

## **Statement on Child/Youth Security at Tenth Presbyterian Church**

*Approved by Session on July 27, 2010*

Tenth Presbyterian Church takes its responsibility to its covenant children and youth very seriously and it is our desire to provide a high standard of care. To that end, the following policies are written to provide guidelines for all child/youth workers in their ministry to Tenth's children and youth in order to reduce the security risks for children and the risk of any false accusations concerning child/youth workers.

We need approximately 250 adults and teens to help in our children and youth ministries at Tenth. These adults and teens work either on a weekly or rotational basis. Whatever the level of involvement, it is incumbent on us to provide the right people in each ministry setting to give the best care, teaching, oversight, and discipleship for our children and youth.

To that end, we employ a variety of screening procedures as outlined in Part 1 to insure we are using people who are appropriately gifted and who have the best interests of our children and youth in mind.

We also use ongoing supervision procedures to ensure the staff and other helpers follow best care practices and common sense in their ministry as outlined in Part 2 of this document.

Finally, we will follow the defined procedures in reporting any unusual or suspicious behavior to the appropriate people and authorities as outlined in Part 3.

All child/youth care workers will review these procedures annually and new workers will receive an explanation of these procedures as part of their orientation.

With these policies, it is our intent to provide a safe, cheerful environment for our children and youth as they enjoy and benefit from the teaching and variety of programs we offer at Tenth Presbyterian Church.

## **Part 1**

### **Screening for Child/Youth staff**

1. All applicants for children/youth ministry positions must complete an application questionnaire and applicants over age 18 must produce a photo ID.
2. Applicants must be Tenth members or associate members in good standing for at least three months following the new member's class.
3. Child/student workers must be at least 18 years old. Youth who are least 11 years old are welcome to assist (subject to the approval of the Children's Ministry Director), but they are only considered as helpers to adult workers.
4. All references of individuals and organizations listed on the application will be checked. The applicant must list current contact info. References may not include family members and ideally must have at least one former supervisor listed.
5. Tenth may conduct a criminal background on those who are overnight with minors or in a one-to-one relationship with a minor. Applicants for this type of ministry will have to pay the cost of a background check. No background checks will be conducted on other volunteers (Bible School teachers, nursery workers, etc) unless they are deemed appropriate. In this instance, Tenth will pay the cost of the background check.
6. Once the paperwork is reviewed and references checked, a personal interview is then conducted by an appropriate elder and the particular ministry leader.
7. In addition, applicants who are relatively unknown or new to the church will be screened by the pastoral staff for further confirmation.
8. Any irregularities raised during this screening process must be resolved before any applicant begins service.
9. Due to the highly confidential information this screening procedure involves, all completed screening records will be kept in a secure and locked area of the church; all applicants will be notified that access to this information is restricted and disclosed only to those with a genuine need to know; and all files will be maintained indefinitely.
10. If interested in a teaching position, a candidate must be familiar with and agree to the key tenets of Reformed theology as stated in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the shorter and larger catechisms. If an applicant has any exceptions to the standards, he/she must make it known.

11. Any associated Tenth group or ministry using our buildings at any time outside of the normal Sunday meetings or going on a Tenth sponsored trip, must follow our childcare screening procedures and at least one person present in *each* room must be an adult that was screened and approved by Tenth children and youth ministries' leaders.
12. Anyone with a record of conviction(s) in the area of child molestation/abuse will not be considered for participation in any children's ministry work.

## **Part 2**

### **Supervising Child/Youth staff**

1. It is required that an approved child/youth worker be present during all activities. It is recommended that at least two qualified teachers/helpers are present in each class/group setting and during an activity. If a child/student worker must work alone, he/she may do so only if visual access to the classroom is provided. The number of staff will be determined by the number and age of the students in each class or group.

The following ratios are recommended during any child activity:

Children ages 0-3	one adult for every 3-5 children
Children ages 4-5	one adult for every 5-6 children
Children ages 6-8	one adult for every 6-8 children
Children ages 9-14	one adult for every 8-10 students

2. No child/youth worker shall ever be alone with a child or youth. If a child or youth is to be taken aside for discipline reasons, the child/youth worker must be accompanied or the interaction must take place in a public area or in a room with open doors in full view of others.
3. No corporal punishment is ever to be used (including, but not limited to spanking, smacking, pinching, etc). Also, any expression of verbal abuse is not permitted in interactions with children/youth.
4. Touching children/youth is permissible and even appropriate in ministry settings. However, touching any private areas including the front of the torso is not permissible as it can lead to misinterpretations and accusations.
5. A child/youth worker should be accompanied by another adult when with children in an enclosed area (i.e. restroom). If this is not possible, then the door to the restroom must remain open. Because our diaper changing areas are in open areas, either men or women may change diapers.
6. Transfer of Responsibility: For students ages third grade and older, unless parents communicate with a written exception to this rule, the responsibility of care/supervision ends when the class or activity is over. By third grade a child is aware of their surroundings and can locate their parents on their own. If a child requires assistance, a child/youth worker will provide help. For children ages 3 through the second grade, the responsibility shift occurs when the parent, grandparent, or older sibling escorts the child from the room or activity.
7. In the nursery rooms (crib/crawlers to 2's), the child is released from our care when the beeper or claim check is returned to retrieve the child and the child is then handed over to a parent, grandparent, or older sibling. No child will be released unless the beeper is returned.

8. Children/youth must have written parental permission for involvement in any church-sponsored activities during off-hours or occurring in off-site locations.
9. All child and youth activities at Tenth must be scheduled and approved in advance to prevent scheduling conflicts and enhance accountability.
10. Child and youth activities should expect routine, unannounced visits by pastors, elders, and activity supervisors.
11. Classes, whenever possible, should be conducted in rooms with open doors or doors with window slits so class can be easily viewed from outside.
12. All child/youth workers should be ready to accept students 15 minutes prior to the start of any session, so that parents have enough time to transition their students and attend their class or service on time.
13. In situations dependent on parental pick-up, children are to be picked up as soon as possible after the class or service. In the event that a child is not picked up within 15 minutes of the end of an activity, the teacher will ask a supervisor or another helper to locate the parents.
14. Tenth will do its best to schedule child/youth activities in central, highly visible locations. If remote areas are used, the supervision level will increase.
15. Children and youth shall be transported in groups. An unaccompanied adult should avoid driving a single child or youth to or from a Tenth service or activity. There also must be compliance with all laws pertaining to seatbelts and age appropriate restraints for children too small for seatbelts.
16. As the risk factors, of isolation, accountability, or power/control increase, we will increase the level of supervision associated with those activities. All church activities will provide appropriate child and youth supervision, both on and off site.
17. A signed and dated form indicating employees and volunteers have read and understood the three major policy statements for child security (screening, supervision, and reporting) will be required and kept on file at the church.
18. Any Tenth associated group and ministry using Tenth property, especially during off-hour times, or sponsoring an off-site trip will receive a copy of these procedures and will be expected to follow them.
19. Tenth shall develop and implement a plan to orient new workers so they are aware of these policies. No person shall have any official contact with children until these policies are read and agreed to by the new worker.

**Part 3**  
**Reporting Obligations**

1. Child/youth workers are to report, using discretion and sound judgment, any suspicious marks or bruises on a child or youth to their supervisor or ministry leader, who in cases warranting further attention, may consult with the Administrator, Children's Ministry Director, or the Executive Minister.
2. Relay to your supervisor any comments, prayer requests, or conversations with children/youth that raise concerns of abuse.
3. Child/youth workers are to report any suspicious behavior on the part of anyone near or in child areas of the building to your supervisor or the security usher on duty.
4. If you witness an act of threatened or actual abuse, intervene directly, if at all possible, and/or call others to help you. Do everything possible to secure the safety of the child/youth. Do not leave the child/youth alone to report the incident.
5. Supervisors, after speaking to their staff in each of the above situations shall inform and consult with the Executive Minister, the Children's Ministry Director, or the Administrator.
6. The Church Administrator will report the incident to the Insurance Company and either the Administrator or the Executive Minister may make additional arrangements (see points 7-11).
7. If the victim is associated with Tenth, a pastoral contact may be arranged with the victim and their family. It will be our goal to provide pastoral support to both the victim and accused and their families to restore such persons to wholeness.
8. If the person being accused is an employee or volunteer, that person will be immediately removed from all duties requiring any contact with minors (ages 18 and under) until the allegations are resolved.
9. Any potentially criminal misconduct will be reported to the appropriate civil authorities. Tenth will cooperate with local law enforcement officials during the investigation process.
10. Tenth officials will seek legal counsel before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the congregation. All public statements should be vetted by legal advisors and given by a designated spokesperson.
11. The Executive Minister, Children's Ministry director, or the Administrator will be responsible for all external communications concerning an incident of alleged misconduct on behalf of the church.
12. Any associated Tenth group or ministry must follow these reporting procedures.

I have read the Statement on Child/Youth Security at Tenth Presbyterian Church and understand its importance. I promise to abide by the Policy so as to enhance the safety of the children in my care. I also agree with this Policy in principle and recognize it will help promote the safety of children and create a more secure environment at Tenth Presbyterian Church.

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Name

Date