Children and Youth Ministry Policies

PVCC cares for a number of children and youth and desires to protect them. The policies following are designed to safeguard them and reduce the chance of injury, or even the suspicion of questionable behavior.

All staff and volunteers who desire to work with minors will be required to complete the Volunteer Information sheet. Criminal background checks will be performed on each ***adult*** volunteer after the signed information sheet has been received and prior to the volunteer being enlisted as a worker. Each volunteer must be given a copy of these policies and sign that they have read and agree to abide by the policy.

The following items would disqualify a volunteer from participating in the leadership or supervision of any activities or programs with minors:

1) criminal homicide 2) aggravated assault 3) crimes related to the possession, use or sale of drugs or controlled substance 4) sexual abuse or assault 5) incest 6) indecency with a child 7) possession or promotion of child pornography 8) abandonment or endangerment of a child 9) public lewdness or indecent exposure 10) enticing a child 11) kidnapping 12) being required to register as a sex offender, or 13) other felony convictions. The elder board has the *authority* to consider repentant sinners in volunteer roles after careful examination of the situation.

Only the Senior Pastor and a member of the lay leadership selected by elders may view information obtained on the criminal background check. The information will be filed in a secured area located in the church office.

PVCC's Children and Youth Ministries implements a "two-volunteer rule", which means no adult shall ever be left alone with a child not their own unless prior, written consent has been given. If written parental permission is not given, the two-volunteer rule must be used. If an adult is alone with a minor, it must occur in an open and public area, or a room with transparent windows, and any door without a window shall remain open at all times. Volunteers will be adults with a completed background check who have also been attending Prairie View consistently over a six-month period prior to volunteering. Volunteers may also be minors (ages 11–17) who have aged out of PVCC's children's ministry. In addition, PVCC's paid staff (i.e. "non-volunteers") are expected to adhere to the principal of never being alone with a child not their own unless the conditions listed above have been met.

Section 1: Bathroom Procedures

This section addresses those steps that the church should implement to protect child, staff and volunteers when children need to utilize bathroom facilities. Children, for the purposes of this section, will be defined as age 3 (potty-trained) through grade 5.

a) If a child requires assistance, the responsible adult (gender sameness preferred) should take the child to the restroom, prop the door open and assist the child in an appropriate manner. The first choice for a restroom is to be, if available, the small bathroom located by the nursery.

b) If the child does not require assistance, the adult should accompany the child, check to see if any adults are already in the bathroom and, if so, ask they leave the bathroom as soon as possible so the child may use the facility in private and then remain outside. Whenever possible, using the small bathroom next to the nursery is preferable.

Section 2: Fire

In the event of a fire or fire alarm, adults should lead the children to the nearest exit and walk to the front parking lot and stay with the children until it is safe to return to the building or the children are released to their parents or guardian. Adults should take attendance to ensure all children are accounted for.

Section 3: Lost or Missing Children

A child is considered lost or missing if the responsible adult cannot locate the child within the confines of their classroom, their immediate area or the church grounds as a whole. This policy covers all children attending church-related activities located on and off the church premises.

1) At the first indication a child is missing, notify an elder or staff member and the security volunteers on duty.

2) As soon as possible, all available volunteers or staff should be enlisted and church exits should be secured.

3) Bathrooms are to be searched first. Then persons involved should conduct a brief but thorough search inside the church facility, including all of the “out-of-the-way” places.

4) If the indoor search is unsuccessful, then proceed outside and conduct a search of the grounds.

5) Isolate the class or group in which the missing child had been involved and take attendance to ensure there is no other child missing. Children should be asked if they know the location of the missing child.

6) If the child cannot be located within five minutes, notify the child’s parents and the police.

Section 4: Medical Emergency

In the event of a serious injury, there are two (2) basic rules:

A. Do not move the injured unless they are in another life-threatening situation, i.e. a fire.

B. Do not leave the ill or injured person unless required to provide the appropriate level of assistance.

Follow the steps below:

1) Call 911 immediately for any life-threatening emergency and follow their directions. If unsure of the urgency of the situation, call 911 if a qualified medical person cannot be **immediately** located.

2) Enlist the help of any trained medical professionals who may be available to assist the individual. In the event of any serious injury, notify the parents as soon as possible.

3) Enlist the help of other responsible adults to assist, to retrieve first aid supplies or attend to other children as soon as possible.

4) As soon as the immediate need is handled, notify a staff person to report the incident. That staff person should report the incident to our church insurance agent.

Section 5: Tornado or Severe Weather

In the event of severe weather or the threat of said incident, a responsible adult, staff member, or member of the Elder Team should monitor weather reports. If possible, volunteers should be posted to observe outside conditions.

If threatening conditions are sighted or a warning is given, all children should be moved to a small, sturdy, **interior** room such as the restrooms or the small Kids' City room or hallway away from windows. The small bathroom and small room in the nursery area is also available. People should evacuate the main sanctuary room and go into the hallways.

Section 6: Transportation

Whenever youth involved in church activities are transported by vehicles, the vehicles should **only** be operated by responsible adults over the age of 25. If a youth pastor, he must be between 21 and 70 years of age. Under **NO** circumstances should any youth drive other youth (siblings exempted) during official youth group activities unless parental permission is **clearly** granted in writing in advance. No youth should drive themselves beyond 10 miles during any youth event unless the parent is notified in advance. Any vehicles should be in good operating condition and adequately insured. Volunteers driving their own vehicles are strongly encouraged to carry minimum personal automotive liability limits of $100,000/$300,000/$100,000. Volunteers should have a valid U.S. driver's license, good driving records meaning no more than one at-fault accident or moving violation within the last three years, and no alcohol- or drug-related violations. The youth pastor or an otherwise designated youth ministry leader is responsible for verifying that all volunteers driving youth meet the above requirements.

Due to higher incidents of rollover accidents, large passenger vans are discouraged for use in youth activities. If a larger van is rented or used, the van should have dual rear truck wheels or be equipped with an anti-rollover package, have seatbelts for all passengers and be a 2004 model year or later. No trailers, no roof rack loads are permitted.

Parents of youth should **always** be informed of any plans for transportation away from the location where youth are dropped off for the activity. If youth decide to meet after a youth event, PVCC is not responsible, but youth should be encouraged to inform their parents of plans.

The Youth Pastor or Youth Ministry Leader is responsible for obtaining Permission/Liability Release/Medical Release forms for all youth participating in activities away from the church property. Permission/Liability Release/Medical Release forms are good from the date they are signed until otherwise notified by the parent/guardian. Youth workers should be familiar with any special medical conditions or allergies.

All drivers should have directions to the destination for longer distance trips rather than being told to "keep up" or follow the vehicle in front of them.

In the event of a vehicle accident, the following steps should be taken:

a) Stop immediately and aid any injured and see to it they receive medical attention as soon as possible. Move any vehicles and people well away from the roadway if possible to do so safely. Do not attempt to move injured persons unless they are in another life-threatening situation, i.e. fire or traffic.

b) Call for help if needed. Report the accident to local police.

c) Place emergency reflectors, flares.

d) Assess damage, get witnesses' names and telephone numbers. Get Driver's license, insurance information, and license plate information of other driver.

e) Notify the families of other passengers involved in the accident.

f) Record details of the accident in writing and notify the insurance company.

Section 7: Recreational Safety

Youth groups often are involved in recreational activities that have the potential for injury. Youth leaders and volunteers should be aware of any potential dangers that cause injury such as sharp objects near the activity. Be sure that activities are away from any traffic. Consider the size and experience of various youth and guard against injury that might result from larger youth being with smaller youth. Leaders should also be aware of the condition of all youth when the weather is hot and humid.

Section 8: Discussions of Sexual or other Sensitive Topics

Anyone working with children and students should avoid speaking on the subject of sex beyond the plain reading of Scripture where the Bible speaks to such things. Anyone who plans to teach on sex or any other subject deemed "sensitive", must receive the approval of the Elders at least seven days in advance. Upon approval from the Elders, the Youth Pastor or Youth Ministry Leader must inform parents and clearly convey the nature of the discussion no less than three days in advance of the meeting. If the subject is deemed "non-sensitive" when elder approval is sought, advanced notice to parents will not be necessary.

In addition, no one working with children or students should ever ask or pressure a minor to share information about his or her sexual activity. If a minor does share information pertaining to his or her sexual activity (as in the context of counseling), the adult(s) involved must report the conversation to the Elders immediately. Because such conversations or statements are often made by minors in confidence,

it is not necessary for the youth pastor, youth leader, or youth volunteer to inform the minor that they will report their conversation to the Elders. Once the conversation has been reported, next steps will be taken as deemed necessary by the board of Elders. The nature of the conversation should only be reported to PVCC's Elders or Pastor(s)—it should not be shared with other youth volunteers. It is not necessary to share any explicit details from the conversation, only that a minor shared information about his or her sexual activity.

For any alleged or suspected abuse, refer to Section 9 below.

Section 9: Reporting Alleged or Suspected Abuse

In the state of Indiana, any "individual who has reason to believe that a child is a victim of child abuse or neglect shall make a report" (IC 31-33-5-1). Suspected or alleged abuse must be reported IMMEDIATELY to local police (**9-1-1**; FPD non-emergency: **317-773-1282**) or the Department of Child Services (toll-free, 24/7 hotline: **1-800-800-5556**).

It is not up to the individual—or the church—to investigate. **If you have any reason to believe a child is being abused or neglected, you must report it IMMEDIATELY to the Department of Child Services or Fishers Police.**

Per the state of Indiana, the leadership of Prairie View Christian Church (i.e. the Pastor(s) and Elders) should only be notified after the initial report has been made to DCS or FPD. (IC 31-33-5-2: "After making the report, the individual shall notify the individual in charge of the institution…that the report was made").

It is not the responsibility of the church to investigate potentially criminal activity. However, it is the church's duty to care for the souls of all its member and participants, including the accused. If the alleged perpetrator is an active participant within Prairie View Christian Church, within 24 hours of discovery—and in cooperation with local law enforcement—the Elders will notify him or her: both that a report has been made and the nature of the report. If the alleged perpetrator is not an active participant within Prairie View, the Elders have no obligation to contact him or her. The alleged perpetrator shall not be treated as "guilty" prior to the conclusion of an investigation by legal authorities finding such a verdict. However, the alleged perpetrator may be prohibited from participating in church functions where the alleged victim or alleged victim's family may be in attendance. In addition, the alleged perpetrator will be strictly prohibited from any involvement with children and youth for the duration of any investigation by legal authorities.

If the alleged perpetrator is an active participant within Prairie View, it will be up to the discretion of the Elders whether or not to inform PVCC's Covenant Members about the incident.

Section 10: Mission Trips

PVCC will go on mission trips from time to time. These trips often involve trips to faraway locales, operation of dangerous equipment and other risks. It is the policy of PVCC that youth under the age of 18 should be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. If another adult is willing to assume the responsibility of accompanying the minor, parents should sign a written permission and grant healthcare powers to that adult.

Section 11: Youth Overnight Activity Policy

All overnight activities involving minors, whether on or off church grounds, shall be supervised or chaperoned by at least two adults, and if youth participants are both male and female, then supervisors and chaperones must be both male and female. All supervisors and chaperones must be twenty-one years of age or older and must ***have*** a completed and clear background check on file at PVCC.

Section 12: Membership

Those in leadership would like to encourage congregants to use their gifts and serve in multiple areas. However, to serve in some areas of the church, it will be necessary to be a Member of PVCC. In addition to roles mentioned in the By-Laws (Elders, Admin Team, Ministry Team Leaders, and Ministers), these areas include small group leading and teaching/leading children of any age. We believe all teachers should have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and be committed to and in line with the mission, ministry, and message of the church. In order to ensure these things are so, anyone wishing to volunteer with children or youth at Prairie View must have attended Prairie View regularly for the six months immediately preceding their request to serve. A six-month waiting period helps to ensure that volunteers with children and youth ministry are well-equipped to handle the tasks asked of them: caring for and educating PVCC's children and congregants in a manner that reflects the beliefs and values of the church.

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