

**GENERAL POLICY
FOR PROVIDING A
SAFE ENVIRONMENT
FOR CHILDREN
AND YOUTH**

**WESTERN SPRINGS BAPTIST
CHURCH**

**4475 Wolf Road
Western Springs, Illinois**

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**WESTERN SPRINGS BAPTIST CHURCH
CONTACT INFORMATION**

Phone Number: 708.246.1530

Church Website: www.wsbc.info

Church Email: wsbc@wsbc.info

Family Pastor: Joel Sisson

Email: joel@wsbc.info

Youth Pastor: Aaron Hoesli

Email: aaron@wsbc.info

Policy for Providing a Safe Environment for Children and Youth

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MISSION STATEMENTS/ PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY/SAFETY GOALS

Children's Ministries Mission Statement

Western Springs Baptist believes that, because children are important to Jesus, ministering to children is a high priority. We also believe that, because God has given parents the primary responsibility and privilege to be the spiritual teachers of their children, the church is called to partner with and encourage families in the spiritual guidance of their children. Therefore, the purpose of our Children's Ministry is to provide Scripture-based, life-relevant, age-appropriate programs that offer opportunities for evangelism, worship, growth, fellowship and service.

Youth Mission Statement

The youth ministry at Western Springs Baptist exists to reach teens with the gospel of Jesus Christ and help them develop a mature faith in Him. While the primary responsibility falls biblically on the parents for spiritual maturation, we also realize we as a church have an important role. We desire to partner with parents and help in any way possible to accomplish this goal. Our purpose is to provide sound biblical teaching that radically changes the lives of our teens for the purpose of following Christ. We desire to help our teens experience fellowship with other believers and to be challenged in their walk with Christ to serve others by reaching out in cross cultural settings.

Parental Responsibility for Children

The responsibility to supervise children while at Western Springs Baptist Church rightfully belongs to the parents of those children. Parents are expected to know where their children are at all times and are relied upon by the Church to supervise the actions of their children when not in classes, especially during and after the mid-week and weekend services and before and after any youth programs and midweek programs. By doing this, parents, staff, and church attendees alike can be assured that the children are not in places in the building where their play can cause injury to themselves, disrupt others who are in community or cause damage to the facilities. Proper supervision of children also significantly minimizes the risk of any child being lost, injured, or abducted.

Safe Environment Goals

We want to provide a safe environment for the children and youth who attend activities at our church or who attend events sponsored by the church. We also want to safeguard all paid employees, staff, clergy, and volunteers. In order to provide this environment, the church is implementing the following policies:

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR PROVIDING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR MINOR PERSONS AT WESTERN SPRINGS BAPTIST CHURCH

All employees, facilitators, and volunteers are mandated to do everything reasonably possible to provide a safe environment for children.

I. SCREENING AND TRAINING PROCEDURES FOR CHILD/YOUTH MINISTRY VOLUNTEERS

All persons who by virtue of their employment, ministry, or facilitation are involved in activities of the Western Springs Baptist Church must be screened. For purposes of this document and children's/youth ministries at Western Springs Baptist Church, "staff" includes both paid employees and volunteers actively engaged in serving children and youth in ministry programs at WSBC.

A.

1. All persons must:
 - Complete the enclosed standard application form.
 - Expect all references will be checked.
 - Have an individual interview
 - Expect that a state background check may be done
 - Expect that application renewals will be performed annually.
2. All Team Leaders must be a member or regular attender of WSBC for at least 6 months.
3. Helpers (such as in VBS, Live Wire, other programs) may attend other churches if helpers are well known to team leaders and have prior relationships with WSBC.
4. All employees, volunteers, and facilitators shall indicate in writing their understanding and agreement to follow the Western Springs Baptist Church Child Protection Guidelines. All employees, volunteers, and facilitators shall receive training annually in the Western Springs Baptist Church Guidelines for Care according to the extent of their involvement.
5. All persons should observe the environment and equipment for unsafe situations and remove children from any potentially dangerous conditions; report problems immediately.

II. EXPECTATIONS FOR PROVIDING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT – ON SITE

A. Open Doors Policy

1. If a staff person needs to meet with a minor one-on-one, the door to the room will always be open.
2. Closed door counseling may be necessary if it involves a sensitive topic. In that case the staff person should always be visible from a window in the door.

B. Two Adult Policy

1. There must always be two or more adults present when supervising, leading, or teaching minors through 6th grade.
2. If a staff person is left alone with fewer than three students, the staff person shall immediately move to an area of public view, such as an area with a doorway or hallway.

C. Proper Displays of Affection Policy

1. Physical Contact. Touching the chest, genital region, upper legs, buttocks, waist, or stomach of a minor by a staff person is not allowed. Full contact, body-to-body “front” or “back” hugs between a staff person and a minor are not allowed. One-arm side hugs or hand-to-arm hugs are allowed.
2. Kissing between any staff person and a minor is not allowed.
3. Lap Sitting. Appropriate sitting on laps of staff persons may occur with children three years of age and younger. Children four years of age and older should be told to sit next to the staff person.
4. Casual Touch. Non-demanding gentle contact during activities by a staff person may be on minors’ heads, shoulders, backs, arms, and hands.
5. Back rubs and massages between staff persons and minors are not allowed.
6. Piggy Back Rides are not allowed between staff persons and minors.
7. Do not carry children over two years of age or pick them up to hug them.
8. Avoid even the appearance of impropriety.
9. Physical Discipline. Research has shown that there can be a fine line between improper physical discipline and higher risk for sex abuse of

a minor and, therefore, spanking, slapping, hitting with rulers, etc., are not allowed at WSBC. When discipline of a minor for unacceptable behavior is needed, the staff person shall seek guidance from his/her supervisor and follow other established WSBC policies. All interaction regarding discipline with a minor needs to carefully consider a student's dignity and fragile life. Gentleness, respect, and understanding must guide all actions and words of a staff person so that the biblical goal of discipline through instruction, training, and correction may be attained.

D. Bathroom Policy

1. Infant, Toddler. Diapering should be done in diaper stations and in the close proximity to other care providers; bathroom doors must remain open
2. Children under five years. Children should be accompanied to the bathroom. Bathroom doors should remain open. The child may require assistance.
3. Kindergarten through Grade Six. Permission shall be granted to use the facility. If *special help* is required parental instructions and permission should be given.
4. Apart from the above exceptions, no staff person shall ever enter the bathroom of the opposite gender unless required to do so in an emergency situation.

III. EXPECTATIONS FOR PROVIDING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT – OFF SITE

All of the above policies for “on-site” behavior also apply to “off-site” behavior; what follows are further policies which have relevance primarily to “off-site” activities.

- A. For an activity off-site, should the staff person be left alone with fewer than three students, the staff person shall immediately move the group to an area of public view such as a restaurant or a location with another adult.

B. Dating Policy

1. Dating between a staff person and a minor is not allowed.
2. Staff persons should be sensitized to the possible existence of “student crushes” and should consult the Youth Pastor

C. Driving Policy

A minor should never be alone with one staff person of the opposite sex in a vehicle. If a youth is unable to reach a parent after an event it may be necessary for youth workers to take the youth home, only after talking with the youth staff person in charge in order to make a good decision together.

D. Personal Communication

1. Telephone conversations between a staff person and a minor shall be brief, less than ten minutes, and non-personal in nature of content.
2. Personal written communication between a staff person and a minor is not allowed. This policy does not include short notes of encouragement, thank-you notes, congratulation notes, post cards, or invitations to WSBC events.
3. Email, IM, Facebook or any other social media communication between a staff person and a minor shall be brief, less than one page in length, general in nature of content, and directed toward information. In depth conversations or personal counseling should not be conducted via social media.

E. Internet Chat Room Policy

1. Staff persons will not engage in chat room dialogue with a minor unless the chat room has been set up by and sanctioned by WSBC for the purpose of healthy Internet chatting with other WSBC students.
2. If a staff member who is participating in a non-WSBC chat room does encounter a minor, he/she shall immediately withdraw from chat room and report such contact to his supervisor. There shall be no anonymous chat room activity by WSBC staff members.

F. Internet Pornography and Prostitution. No staff person shall ever engage in viewing pornography or any sort with minors. Likewise, no staff

person shall ever encourage prostitution with minors or engage in facilitating a minor to have sex for money.

IV. ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT MINISTRIES

A. Sleepover Guidelines for Student Ministries

- 1.** The sleepover must be cleared through the Youth Minister.
- 2.** Permission slips must be obtained from all the students' parents
- 3.** Emergency contact information should be on file for all regular attenders of youth programs. Emergency information for any visitors should be acquired prior to the sleepover.
- 4.** The two-adult rule must be followed.
- 5.** As long as any youth are awake one of the leaders must also be awake to ensure monitoring of safe behavior.
- 6.** Leaders should check with parents and use good judgment regarding PG or PG13 movies. No R-rated movies.
- 7.** Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn.
- 8.** In the event of a cross-gender sleepover on the property, boys and girls must sleep in separate rooms and be properly supervised with same gender leaders.
- 9.** All items/devices which could be harmful to a student (e.g., fireworks, etc.) should not be brought along.
- 10.** If sleepovers are held in a parent's home, in addition to all the above guidelines, the following guidelines must be followed
 - a.** The parents must be present in the home during the sleepover.
 - b.** No mixed gender sleepovers
 - c.** A general discussion should be held between the leader and the parent(s) to discuss areas of potential risks and steps should be taken to safeguard the minors from inappropriate material.

V. CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

In general, abuse is physical, mental, or sexual maltreatment; neglect of the health and welfare; or exposing to any unreasonable risk, a person under 18 years of (hereinafter termed "child").

In order to prevent occurrences of abuse of minors and to reduce the likelihood for false accusations, WSBC is a "ZERO TOLERANCE ZONE" for abuse of minors.

A. Abuse may take the form of (but not exclusively) the following:

1. **Inflicting injury upon a child.**

Inflicts, causes to be inflicted, or allows to be inflicted upon such child physical injury, by other than accidental means, which causes death, disfigurement, impairment of physical or emotional healthy, or loss or impairment of any bodily function.

2. **Placing a child in a situation where they will likely be injured.**

Creates a substantial risk of physical injury to such child by other than accidental means which would be likely to cause death, disfigurement, impairment of physical or emotional health, or loss or impairment of any bodily function.

3. **Involving or allowing a child to be engaged in sexual activity.**

Commits or allows to be committed any sex offense against such child, as such sex offenses are defined in the Criminal Code of 1961, as amended, and extending those definitions of sex offenses to include children under 18 years of age.

Definition: *Sexual Abuse of a Minor is a broad concept and includes any contact or interaction (with or without touch) between a minor and another person in which the minor is being used for the sexual stimulation of the abuser. This contact or interaction can include rape, molestation, touching breasts or genital areas or buttocks over clothing or under clothing or without clothing, oral sex acts, masturbation, forcing a minor to look at the genitals of another, forcing a minor to fondle the genitals of another, kissing, showing a minor pornography (written or Internet form), obscene telephone or email or Internet instant message or Internet chat room conversations with a minor, or involvement in any way with prostitution. All of the above when done with a minor are violations of the Illinois Criminal Code and are reportable under Illinois' child abuse statutes.*

- 4. Torturing a child.**
Commits or allows to be committed an act or acts of torture upon such child.
- 5. Excessively punishing a child.**
Inflicts excessive corporal punishment
- 6. Allowing a child to witness the abuse of someone else, including:**
 - a. Witnessing sexual acts or pornographic materials
 - b. Sexually inappropriate statements, comments, or seductiveness
 - c. Witnessing any physical abuse of another.
- 7. Emotional abuse, including:**
 - a. Verbal comments, actions, or statements that would cause a child to believe their person, emotions, physical form, family, race, background, religious background, or social status is somehow bad, inferior, unacceptable, or shameful.
 - b. Witnessing the emotional abuse of other
- 8. State law defines neglect or (failure to properly care for a child):**
“Neglected child: means any child whose parent or other person responsible for the child’s welfare withholds or denies nourishment or medically indicated treatment including food or care denied solely on the basis of the present or anticipated mental or physical impairment as determined by a physician acting alone or in consultation with other physicians or otherwise does not provide the proper or necessary support or medical or other remedial care recognized under state law as necessary for a child’s wellbeing, or other care necessary for his or her wellbeing, including adequate food, clothing, and shelter; or who is abandoned by his or her parents or other person responsible for the child’s welfare; or who is a newborn infant whose blood or urine contains any amount of a controlled substance as defined in a subsection (f) of Section 102 of the Illinois Controlled Substances Act or a metabolite thereof, with the exception of a controlled substance or metabolite thereof those presence in the newborn infant is the result of medical treatment administered to the mother of the newborn infant. A child shall not be considered neglected or abused for the sole reason that such child’s parent or other person responsible for his or her welfare depends upon a spiritual means through prayer alone for the treatment or cure of disease or remedial care as provided under Section 4 of this Act. A child shall not be considered neglected or abused solely because the child is not attending school in accordance with the requirements of Article 26 of The School Code, as amended.

10. Threats of violence against others or threats to harm oneself.

During the course of your ministry you may receive information that a person has the eminent intent to harm themselves or others. You must take this information seriously and report this information to your supervisor. The important principle is to report your suspicions. The Western Springs Baptist Church Discipleship Chair can assist any employee, volunteer or facilitator with any questions. Even though you may feel embarrassed or you may be concerned that you are violating a "confidence," you must report the incident. It is important that you realize that, although the person may be angry or depressed, they have probably revealed this information to you as a desperate attempt to receive help.

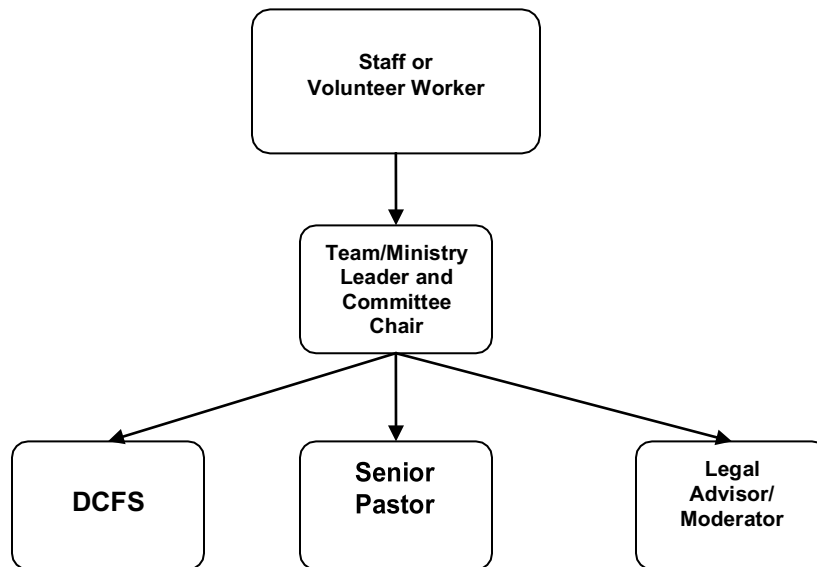
B. Responsibility to Report Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

Our governing principle is that we know that it is in God's heart and will to care for and protect children (Matthew 18:1-10). Therefore, all persons in the course of their employment, ministry efforts or facilitation involvement, have a responsibility to report actual or suspected child abuse or neglect whether or not it may have occurred on the Western Springs Baptist Church property.

1. The law also provides for protection for anyone who "in good faith" reports child abuse or suspected abuse. This is true even if the report is determined to be incorrect.
 - a. Any employee, volunteer, or facilitator has the right to make a report to the Department of Children and Family Services or a law enforcement authority. Nothing in these guidelines should be interpreted to impinge upon this right. **The State maintains a toll free telephone number, 1.800.252.2873 to report suspected abuse.** However, the following procedures should be followed to provide consistency and appropriate documentation.

C. Western Springs Baptist Church's Reporting Procedures of Suspected Abuse

Flow Chart for Reporting Abuse or Neglect or Suspected Abuse or Neglect



1. Any employee, volunteer, or facilitator who believes or suspects child abuse or neglect **shall immediately** report their suspicions to their supervisor or leader whether or not it may have occurred on the Western Springs Baptist Church property. All concerns should be directed according to the reporting chain above.
2. No employee, volunteer, or facilitator shall conduct any investigation or attempt to “solve the problems” independently.
3. The Senior Pastor shall determine who else within church leadership should be informed, consult corporate Legal Counsel of the Western Springs Baptist Church, and direct the reporting any instance of child abuse or neglect to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (IL-DCFS).
4. A report regarding the disposition of this matter will be made to all persons in the reporting chain.

D. Discipline Policy

Because WSBC is a zero tolerance for sex abuse of a minor, any violation of the Sex Abuse of Minors Prevention Policy is grounds for immediate dismissal. The Senior Pastor and Church Board shall have the final say on the dismissal of staff persons found to be in violation of this policy.

E. Response to Victims Policy

1. As followers of Christ, we wish to display His compassion and love in the highest measure to any minor who has been a victim of sex abuse.
2. The response to minors who have been a victim of sex abuse at WSBC shall always include an apology to the minor and his/her parents. The Senior Pastor and the Church Board shall determine the nature and method of apology.
3. The response to minors who have been a victim of sex abuse at WSBC will also always include an offer for extended individual and family therapy at no charge with any licensed psychologist/therapist chosen by the parents of the abused minor. WSBC understands that the length of time for recovery from childhood sex abuse varies and may be quite long; therefore, this commitment to provide therapy for the victim shall not extend past his/her twenty-fifth birthday.

F. Response Within our WSBC Community.

1. The Senior Pastor will meet with the victim of child sex abuse and their parents to best decide how the WSBC community can reach out to them in this time of great distress and pain.
2. The Senior Pastor will meet with the accused perpetrator and advise him/her that they are being removed from active service in the children's ministry pending the outcome of the official investigation. It is recommended that WSBC's legal counsel be involved at this stage to gather information and determine further action.
3. When sex abuse of a minor occurs in a church, many people within the community are greatly affected and in need of special support. The Senior Pastor will meet with them, speak truthfully using all possible candor and sensitivity, protect the rights and feelings of both victims and accused perpetrators, and encourage any questions to dispel false rumors.
4. The Senior Pastor alone will deal with the Press/media persons who may contact WSBC for details. Everyone else associated with WSBC or the incident in question should be advised to respond to press calls which they receive by saying, "I am not in a position to comment; please call the Senior Pastor.