approved to lead/oversee child and youth activities should secure the scene and contact a deacon or an Elder to handle the situation.

Disciplinary Guiding Principles

Always maintain a Christ-like attitude when instructing the child and model the love and respect you are asking the child to show you and others.

As a volunteer, your goal is to engage the child relationally, which will give you an opportunity to influence the child's life.

The following are inappropriate ways to regain control of the classroom and should not be used:

- Yelling
- Hitting the student
- Spanking the student
- Shaming the student with degrading words or actions, harassment, hazing, or asking a child over the age of 3 to sit in your lap.

If a student is disruptive during the class, the following are appropriate ways to handle the situation:

- Move closer to the student causing the disturbance
- Touching or patting the shoulder of the student
- Politely asking the student to stop with the distracting behavior
- Asking the student to move his or her chair or person to the front
- Inform the student that you will have to get their parent/guardian if the disruptive behavior continues.

A child is usually disruptive because they either crave attention, are bored, or are confused.
The solution:

- Don't reinforce misbehavior with too much attention. Briefly address it and move on. Create a positive culture by proactively giving attention to positive behaviors.
- Keep children from being bored by preparing activities and materials prior to class time. Trying to figure out as you go creates space and down time for children to misbehave.
- Fuzzy rules and no consequences are a guarantee for misbehavior. Set clear expectations and consequences and enforce them fairly and consistently. When possible, use Bible topics or lessons to reinforce proper behavior.
- Physical punishment is forbidden, including parents who serve in a room with their own children. Parents are not allowed to scold or physically punish their own children during their time in the classroom as this is upsetting to other children in the room.
- Disruptive behavior should always be handled in the room, not in isolation with the volunteer and a child alone. Never humiliate a child in front of others or in private.
- The only discipline allowed in the classroom for children is time-out which should be limited to 5 minutes. Scolding, harsh words, and physical punishment of any kind is forbidden.

For the youth group

- If a student is continuously disruptive, the student will be first asked to sit near an adult volunteer.
- If misbehavior continues, the student will be asked to remain after class to discuss behavior with the teacher and another adult volunteer. If a meeting is to occur, the parents will be informed of the meeting and can be included in the meeting when it takes place.

- If a child needs correction, it should be done in a firm, but calm tone and should address only the behavior ("no hitting") and never the character of the child ("bad boy"). Also, tell the child the behavior you want to see when giving correction ("no hitting, please use your words to say what you want").
- When it is evident that you have an extreme case, which cannot be handled with time-out, parents should be contacted.

Diaper Changing and Bathroom Tips:

No one under 18-years-old will be allowed to perform "personal care" by changing diapers.

Parents should supply diapers, wipes, a burp pad, and a change of clothing for any child that requires such each time they drop off their child. Woodland Hills will supply extra diapers and wipes as backup.

Volunteers should check periodically for wet or soiled diapers.

Volunteers should have a diaper bag, diaper, and all materials at a changing table prior to laying the child down for a change. A child should never be left alone while on the changing table, not even for a second.

Rubber gloves, wet wipes, hand sanitizer, and sanitizing surface spray (if needed) should be taken and utilized for changes for the safety of the child and the worker.

Only apply powder, lotion, or medicated cream if provided in the child's bag and with the parent's permission/instruction.

Keep all items (cleaners, wipes, etc.) out of the reach of children.

Dirty diapers should be removed from rooms and placed in an outside container for the purpose of keeping odor contained.

It is preferred that two volunteers (never one) take children to the bathroom. The volunteers should check the bathroom for other guests, possible abusers, or other dangers, and ensure the child's safety before allowing them to use the restroom. Volunteers should remain outside the bathroom door when possible. If a volunteer must enter the restroom, they should remain outside of the stall. **Never should 1 adult be alone in the bathroom with a child**. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the volunteer should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the volunteer should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.