

Child Safety Policy



Children's Ministries Mission Statement

We are community that is committed to providing a **safe** and loving environment where children:

- Learn about God
- Explore His Word
- Are nurtured as the Lord's special and unique creation
- Discover the love and grace of Jesus Christ

Eastminster Presbyterian Church Mission Statement

Eastminster Presbyterian Church is a Christ centered church, committed to leading people to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior by gathering to worship, making and deploying disciples, ministering to families, and building community.

We invite all people to walk with us on this journey of faith.

INTRODUCTION

The Session of Eastminster Presbyterian Church (USA) adopts this Children's Safety Policy as a positive and proactive statement of our concern for children and volunteers. We offer these clearly defined safeguards, policies and procedures for the safety and protection of all concerned. Eastminster Presbyterian Church's policy is God embraces children with love, placing their nurture and care in our hands. We believe that children should be safe from all forms of harm, abuse or neglect.

We understand that we are of the Kingdom of God, but also called to be "in" this world, reaching out to those who need Christ and are seeking to experience Christian community for themselves and for their children. We must be alert to legal and moral implications and the realities of the world around us.

We desire to protect and support both those who are paid and those who volunteer to work with our children. These policies to prevent child abuse, neglect or any unfounded allegations against workers or leaders are in four major areas:

1. Worker selection
2. Worker practices
3. Reporting obligations
4. Response to allegations

We hope that this plan is received with understanding and grace toward all who are involved with Children's Ministries. We are promoting a plan founded on responsibility and love. This policy will provide us with a greater sense of confidence and peace.

SELECTING CHILDREN'S WORKERS

Eastminster Presbyterian Church (USA)

We require applications for all children's workers according to the following:

1. All paid employees, full or part time, including clergy, must complete an "Application for Children's Work" (see pages 7 and 8).
2. All Children's Volunteers, whether working with children on a weekly or occasional basis, must complete an "Application for Children's Work" (see pages 7 and 8).
3. A personal interview will be included as part of the selection process for all children's workers. For paid employees, the applicant will be interviewed by any two of the following: Pastor, Elder(s) for Children's Ministries or Personnel, or their designated representatives. For volunteers, the applicant will be interviewed by the Children's Ministries Director, the Elder for Children's Ministries or their designated representative.
4. For paid staff, the Elder should check, where circumstances merit, with the personal references listed in the application to further determine the suitability and character of the applicant. The references check shall be documented by completing the "Reference Contact Form" (see pages 10 and 11).
5. Volunteers working with children must be members of Eastminster Presbyterian Church or individuals who have been attending Eastminster Presbyterian Church for at least six months time. Exceptions to this policy are strongly discouraged and must receive the approval of both the Elder for Children's Ministries and the Pastor. If such approval is given, it shall be documented on the "Application for Children's Work" (see pages 7 and 8) by stating the reason for the exception along with the signatures of the Pastor and Elder.
6. All paid employees working with children must be fingerprinted to assure there is no record of child abuse or any sexual misconduct. The Elder for Personnel is responsible for checking paid staff.
7. All volunteers will be checked, prior to their working with children and once a year thereafter, through the Megan's Law program to determine if there is any record of sexual molestation convictions. A "Megan's Law Verification Form" (see page 11) must be completed for each check made and kept on file in the Children's Ministries Office for volunteers. The Children's Ministries Director(s) or the Elder for Children's Ministries is responsible for checking volunteers.

SAFETY POLICY FOR CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

Eastminster Presbyterian Church (USA)

All paid staff and all volunteers in Children's Ministries or programs are subject to the supervision and evaluation of the Elder for Children's Ministries and/or the Children's Ministries Director(s). All paid staff and all volunteers are required to comply with these policies to ensure a safe and secure environment for children.

1. Whenever feasible, each group of children should have at least two workers present at all times with at least one worker being an adult. One benefit is that there is a second worker for support in case of emergency. It is a good rule not to be alone with a child.
2. For infants and toddlers, the desirable ratio is one worker for each 3 children. For children, 2 years old through kindergarten age, the desirable ratio is one worker for each five children. For grades one through five, the desirable ratio is one worker for each eight children.
3. For their protection against false accusation, male workers must not be alone with children, must not supervise children in the restroom and must not change diapers in the nursery.
4. Window blinds are to be kept open at all times and a supervisor or designated adult representative will circulate where children's activities are occurring.
5. When taking children to the restroom, the worker should stay out of the restroom until the child is finished. Children need as much privacy as possible when using restrooms, workers entering to assist only when necessary.
6. All activities or outings need to be pre-approved by the Elder for Children's Ministries. A "Children's Activity Approval Form" (see page 15) needs to be submitted and approved. A parent permission slip for each child needs to be completed before all off-campus activities or outings.
7. All drivers transporting children on out of town activities shall be a minimum age of twenty-five and a maximum age of sixty-five and will complete and have approved a "Driver Form" (see page 16).
8. Drivers are to have two or more children in the car when transporting children to and from activities. The only exception would be when the driver is transporting his or her own children.
9. This policy will be reviewed annually during training sessions with children's workers.
10. Children from the ages of nursery to second grade must be picked up by their parent(s) or guardian, unless prior arrangements have been made with the Children's Ministries Director.

REPORTING OBLIGATION AND PROCEDURE

Eastminster Presbyterian Church (USA)

Because we are all a part of the family of God we need to walk alongside all parties involved: the child, the family and the alleged abuser.

The California Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (the Act) requires that any child care custodian, health practitioner, or employee of a child protective agency who has knowledge of or observes a child in his or her professional capacity or within the scope of his or her employment who he or she knows or reasonably suspects has been the victim of child abuse to report the known or suspected instance of child abuse to a child protective agency immediately or as soon as practically possible by telephone and to prepare and send a written report thereof within **36 hours** of receiving the information concerning the incident.

"Child abuse" means any of the following: 1) A child is physically injured by other than accidental means, 2) A child is subjected to willful cruelty or unjustifiable punishment, 3) A child is abused or exploited sexually, or 4) A child is neglected by a parent or caretaker who fails to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care or supervision. It is never permissible or acceptable.

"Child" means a person under the age of eighteen years.

When should child abuse be reported?

Whenever someone knows, observes or reasonably suspects that child abuse has occurred, it needs to be reported. Child Abuse continues when it goes unnoticed or unreported.

Who should report child abuse?

The Child Abuse and Neglect Act establishes a category of "Mandatory Reporters". The Act relates to Eastminster in several ways. All paid people, both clergy and lay, working with youth or children would be defined as mandatory reporters. All volunteers with a responsibility for supervising a Youth or Children's program are mandatory reporters. Church school volunteers are not mandated reporters, but are encouraged to report any suspected abuse to the Children's Ministries Director, elder, or pastor.

Since revealing this information by the child may be traumatic for the child, the child should not be asked to repeat the information to others except as required when the Public Social Services Agency or the Police Department is working with the child. Eastminster's Policy is that the person that observes or hears of child abuse from a child will be the one making the report jointly with the Director of Children's Ministries, elder for children's ministries, and/or pastor.

Reporting Obligation and Procedure (con't)

Eastminster Presbyterian Church (USA)

The Director of Children's Ministries, elder of children's ministries, and/or Pastor should be notified immediately of the need to file a report, unless the incident involves the Pastor. In that case the Elder for Personnel or the Executive Presbyter of the Santa Barbara Presbytery, [(805) 583-1548], should be notified.

The Act provides that reporters of suspected child abuse are protected from civil or criminal liability as a result of any report unless it can be proven that a false report was made and the person knew it was false. The identity of all persons who report child abuse shall be confidential.

How is a report to be made?

The Act requires that a telephone report be made to the Child Protection Agency immediately or as soon as practical and followed up with a written report within 36 hours of receiving the information concerning the incident.

Telephone Report: In Ventura County for familial abuse, the Child Protection Agency is the County Public Social Services Agency (PSSA), Children's Services Division. The telephone report should be made by calling **(805) 654-3200**. This is a 24 hour per day, seven day a week number.

For non-familial abuse, the report should be made to the Ventura Police Department by calling the Desk Officer at **(805) 339-4425**.

If the reported abuse occurred outside of the City of Ventura the report needs to be made to the agencies where the alleged abuse occurred.

The following information will need to be provided:

1. the name of person making the report
2. the name of the child
3. the present location of the child
4. the nature and extent of the injury
5. any other information, including information that led that person to suspect child abuse, requested by the Child Protective Agency.

Depending upon the circumstances (e.g. If the child would be in danger if released to its parents), the child may need to be detained until a Police Officer arrives.

Written Report: The written report needs to be made on form SS 8572 entitled "Suspected Child Abuse Report". A copy of the report form is included in this document on page 17. The instructions are available in the Director of Children's Ministries office.

The written report should be forwarded to either PSSA or the Police Department depending upon which agency received the telephone report at the following addresses:

Children's Services Division
Public Social Services Agency
4651 Telephone Road, Suite 201
Ventura CA 93003

or;

Ventura Police Department
1425 Dowell Drive
Ventura CA 93003

RESPONSE TO AN ALLEGATION

Eastminster Presbyterian Church (USA)

Eastminster's Policies have emphasized the necessity of prevention. While we like to think that these policies will prevent child abuse, that may not be the case. This response plan is to help deal with that possibility.

We can become aware of an allegation from several sources: a report from one of our volunteers or employees, a report from a parent or guardian, or from a Child Protection Agency either County PSSA Childrens Services or the Law Enforcement Agency where the alleged abuse occurred.

All allegations shall be taken seriously. Situations need to be handled forthrightly with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality. Full cooperation is to be given to civil authorities conducting any investigation.

The Pastor is the spokesperson for Eastminster Presbyterian Church. The Pastor will speak to the media and the congregation regarding the matter in a discreet, informed and diplomatic way. When the Pastor is not available the Associate Pastor or an Elder designated by the session will be spokesperson in that order.

If an allegation of child abuse occurs, these guidelines will be followed:

1. If a report has not been filed, follow the reporting procedures previously outlined in this document. It is crucial that the written report is filed within 36 hours.
2. Document all efforts at handling this incident.
3. Report the incident to Eastminster's insurance carrier. The insurance company may name an attorney to provide professional assistance. If not, counsel for Eastminster should be consulted. Do not try to handle this without professional outside assistance.
4. After a report is made the investigation should be left to professionals who have experience with these types of cases.
5. The Pastor will notify the parents or guardians, if they are not the accused.
6. Do not confront the accused until the safety of the child is secured.
7. Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Showing care and support help to prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember the care and safety of the alleged victim is the first priority.
8. Treat the accused with dignity and support. If the accused is a church worker, as a precautionary measure, that person will be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is completed. If the accused is a paid employee, the session will determine to either maintain or suspend his or her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.
9. Be careful to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.
10. If any information needs to go to the congregation, it will be provided only by the Pastor.
11. Consider offering workshops to members of the congregation, by counseling professionals from outside the church. When the issue becomes public, invite members of the public to the same workshops.

EASTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)
8180 Telephone Road, Ventura CA 93004 (805) 647-3757

APPLICATION FOR CHILDREN'S WORK

Eastminster has a plan founded on respect and love for our youth and children which gives us a sense of confidence and peace. This application is being used to evaluate applicants and to ensure a safe and secure environment for our youth and children who participate in our programs. This application is to be completed by all applicants for any position whether a volunteer or compensated who work with youth or children.

Name _____

Address _____ phone (____) _____

Children? name and ages _____

E-mail address: _____

Occupation _____

Place of employment _____ Phone (____) _____

Can you receive calls at work? yes no.

Are you currently member of Eastminster, yes no If yes, how long? _____

Please list other churches and locations where you have regularly attended over the last 3 years.

_____ Ar

Are you currently under a charge or have you ever been convicted of or plead guilty to child abuse or a crime involving actual or attempted sexual misconduct or sexual molestation of a minor? yes no. If yes, please explain:

Do you have a current drivers license? yes no.

Please list drivers license number _____ and expiration date. _____

Have you ever had your driver's license suspended or revoked? yes no.

If yes, please explain _____

Is there any other information that we should know? _____

CHURCH ACTIVITY

1. Testimony: Who is Jesus Christ to you? Where are you in your Christian walk?

2. Experience:

a. What volunteer or career experience with children have you had in the church or the community?

b. List any gifts, calling, training, education or other factors that have prepared you for children's work

3. Preference: In what capacity and with what age group would you like to minister?

First choice _____

Second choice _____.

4. Concerns: What causes you the greatest feelings of apprehension as you contemplate this work?

PERSONAL REFERENCES

(Not a former employer or relative)

Name _____

Name _____

Address _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Phone _____

APPLICANT'S STATEMENT

The information contained in this application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any of the above references or churches to give you any information that they may have regarding my character and fitness to work with children.

I hereby certify that I have read and understand the Eastminster Presbyterian Church Child Safety Policy. I further understand that I am encouraged to report any suspected child abuse to the Pastor, and/or Elder for Children's Ministries immediately.

Signature _____ Date _____

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CHECKING REFERENCES

General:

When making reference contacts, please indicate to the reference that they have been listed as a personal reference on the applicant's application. If there is any hesitancy on the part of the reference, read the authorization that the applicant signed at the bottom of the application.

Please note that this is confidential information and is not to be an item of discussion other than for the selection procedure.

List the date, time and method of the contact.

This is the most important information on the form. Summarize the results of the contact. The ultimate question is whether or not the applicant is suitable for work with children. The person contacting the reference should ask this question and summarize the response on this form. If the reference refuses to comment, be sure to note that on the form.

Please be sure that your name and signature are legible.

Please return completed form to the church office to be placed in the applicant's personnel file.

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REFERENCE CONTACT FORM - CONFIDENTIAL

Name of applicant _____

Position _____

Reference or church contacted

Name _____ Title _____

Address _____

Phone # _____

Date _____ Time _____

- Method of contact telephone
 letter
 personal conversation

Summary of conversation (Summarize remarks concerning the applicant's fitness and suitability for youth or children's work.)

Person making contact:

Please print _____

Legible signature _____

Date _____

Eastminster Presbyterian Church
8180 Telephone Road
Ventura, CA 93004
(805) 647-3757

MEGAN'S LAW VERIFICATION FORM

NAME OF VOLUNTEER: _____

The above-named individual has been checked against the records of the Ventura County Sheriff's Department "Megan's Law" listing, and has been found **not** to be a convicted sex offender. It is the policy of Eastminster Presbyterian Church to check all people who volunteer with children or youth, annually, in this manner.

Check performed by: _____

Date: _____

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CHILDREN'S ACTIVITY APPROVAL FORM

Name of event _____

Activity date _____ day of week _____ start time _____ end time _____

Description of activity: _____

Location of activity _____

The purpose of this activity: _____

Number of children expected _____ Number of adults expected: _____

What is the estimated adult to children ratio? One Adult for each _____ child

Does this activity involve an overnight stay? yes no

Is transportation required? yes no. If yes, how many drivers? _____

Has each driver filled out the DRIVER FORM? yes no If no, please be sure they do.

Person in charge of activity _____

Home phone (_____) _____ Work phone (_____) _____

Please list all adult volunteers assisting in this activity. _____

Home base contact person during activity. _____ phone _____

As the person in charge of this activity for Eastminster Presbyterian Church (USA), I am aware of the Child Safety Policy and the child abuse prevention procedures and safety recommendations established by the Session. I will follow these recommendations to the best of my ability and will take responsibility for the supervision of other volunteers involved in this activity.

Your signature _____ date _____

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DRIVER FORM

Each time participants are transported by private vehicle as part of a Church sponsored out of town event or activity, the driver is required to complete all statements on this form. The minimum age for all drivers is twenty-five years; and, maximum age is sixty-five years. In order to protect the interests of both the driver and Eastminster the following information needs to be on file before any trip takes place.

A driver may transport participants only after the driver has completed and signed this form.

Driver's name _____

Driver's license number _____ expiration date _____

Do you have any physical condition, or are you taking any medication which would affect driving safety. () yes () no. If yes, explain: _____

Have you been cited for a moving violation and or accident within the past year () yes () no.
If yes explain: _____

Has your license ever been suspended or revoked? () yes () no.
If yes explain: _____

Registered owner of vehicle _____

year of vehicle _____ make of vehicle _____ vehicle CA license _____

How many working seat belts are in your vehicle? _____ seating capacity of vehicle? _____

Does your vehicle have any known mechanical or safety deficiencies? () yes () no

Do you have liability insurance? () yes () no

Name of liability carrier _____ policy number _____

Policy expiration date _____

In case of accident or claim with a private vehicle, your insurance listed above may provide your only coverage.

I certify that the answers provided are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature of driver _____ date _____

