



WYCKOFF
REFORMED CHURCH

FAMILY MINISTRY
Child and Youth Protection Policies

Worshiping God, Making Disciples of Jesus, Living Missionally

Wyckoff Reformed Church Family Ministry
Adult Leader Requirements

- Family Ministry adult leaders must be at least 18 years of age (21 if working with teens) and meet with the Director of Family Ministry prior to serving.
- All leaders must be associated with WRC for **at least six months** prior to volunteering and undergo a 2-week observation period to ensure each party feels the role is a good fit.
- All Family Ministry leaders must review, sign, and act in accordance with the WRC Child Protection Policy and Leader Covenant.
- Leaders must attend periodic training sessions.

Wyckoff Reformed Church Family Ministry
Student Leader Requirements

- Student leaders must be at least 14 years of age and meet with the Director of Family Ministry prior to serving.
- Student Leaders should be at least 3+ years older than the students they are serving.
- Student Leaders must be associated with WRC for **at least six months** prior to volunteering and undergo a 2-week observation period to ensure each party feels the role is a good fit.
- Student Leaders should be involved in youth group and/or confirmation to continue to grow their own faith and foster relationships with peers. They will also attend periodic training sessions.
- Student Leaders must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

Wyckoff Reformed Church Family Ministry
Volunteer Screening

- **Written Application** - All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the church.

- **Personal Interview** - Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant and the Director of Family Ministries to discuss their suitability for the position.
- **Molestation Prevention Training** - Volunteers will be required to complete a mandated reporter training through the New Jersey Department of Children and Families. (<https://reportingchildabusenj.org/>)
- **Reference Checks** - Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked.
- **Criminal Background Check** - A national criminal background check is required for all employees and Adult Leaders.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, they will be unable to work with children.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Senior Pastor in consultation with the Director of Family Ministries on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the church.

Wyckoff Reformed Church Family Ministry **Sunday School Behavior Guidelines and Expectations**

- Children will be checked in at the Sanctuary upon arrival to worship. Once students have been walked over to their classrooms, each teacher should take their own attendance on the clipboard. The Director of Family Ministries will come around to verify attendance.
- **Two Adult Rule** - It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in

attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation.

- While classes are in session, a certified adult (usually the Director of Family Ministry or a substitute) must be present in the Education Building and available for contact.
- Children will not be taken to any other part of the building or outside the building without an adult present and the knowledge of the Director of Family Ministry. (Unless it's explicitly stated in the lesson plan.)
- Children will not be left unsupervised at any time and no child will ever be alone with a leader where they cannot be seen by others. If there is only one child in a class setting, the classroom teachers may either keep the door open or join with another group.
- Leaders will never abuse children or youth in any way. The following acts are prohibited during any activity for children and youth and are elaborated on page 12.
 - o By using physical punishment of any kind (physical abuse)
 - o By engaging in any sexual activity with children or youth, or making sexually explicit or suggestive comments to or in front of children and youth (sexual abuse)
 - o By humiliating, degrading, or threatening children and youth (verbal abuse)
 - o By shaming, withholding love, or exercising cruelty (mental abuse)
 - o By withholding food, water, and basic care (neglect)
- Leaders will not carry on extended private conversations with youth via texting, phone calls, or social media. If a leader has permission to contact a youth, it should only be done privately with same-sex individuals and with a parent's permission. Typically, private communication should be monitored by parents and be a means to arranging a public meeting.

- Parents will sign out their child when they individually pick them up from the classroom. Children in sixth through eighth grade do not need to be signed out if parents/guardians have signed a waiver.

Prohibited Acts of Leaders

If a leader engages in any of the following actions, they will be immediately removed from their position and put on probation while the church conducts a report. The church will seek legal advice if abuse or harm on behalf of a leader is suspected. This list is not exhaustive.

Prohibited Acts

- Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct toward a child or youth.
- Any threat or bullying action towards a youth or leader in a youth's presence.
- Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any adult and a child or youth.
- Physical neglect of a child or youth, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to planned activities. Adequate supervision means the type of supervision a reasonable person would provide in the same or similar situation.
- Causing mental or emotional injury to a child or youth.
- Possessing or accessing obscene or pornographic materials.
- Possessing illegal drugs or being under the influence of any illegal drugs.
- Consuming or being under the influence of alcohol or marijuana while participating in any activity designed for youth.
- Vaping or smoking in the presence of youth.
- Requests for sexual favors from youth.
- Sexually motivated physical contact, speech, comments, or conduct.
- Staring or leering, making suggestive gestures or jokes towards a youth or other leader.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and/or Neglect

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at this church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under their care, this should be reported immediately to the Director of Family Ministries for

further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law. In the State of New Jersey, proof of abuse is not required to make a report; “reasonable cause to believe” that a child is being abused is all that is required. It is the investigator’s job to determine if abuse or neglect has occurred.

1. If you have a reasonable suspicion that physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, trauma, and/or neglect is occurring, you are obligated to report it to **the Child Abuse Hotline for a further investigation. CALL 1-877-652-2873. Make the call right away. Call a director to come cover your class if the suspicion occurs during an event or lesson.**

When a young person reports abuse or you suspect abuse, the person hearing the initial report should follow these steps:

- a. When making a report to the hotline, it is important to describe any behavioral indicators or statements the child has made that led you to suspect harm has occurred. When possible, you should write down the exact words or phrases the child used.
 - b. Do not promise the child not to tell. Do tell them that you believe them and that you need to tell people who will help them and their family. Do not promise never to let it happen again, as that is a promise you may not be able to keep.
 - c. Do not continue to victimize the child by repeating the story to others. Confidentiality is of the utmost importance.
 - d. If they are telling you something, ask questions such as ‘tell me more.’ NOT things like ‘are you sure? I know ___ is a good person.’
 - e. Don’t talk to others or try to collect more information. Listen to the child and call the hotline.
2. In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at this church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:
 - a. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
 - b. The worker or church member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave 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.
 - c. 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. The organization will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.

- d. The insurance company will be notified, and the organization will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
- e. The organization will designate a spokesperson 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.
- f. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it. This should be for the purpose of providing pastoral support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.
- g. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

3. Legal Advice

- a. It is the policy of The Wyckoff Reformed Church to seek legal advice prior to any actions of termination of employment of an accused person. It is also our policy to seek legal advice concerning questions on statutory reporting requirements.

Wyckoff Reformed Church Family Ministry
Acknowledgment of Policies and Procedures

To end, **“Time spent ministering to a child is never wasted”** What you are doing as a Family Ministry Leader points kids and youth to Jesus, which ultimately changes a generation, which will affect the next. **You are doing great, well done!**

By adhering to these standards, we can ensure that a safe and healthy environment can be maintained for our families (and all children and youth). Our focus will be on caring for them. We greatly value the safety of our kids and failure to comply with these guidelines are grounds for immediate dismissal.

Please check and initial the following questions:

1. Have you ever participated in, been accused, or pled guilty/no contest to, or been convicted of abuse or any sexual misconduct? X_____ (Initial here)
 YES
 NO
2. Have you ever been convicted of or pled guilty or no contest to any criminal offense of any kind? X_____ (Initial here)
 YES
 NO

In signing this document, I acknowledge that these conduct standards have been reviewed with me and I agree to act in accordance with them.

Signature

Date

Name (Please print)

****Prior to volunteering, please submit your volunteer application along with the names of two references. You may email or call the Director of Family Ministries, 201-891-1782, with the contact information of your references. Alternately, you may have them mail in a completed reference form.***