



Oakwood Presbyterian Church Child Safety Policies and Procedures

(Revised and Adopted February 2020)

“Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.”

- Isaiah 1:16-17

Introduction

Oakwood Presbyterian Church (Oakwood) takes seriously our responsibility to love and protect our Children. We believe that Child Abuse can prevent Children from experiencing the joy and love of Christ. We acknowledge the tragic prevalence of Child Abuse, including in Church environments, and desire to foster an environment that is both protective and responsive. The following guidelines are set forth to help provide a safe and nurturing environment at Oakwood. Everyone who teaches, helps, or cares for our Children must adhere to the following policies and procedures. They are intended to protect both Children and Employees/Volunteers and to be a helpful resource in addressing the issues of Child safety. In addition, the guidelines are designed to prevent abusers from targeting Children and to minimize opportunities for abusers to Groom their targets.

Definitions

Adult: a person eighteen (18) years of age or older and has completed all necessary clearances and training as a mandated reporter.

Appropriate Legal Authorities: Centre County Children and Youth Services (CYS); or, if Child is in immediate danger, Emergency Services (911, local police)

Child or Children: a person(s) under the age of eighteen (18).

Child Abuse: an injury of a Child by an Adult or other Child that is not accidental. It may include Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Emotional Abuse, and Neglect.

Child Physical Abuse: At a minimum¹, the non-accidental bodily injury of a Child through physical contact or mistreatment.

- Examples of injuries which may result from Physical Abuse include, but are not limited to: head injuries, bruises, cuts or lacerations, internal injuries, burns, scalds, reddening or blistering of the tissue through application of heat by fire, chemical substances, cigarettes, matches, electricity, boiling hot water, friction, etc.; injuries to bone, muscle, cartilage, ligaments, fractures, dislocations, sprains, strains, displacements, hematomas, etc.; and death.

Child Sexual Abuse: Sexual Abuse includes any form of sexual contact with a minor, non-touching offenses, or sexual exploitation of a minor. Child Sexual Abuse is criminal behavior that involves Children in sexual acts for which they cannot be personally, socially, and developmentally ready.

- Sexual Abuse perpetrated by an **Adult** is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a Child and an Adult. This includes any activity that is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the Adult or Child. **Sexual behavior between a Child and an Adult is always considered to be forced whether or not the Child consents to it.**²
 - Examples of touching sexual offenses include, but are not limited to: touching a Child's genitals, breasts, and buttocks; forcing or telling a Child to touch an Adult's genitals, breasts, and buttocks; and any non-medical penetration.
 - Examples of non-touching sexual offenses include, but are not limited to: engaging in indecent exposure; showing Children pornographic material; deliberately allowing Children to observe you or someone else engaging in a sexual act; and inducing a Child to engage in a sexual act.
 - Examples of sexual exploitation include, but are not limited to: forcing a Child or soliciting a Child for the purposes of prostitution; and using a Child to videotape or photograph pornography.
- Sexual Abuse perpetrated by a **Child** (see *Perpetrator* definition below) is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between Children, with or without the consent of either Child, when one Child has power or perceived authority over the other Child. This includes any activity that is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the Children (examples listed above still apply).

¹ Even if injuries do not result, harsh physical discipline such as shoving Child to the ground or slapping a Child's face increases the risk for long term medical and mental health conditions. Although the law permits parents to use corporal punishment, the law requires the discipline to be reasonable. The striking of infants is strictly prohibited. Harsh discipline done out of anger also warrants intervention.

² However, in PA, Children 16 or 17 years of age legally can consent to a sexual act with an older individual within a 4-year age difference. For example, a 16-year-old can engage in sexual activity with a 20-year-old; a 17-year-old can engage in sexual activity with an 18-year-old. Sexual encounters with an individual outside of the 4-year age difference for Children 16 or 17 years of age constitutes Child Sexual Abuse (statutory rape if touching sexual offense).

Child Emotional Abuse: any language or negative acts directed toward a Child by an Adult that is intended or likely to cause emotional anxiety, pain, or other severe emotional disturbance.

- Examples of Child Emotional Abuse include but are not limited to: repeated negative acts or statements spoken to the Child; exposure to repeated violent, brutal, or intimidating acts or statements among members of the facility; cruel or unusual actions that may be used in an attempt to gain submission, enforce maximum control, or to modify the Child's behavior; and any other act or omission that demonstrates a refusal to respond to the Child's needs.

Child Neglect: the failure, whether intentional or not, of the person responsible for the Child's care to provide for the Child's basic needs such as adequate food, clothing, medical care, supervision, and/or the failure to protect a Child from harm.

- Examples of Neglect include, but are not limited to: refusal or failure on the part of the person responsible for the Child's care to seek, obtain, and/or maintain the services necessary for proper medical, dental, or psychiatric care; recognizing the Child's need, but failing to provide the Child with emotional nurturance; having inappropriate expectations of the Child; leaving a small Child unattended in water; and failing to provide adequate supervision to a young or developmentally delayed Child.

Child Protection Ministry Team (CPMT): Team established, endorsed and empowered by the Session to implement Oakwood's Child Safety Policies and Procedures, suggest revisions to the established policy and procedures, etc.

Church Leadership: any Pastor, member of the Session (Elders), or member of the Diaconate. All Elders will be have clearances and trained as Mandated Reporters.

Employee: any Adult who is paid by Oakwood on a full or part time basis and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of Children.

Flex Person: any Volunteer or Employee assigned to assist with miscellaneous or urgent needs that may arise during any church function; this person will remain available (e.g., standing in the hallway) in case he/she is needed by another Adult (see *Two-Adult Rule* and *Bathroom Policy* in "Code of Conduct" section for more information).

Grooming: when someone builds an emotional connection with a Child in order to gain their trust for the purposes of Child Abuse, exploitation, or trafficking.

Helper: any individual who is not paid by the church and is serving in an auxiliary role to a Volunteer, Employee, or member of Church Leadership; must be between the ages of 12-17.

Investigate/Investigation: the act of determining and confirming whether or not a specific allegation of child abuse actually constitutes child abuse.³

Mandated Reporter: according to PA law, in the context of Oakwood, any individual, paid or unpaid; who, on the basis of the individual's role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled Oakwood program, activity or service, accepts responsibility for a Child.

Parent/Guardian - An individual who is responsible for a Child or children that are participating in an Oakwood event.

Caregiver - An individual who does not have legal right for a Child but has responsibility for a Child or children that are participating in an Oakwood event.

Perpetrator: someone who has been accused and found guilty by a court of law of Child Abuse. This can include any of the following: Child's parent; spouse or former spouse of the parent; paramour or former paramour of the parent; person 14 years of age or older responsible for the welfare of a Child (such as a babysitter or daycare staff person); individual residing in the same home as the Child who is at least 14 years of age; relative who is 18 years of age or older who does not reside in the same home as the Child, but is related within the third degree of consanguinity or affinity by birth or adoption to the Child; an individual 18 years of age or older who engages a Child in severe forms of trafficking in persons or sex trafficking.

Report: a referral made to Pennsylvania Child Protective Services when a person has reasonable cause to suspect that a Child is a victim of Child Abuse (or, **To Report:** the action of making a such a report/referral; see "Responding to Reported Abuse" section for guidelines and procedures for filing a report in PA).

Volunteer: any Adult who is not paid by the church and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of Children; must be 18 or older.

Youth: any Child who is in the Youth Group (Grades 6-12)

Application Procedure

1. A **Volunteer Application** is available in the church lobby, from the church office, in Appendix A, or online (<http://www.oakwoodpca.org/ministries/>)

³ The difference between **investigating** a Report of Child Abuse and **clarifying** the details of a Report of Child Abuse lies in the nature, depth, and intent of the questions asked. **Investigations** are conducted to determine the plausibility and legitimacy of Reported Child Abuse; **clarifying** questions are asked to determine whether the incident being reported actually constitutes child abuse (not whether it actually happened). See Appendix C for potential indicators of abuse and Appendix D for possible clarifying questions to ask.

children). Every Volunteer who works with Children at Oakwood must complete and turn in a signed application and be interviewed by the Child Protection Team.

2. **Clearances and Trainings:** Every Volunteer must complete the appropriate clearance and training requirements as outlined in the “Clearance and Training Requirements for Children/Youth Workers at Oakwood Presbyterian Church” document in Appendix B.
3. **References:** References provided on the application form may not include relatives. References will be contacted by the Child Protection Team.
4. **Interviews:** Volunteer interviews will be conducted by a member of the Session.
5. **The entire application** will be reviewed by the Child Protection Team who will inform the applicant of the final decision.
 - a. All Employees/Volunteers must have the approval of the Session before being placed in any position of ministry to Children.
 - b. The list of Employees/Volunteers will be reviewed regularly to ensure compliance to the Child Protection Policy and Procedures. Session will meet with any Employees/Volunteers for whom any issues arose to determine eligibility of working with Children at Oakwood in the future.

Expectations

All Employees, Volunteers, and Church Leadership working with Children are expected to follow these guidelines. Please see the “Clearance and Training Requirements for Children/Youth Workers at Oakwood Presbyterian Church” document in Appendix B for details regarding clearances, background checks, and renewals.

- **All Adults working with Children:**
 - Complete the Application Procedure and be approved
 - Agree to Child Protection Policy and Code of Conduct and review yearly
 - Be trained in policy and Child safety procedures by Oakwood
 - Complete PA-approved mandated reporter training
 - Agree to report any suspected or reported Abuse as a Mandated Reporter
- **Church Leadership and Employees:**
 - For *both Church Leadership and Employees*
 - Be a member of Oakwood Presbyterian Church and/or be approved by the Session
 - Attend a regular training meeting with Volunteers
 - Maintain an access to a working database of counseling and community referrals
 - For *Church Leadership*
 - Church Leadership agree to inform other churches if an alleged perpetrator, abuser, or person with allegations of behavioral misconduct are known to attend

- Be in prayer through the year for the protection of vulnerable persons
- For *Employees*
 - Meet regularly with direct supervisor to review performance/ adherence to Child Protection Policy
- **Volunteers:**
 - Be a member of Oakwood Presbyterian Church and/or be approved by the Session
 - Must be 18 years of age or older (including Volunteers for Nursery and Stepping Stones)
 - Volunteers will be required to attend regular training with Church Leadership and Employees
- **Helpers:**
 - Be a member of Oakwood, a Child of a family who are members of Oakwood, or approved by the Session
 - Must be a Youth (i.e., between the ages of 12-17, including Volunteers for Nursery and Stepping Stones)
 - Complete Helper Application (<http://www.oakwoodpca.org/ministries/children>)
 - Know who to talk to if questions arise about Child Safety Policies and Procedures
 - Officially sign up for any event with which they are helping

Code of Conduct

The following policies will guide those working with Children and Youth in areas regarding Child safety and protection.

Because of how seriously we take our responsibility to love and protect our Children, Adults who willfully violates any part of this policy must meet with two elders, and get Session approval before being allowed to work with Children at Oakwood again. If an individual is suspected of Child Abuse, the incident must be reported to the Appropriate Legal Authorities within 24 hours; if convicted by a court of law, that individual will not work with Children at Oakwood again.

Appropriate Touching Guidelines

Adults shall behave and interact with Children in an appropriate way at all times. Interacting with Children in a way that is intended to be or appears to be sexually stimulating or suggestive is strictly prohibited.

- ***Appropriate Touch*** is positive physical contact that nurtures Children and develops a sense of emotional security and maturity in their interactions with Adults. Appropriate touch is applied to meet the needs of the Children and not the Adults.
 - Some **examples of appropriate touch** are as follows: high fives, fist bumps, handshakes, side hugs, pats on the upper back, picking up a young Child in distress, sitting side by side.
 - A nurturing touch is important in developing a positive relationship with youth. Children should be touched appropriately on faces, hands, shoulders, heads and backs. Other than as outlined in this Policy, never touch a Child in areas that would be covered by a full swimming suit, including the genital areas, buttocks, and the chest/breasts. Appropriate and nurturing touch should be in a public setting and never in a private setting.

- ***Inappropriate Touch*** involves, but is not limited to, coercion or other forms of physical contact which exploits the Child's lack of knowledge, satisfies Adult physical needs at the expense of the Child, violates laws against sexual or other physical contact between Adult and Child, and any attempt to modify Child behavior with physical force. Any observed inappropriate touches should be reported to one of the Pastors. Inappropriate touching that constitutes Child Abuse will be reported to Appropriate Legal Authorities. If you are ever concerned that a touch may be inappropriate and/or constitute Child Abuse, you must report the suspicion to the Appropriate Legal Authorities within 24 hours (see reporting abuse section for more information).
 - Some **examples of inappropriate touch** (that may constitute Child Abuse) are as follows: shoving, biting, kicking, or hitting a Child and leaving a bruise; kissing (between a Child and Adult OR between a Child over 14 and a Child under 14); slapping or tapping a Child on the behind; caressing or fondling a Child (even in non-private areas); and any touch that is secret.
 - Some **examples of inappropriate touch** (that likely do not constitute Child Abuse) are as follows: squeezing, pulling, hair pulling, shaking, slapping, pinching, tickling,⁴ picking up a Child who is not in need of assistance⁵, and any other touch unwanted by a Child.

- When approached by a Child physically, do not reject the Child, but guide his/her affection to an appropriate touch.

⁴ Tickling is over-stimulating and considered by some professionals to be a deceptive device that could lead to inappropriate touching

⁵ "Assistance" may refer to many scenarios: when a Child is in distress (e.g., a Child is injured, crying, or otherwise needs comforting); matters of safety (e.g., Child needs help off a chair, infant needs to be picked up); or in situations required for typical church activities and functioning (e.g., placing Child on knee to read story). Use best judgement in all such situations and contact a member of Church Leadership should there be any questions.

Two-Adult Rule

The presence of multiple, unrelated Adults creates a safer environment for our Children where behavior is observable and Adults are more accountable.

- Each room must always be equipped with **at least two unrelated Adults**⁶ (Volunteers, Employees, or Church Leadership). Helpers may serve with Adults, but they never count as Adults. When determining the two adult rule compliance.
- All interactions between an Adult and a Child should be readily observable, interruptible, and in the sight of another Adult.
- Related Adults may serve together but are considered to be 1 Adult, therefore an additional unrelated Adult must be present.
 - Session can make an exception for related Adults to teach a High School Sunday school class without the necessity of having a third Adult present. This exception is restricted to just High School Sunday School.

Bathroom Policy

Church Leadership, Employees, and Volunteers will take every precaution to keep Children safe when they are in vulnerable places, like a bathroom. Parents are expected to take their Child to the bathroom prior to dropping them off in the nursery or taking them to church event as a first precaution. Age and situation-specific guidelines are outlined below.

General Bathroom rules:

- **All Children are expected to have visited the bathroom with their parent's supervision before the start of a program.**
- The Two-Adult Rule applies to all bathroom scenarios in which an Employee/Volunteer assists a Child in using the bathroom. A single Adult (or multiple related Adults) may not be alone with a Child in the bathroom.
 - This may mean incorporating a class bathroom break during the program in which the entire class is taken to the bathroom. Do not send pre-school-aged Children to the bathroom without proper Adult supervision.
- Children in first grade and above should be discouraged from using the bathroom during class, especially during the teaching time, except in the case of an emergency.
 - If the teacher determines that it is appropriate, Children in first grade and above may be released from class to use the bathroom in pairs (either two boys or two girls).

⁶ Adults may not be left alone with a child. In cases of emergency, one Adult may be alone with multiple Children who are old enough to communicate. If an Employee/Volunteer needs additional support, he/she may call the Flex Person to assist as needed.

- Never enter a toilet stall with a Child and shut the stall door.
- Provide Children with the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities.
 - If a Child needs assistance with something such as buttoning/snapping pants, an Adult may help them in the plain sight of other Adults.

Situation-Specific Bathroom rules:

- Parents with young Children:
 - For young Children who need assistance, parents are encouraged to take them to the family bathroom.
 - For all children in the nursery their parents will be paged by the nursery Volunteer, if they need to use the bathroom.
- Children in diapers:
 - Parents will be asked to put their Children in fresh diapers before dropping them off.
 - Diapers will only be changed if absolutely necessary. Diapers should be changed on a changing station only and occur within unobstructed sight of another Adult. Helpers may not change diapers.
- Children with Special Needs:
 - Parents will offer instruction to Employees/Volunteers regarding how to care or assist a Child with Special Needs on a case-by-case basis.

Other Miscellaneous Code of Conduct Policies:

Adult and Youth Relationships

- Any romantic relationship between an Adult and Youth is prohibited.

Employee's/Volunteer's Children

- If attending Nursery, Stepping Stones, or Sunday School, all Employee's/Volunteer's Children must be in classrooms with Children their own age.
- Employee's/Volunteer's Children do not count as Helpers if they have not had their Application approved and if they have not signed up to help.

Nursery Drop-Off and Pick-Up

- Only 1 approved Adult (Parent/Guardian) may enter the nursery when dropping off and picking up.
- No siblings are allowed to drop off or pick up Children.
- All children must be scanned out by a Volunteer upon pick up.

Transportation

- Oakwood is not responsible for transportation to and from church events.

Gift Giving and Special Attention

In some cases, a potential Perpetrator may use gifts and attention giving as methods of Grooming Children. By being the sole person to interact with a child during a time of need, the potential Perpetrator may attempt to form a close bond with a Child in order to take advantage of him/her. Thus, this set of rules is in place to deter anyone from using a Child's time of need for their own purposes.

- If a Child needs extra on going attention due to something such as a loss or illness, extra attention will be coordinated in a rotation whereby Employees/ Volunteers take turns providing the support. This rotation will be arranged by 2 or more members of Church Leadership.
- If any Adult plans to give a special gift to a Child during a time of need, the Child's parent(s) and a Pastor must be informed beforehand.
- All gifts must meet the Child's needs, not the Adult's needs.

Meeting with Youth/Mentoring Youth

- One-on-One meetings with a Youth must be in a public, observable, and interruptible location.
- All meetings should be scheduled on a calendar accessible by Employees and Church Leadership: another unrelated Adult should always know when and where there is a meeting between a Youth and an Adult.

Communication/Technology

- Adults will communicate with Children and each other in an appropriate and edifying way. There will be no tolerance for denigrating, foul, or sexually suggestive language.
- All forms of communication are subject to observation by Employees and/or Church Leadership.
- The parent(s) of a Child must be informed of any social media contact, including texts and emails, between an Adult and Child. If a Child contacts an Adult through social media or texting, the Adult should let the Child know that his/her parent(s) will be notified of their conversation.⁷
- Any use of screens (including cell phones, tablets, computers, or other technological devices) should be limited to events/activities that are church-

⁷ Discretion may be taken if/when a Child/Youth raises a sensitive issue. In cases where the Child's/ Youth's parent is not directly informed of the conversation, the Adult must inform Church Leadership of the conversation and its content after informing the Child that another Adult needs to be made aware of the conversation.

sanctioned, planned as part of a regular program, emergencies, or during times where direct supervision of Children is not necessary (e.g., a high school youth group event).

- Written permission from Youth and parents must be obtained before any Employee/Volunteer takes and posts photographs or videos online. No pictures of Children in a state of undress may be taken or posted. No information about a Child's name, age, school, or location may be identified.
- Adults shall not engage with a Child on any social media medium that is time-limited (such as Snapchat) or is not publicly accessible.

Responding to Suspected Abuse

There is a legal duty to report suspected Child Abuse or Neglect. The law, however, requires the minimum for Child safety, but churches can (and should) go above and beyond the law. Thus, because Jesus calls his church to protect the vulnerable, Oakwood believes that there is also a spiritual duty to disclose suspected Child Abuse or Neglect to the Appropriate Legal Authorities. This policy requires any Adult who suspects a Child has been Abused or Neglected to report the suspicion to the Appropriate Legal Authorities.

Due to PA state law, some individuals must report suspected Child Abuse; in PA, Church Leadership, Employees, and Adult Volunteers are all Mandated Reporters. However, just because the state does not mandate certain Adults to report suspected Abuse or Neglect does not mean that they are prohibited from reporting. If anyone has any concerns about potential Child Abuse, they are encouraged to make a report on their own or discuss their concerns with Church Leadership.

Any time a disclosure of abuse is made, an Adult should respond by believing that the Child has told the truth, protecting the Child/victim, and Reporting the potential Abuse to the Appropriate Legal Authorities. Reports must be made immediately after suspicion that Child Abuse or Neglect is occurring or has occurred. At Oakwood, the Senior or Associate Pastor should be made aware of suspected abuse. **If there are questions about whether something may qualify as suspected abuse or Neglect, the reporting Adult may discuss/clarify their concerns with a Pastor. Together, the Pastor and the reporting Adult will file a report to the Appropriate Legal Authorities within 24 hours if Abuse or Neglect is suspected.**

Guidelines for Reporting

- Do not try to investigate the matter yourself.⁸ Neither Oakwood nor its Employees/Volunteers will perform any preliminary assessments or investigations to determine the **plausibility** of any allegations before reporting

⁸ Again, see Appendix C for indicators of abuse and Appendix D for possible *clarifying* questions to ask.

to the authorities. Employees/Volunteers will immediately report any abuse allegations to the authorities and strictly adhere to the procedures of this policy and the law of the jurisdiction.⁹ The Church Leadership, Employees, and Volunteers will fully cooperate with the authorities in any criminal Abuse investigation.

- If the alleged Abuser is a parent, caregiver, or any other individual living in the same home with the Child, discuss with a Pastor whether the caregiver should be notified of a Report (decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis). Regardless, after an investigation has been completed, you may choose to notify the parent/family and explain your role as a Mandated Reporter at Oakwood.
- If the suspect of the Abuse/Neglect is an Employee/Volunteer, Oakwood will immediately remove the suspect from all interactions with children until all investigations are complete and the Church has sufficient information to render judgement concerning their continued employment and involvement with Children.
- If an individual is not sure if something constitutes abuse, they may discuss their questions with a member of Session (Pastor or Elder).
- Keep information confidential: Children have a right for their privacy to be respected to the fullest extent possible.
- After a report has been made, a copy of the report will be printed and stored in a locked file in the Church office.

Reporting Contact Information

- A report should be made online via the Department of Human Services Child Welfare Portal (<https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home>) but can also be made by telephone, email, or direct contact with the Appropriate Legal Authorities.
 - **Childline: (800) 932-0313**
 - **Centre County Children and Youth Services: (814) 355-6755**
 - **Police: 911**

The following information (as much as you can gather) should be included in any report of suspected abuse:

- Information about those involved
 - Name of the Child, parent/caregiver, and alleged Perpetrator
 - Age of the Child (age, date of birth), parent/caregiver, and alleged Perpetrator
 - Current location of the Child (including address and county of residence), parents/caregivers, and alleged Perpetrator
- Information about the situation

⁹ The department will not release the identity of the reporter except under court order when the court has determined that the reporter knowingly made a false report.

- Whether or not the Child lives with this parent/caregiver/Perpetrator?
- Perpetrator's relationship to the Child
- Whether the alleged Abuser an employee of a school/daycare or responsible for the welfare of Children
- Extent of the injuries or information that led to your knowledge of or suspicion of Abuse
- If there are there other Children in the home where the Abuse may have taken place

Following up on Pending Cases

- The Church Leadership will fully cooperate with the authorities in any abuse investigation. Church Leadership will make decisions on a case-by-case basis regarding how to protect the victim (Children and other vulnerable persons) moving forward.
- If an abuse allegation is confirmed, the information will be distributed to the Session and whoever else the Session deems necessary to have the information.
- An allegation that is not confirmed may still require the Church/Church Leadership to address issues exposed during the process. A third-party audit may help navigate decisions made to keep Children safe.
- All reports and response steps will be reviewed annually but the Child Protection Team to identify ways to improve the response process.

Creating a Culture of Awareness and Support for Survivors

Supporting Child Abuse inflicts spiritual injury. The Church's compassionate, authentic response is crucial to demonstrate Christ's love to victims. Therefore, Oakwood will do the following:

- Archive the Past - Victims should be assured that the Church will never minimize or revise history.
- Affirm the victim's willingness to disclose the abuse.
- Assign a specialized care team to care for the survivor and his/her family if they choose.
- Inform other churches (where an alleged Perpetrator attends) of their knowledge of allegations.
- Continue to raise awareness of abuse in the Church and create a culture of safety.
- Keep the identity of the minor victim confidential as required by law in most jurisdictions.
- Listen to, and learn from, abuse victims, not only for the sake of the victim, but that the Church may develop stronger child safety policies and procedures.
- Maintain a list of local counselors skilled in the area of Abuse recovery.
- Pray publicly for healing, justice, and support for all involved in an instance of abuse.
- Prohibit asking for details of the abuse. Victims will share if, when, and to whom they choose.
- Prohibit blaming the victim for the abuse or asking what he/she may have done to encourage it.
- Prohibit coerced forgiveness or reconciliation.
- Prohibit public defense of the Perpetrator.
- Provide care, counseling, and other resources for victims of abuse or other members who may be negatively impacted upon learning of a Child Abuse disclosure.
- Support and accompany the victim through any legal proceedings, with their permission.

Training and Increasing Awareness

The principles found in Oakwood's policies and procedures reflect God's instruction to protect His little ones (Matthew 8:16) and to be "equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17). Therefore, ongoing training will be **required** for all Church Leadership, Employees, and Volunteers who engage with Children.

- All Church Leadership, Employees, and Volunteers will receive yearly training in the prevention of, and response to, abuse. This will include training in reporting procedures, reviewing the Child Safety Policies and Procedures, and

participating in ongoing training topics selected by the Child Protection Team with input from the Church Leadership. Ongoing topics can take a variety of forms including discussions about books, presentations by speakers, and/or workshops.

- Care teams for victims of Abuse will receive training from a healthcare provider, such as a social worker or counselor, on how to interact with people who have suffered the trauma of abuse.
- Opportunities for continued training and awareness will be provided for other Adults, Children, and families using the suggested methods listed below:
 - Encourage parents and members of the congregation to attend training sessions for Employees/Volunteers and Church Leadership.
 - Encourage parents to fill out registration cards denoting information regarding Child safety (allergies, diaper changes, special needs, etc.). The Child Protection Team will maintain and update such cards annually.
 - Invite child protection professionals to speak at congregational events.
 - Invite the Child Protection Team to speak at small group gatherings about the Oakwood Child Safety Policies and Procedures and Child Abuse awareness.
 - Post contact information for relevant local authorities and agencies.
 - Post the Child Safety Policies and Procedures on the church website.
 - Preach a sermon dedicated to addressing Abuse.
 - Provide access to resources such as book recommendations and workshops related to the topic of abuse and caring for vulnerable demographics.
 - Provide an age-appropriate safety training that addresses personal protection and reporting procedures for Children (including Youth ages). An example of this could be a puppet show, skit, or a specialist on social media.
 - Provide educational opportunities for parents to learn about potential risks of abuse (e.g., internet and social media safety).
 - Read and have available *Protecting Children from Abuse in the Church: Steps to Protect and Respond* and *God Made All of Me* (available at [New Growth Press](#)).
 - Use the month of April (Child Abuse Awareness month) and/or September (start of ministry year) to review the policy or provide educational training.

Agreement to Abide by Contents of Oakwood Presbyterian Church Child Safety Policies and Procedures

Please read this document **carefully** before signing to ensure that you understand its contents.

For Employees:

My signature below indicates that I have reviewed the policy and agree to abide by its contents. I, _____, understand that if I have questions, at any time, regarding the Oakwood Child Protection Policy, I will consult with my immediate supervisor.

Employee Signature

Date

Witness

Date

For Volunteers:

My signature below indicates that I have reviewed the policy and agree to abide by its contents. I, _____, understand that if I have questions, at any time, regarding the Oakwood Child Protection Policy, I will consult with my immediate supervisor.

Volunteer Signature

Date

Witness

Date

For Helpers:

My signature below indicates that I have reviewed the policy and agree to abide by its contents. I, _____, understand that if I have questions, at any time, regarding the Oakwood Child Protection Policy, I will consult with my immediate supervisor.

Helper Signature

Date

Witness

Date

Appendix A
Volunteer Application

Appendix B

Clearance & Training Requirements for Children/Youth Workers at Oakwood Presbyterian Church

Documentation for all adults (age 18 and above) who volunteer directly with children and youth are required.

Any questions? Contact the church office at churchoffice@oakwoodpca.org.

NOTE: All clearances are transferable, so clearances obtained for other organizations can be submitted in fulfillment of these requirements. Also, any clearances you obtain for Oakwood can be used to fulfill requirements for other volunteer positions.

- 1. Oakwood Children's Worker Application (Required by Oakwood Policy) Forms** available from the Oakwood office or on the Oakwood website www.oakwoodpca.org under Children on the Ministries tab.
- 2. PA State Police Criminal History (Required by PA Law). Renew every 60 months or 5 years.** This clearance is available online for free at www.epatch.pa.state.us Select "New Record Check (volunteers only)." You will first have to enter information on the agency requesting the check (you can enter yourself as the agency) and then you will enter the information on the person being checked (which is you). You are NOT required to enter your SSN if you prefer not to. Please write down your control number for future access in case you get a message that your history check is Pending or Under Review. When your record check has been completed, click on your control number, and then click on the button at the bottom to display your certificate. **DO NOT CLOSE THE CERTIFICATE UNTIL YOU HAVE PRINTED AND/OR SAVED IT! YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ACCESS IT AGAIN!** You will need to submit a copy of your clearance.
- 3. PA Child Abuse History Check (Required by PA Law). Renew every 60 months or 5 years.** This clearance is available online for free for volunteers at <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/CWIS>. You will begin by creating an individual account for yourself, and then you will enter your data and access your clearances through this account. Once your clearance has been processed, you will be able to access your certificate from your account. You will need to submit a copy of your clearance.
- 4. FBI Fingerprint Check or Affidavit in Lieu of FBI Check (Required by PA Law).** If you have lived in PA for the past 10 years continuously, you are eligible to skip the FBI Fingerprint check by signing an **Oakwood Volunteer Affidavit**. Affidavits

are available in the Oakwood office or on the Oakwood website www.oakwoodpca.org.

If you have NOT lived in PA for the past 10 years continuously, you will need to do an FBI fingerprint check. Begin by registering at <https://uenroll.identogo.com>. If you are a **VOLUNTEER** you will need to enter the **service code 1KG6ZJ** (paid staff service code is 1KG756). Go through the prompts and schedule an appointment at a location of your choosing (there is only one location in State College). You will need to pay a \$22.60 fee with a credit card to register (Oakwood will reimburse you for this or you may consider it a donation). Print your appointment confirmation sheet and take it, along with the appropriate ID to the location where your fingerprints will be scanned electronically and submitted. Results will be mailed to you in about 5 weeks and will arrive in a **plain white envelope** (be on the lookout as it's easy to overlook this as junk mail). Once you have a copy of your fingerprint check, submit a copy of your certificate to the Oakwood office.

5. Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting Training (Required by Oakwood Policy). Must be renewed every 36 months. You must complete one mandated reporter course. If you have had training through PSU or elsewhere, please submit your certificate of completion. Oakwood also provides an in-class training once a semester. In addition, there are two options for free online training, which you can complete on your own. Any one of these options will fulfill the three hours of mandated reporter training. Here are links to the free online courses (you only need one): This clearance is available online for free for volunteers at <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/CWIS> or [https://www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu/webapps/portal/execute/tabs/tabAction?tab_group_id= 2 1](https://www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu/webapps/portal/execute/tabs/tabAction?tab_group_id=21). You will begin by creating an individual account for yourself, and then you will enter your data and access your clearances through this account. Once your clearance has been processed, you will be able to access your certificate from your account. You will need to submit a copy of your clearance.

To submit documents:

Electronically:

churchoffice@oakwoodpca.org

By Mail:

1865 Waddle Road,
State College, PA 16803

In Person Drop off:

Oakwood Office

Appendix C

Potential Indicators and Symptoms of Abuse (Child Welfare Information Gateway)

Symptoms

A child who is being abused may feel guilty, ashamed, or confused. He/she may be afraid to tell anyone about the abuse, especially if the abuser is a parent, other relative, or family friend. The following symptoms may be indicative of abuse or neglect, though they do not include *all* the signs of abuse or neglect. Thus, it is important to pay attention to other behaviors that may seem unusual or concerning.

The Child

- Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance
- Has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention
- Has learning problems (or difficulty concentrating) that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen
- Lacks adult supervision
- Is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn
- Comes to school or other activities early, stays late, and does not want to go home
- Is reluctant to be around a particular person
- Discloses maltreatment

The Parent

- Denies the existence of—or blames the child for—the child's problems in school or at home
- Asks teachers or other caregivers to use harsh physical discipline if the child misbehaves
- Sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome
- Demands a level of physical or academic performance the child cannot achieve
- Looks primarily to the child for care, attention, and satisfaction of the parent's emotional needs
- Shows little concern for the child

Physical Abuse Signs and Symptoms

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the **child**:

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
- Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home
- Shrinks at the approach of adults
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver
- Abuses animals or pets

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child's injury, or provides an explanation that is not consistent with the injury
- Describes the child as "evil" or in some other very negative way
- Uses harsh physical discipline with the child
- Has a history of abuse as a child
- Has a history of abusing animals or pets

Sexual Abuse Signs and Symptoms

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the **child**:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14
- Runs away
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver
- Attaches very quickly to strangers or new adults in their environment

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex
- Is secretive and isolated
- Is jealous or controlling with family members

Emotional Abuse Signs and Symptoms

Consider the possibility of emotional abuse when the **child**:

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression
- Is either inappropriately adult (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example)
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development
- Has attempted suicide
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the **parent or other adult caregiver**:

- Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child
- Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's problems
- Overtly rejects the child

Neglect Signs and Symptoms

Consider the possibility of neglect when the **child**:

- Is frequently absent from school
- Begs or steals food or money
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
- Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor

- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs
- States that there is no one at home to provide care

Consider the possibility of neglect when the **parent or other adult caregiver:**

- Appears to be indifferent to the child
- Seems apathetic or depressed
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner
- Is abusing alcohol or other drugs

Appendix D

Child Protection Cheat Sheet for Asking Clarifying Questions

When asking about possible physical abuse, calmly and neutrally ask or find out:

- (1) Specific details of incident:
 - a. Who did this?
 - b. What happened (before, during, after)?
 - c. Was an open hand, closed hand, or object used? Clothes on or off?
 - d. What part of the body?
- (2) Did it leave a mark (e.g., bruise, welt)?
- (3) Did it result in severe pain (e.g., sore to the touch hours or days later)?
- (4) Did it result in loss of functioning (e.g., child could not sit down, or couldn't use arm afterwards)?
- (5) Were there other times that something like this happened? How often does it happen? When was the last time it happened?
- (6) If relevant: are siblings at risk? Does it happen to them, too?
- (7) Does anyone else know about the incident(s) (e.g., parent, teacher, CYS, Pastor)? And, if so, what happened (i.e., has CYS already been notified and a report already been made?)

When asking about possible sexual abuse, calmly and neutrally ask or find out:

- (1) Who did this?
 - a. What is the relationship of this person to the child?
 - b. Does this person live with the child?
 - c. How old is the person who did this?
- (2) What happened (specifics)
 - a. Where and when did the incident happen?
 - b. Was the child touched and where (clothed or unclothed)?
- (3) Were there other times that something like this happened? How often does it happen?
- (4) If relevant: are siblings at risk?
- (5) Does anyone else know (e.g., parent, teacher, CYS, Pastor)? And what happened (i.e., has CYS already been notified and a report already been made?)

Note: Sexual Abuse can include non-contact acts (e.g., someone making sexual comments to child, exposing him/herself to child, exposing child to pornographic materials, inducing child to undress/masturbate)