

Bethel Murdoch Presbyterian Church Boundary Guidelines

Approved by Session: October 11, 2012

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs." (Matthew 19:14; Luke 18:16) We who lead children and youth as they grow in faith also have a responsibility to protect and care for them. Bethel Murdoch Presbyterian Church seeks to protect the adults who work with the young people in the church. The Session of Bethel Murdoch Presbyterian Church recommends the following guidelines and practices for the security, protection and care of children and youth, and the adults who work with them in ministry within our congregation.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms "child" or "children" include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

1. Adult workers will agree to background checks.

A national criminal background check is required for all employees, regardless of position. A national criminal background check is also required for any volunteer who will be chaperoning overnight activities with minors.

Before a background check is run, prospective staff/volunteers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church to run the check.

- If a prospective employee declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children.
- If a prospective volunteer declines to sign an authorization form, s/he will be unable to chaperone overnights. Further investigation may be necessary to determine the prospective volunteer's suitability to work with children at Bethel Murdoch Presbyterian Church.

The background check authorization form and results will be reviewed by the Head of Staff and Clerk of Session. If a completed background check shows unfavorable results, the Head of Staff and Clerk of Session will make a determination of the suitability of the employee or volunteer to work with children.

2. Adult workers will receive information and training regarding the safety and protection of the children and youth in their care. They will complete the Youth Protection Training that is available through the Boy Scouts of America at <https://myscouting.scouting.org> every two years.

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, staff/volunteers will provide first aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.

For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple first aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called. In the case of an injury requiring treatment by a medical professional, an incident report will be completed once the child has received appropriate medical attention.

3. Two-adult leaders are required to attend all church functions and events. One-on-one contact is not permitted unless the adult and child/youth are in clear view of other adults and children/youth.

It is our policy that we do not permit a child to be alone with an unrelated adult at Bethel Murdoch Presbyterian Church, or church sponsored activities. It is our goal that a minimum of two adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some children's classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, the Open Door Policy (below) will apply. If a situation arises where a child will be alone with an unrelated adult, the child's parents shall be notified.

During an off-site church sponsored activity, a child and unrelated adult should not be separated from the group.

Open Door Policy

On rare occasions, when only one adult is present with a group of children, classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

4. Respect for the privacy of children, youth, and adults is expected at all times unless the health and safety of the individual is at risk. Responsible use of digital devices is expected in all situations.

Digital Privacy

A key ingredient for a safe and healthy church experience is the respect for privacy. Sending sexually explicit photographs or videos electronically or "sexting" by cell phones is a form of texting being practiced primarily by young adults and children as young as middle-school age. Sexting is neither safe, nor private, nor an approved form of communication and can lead to severe legal consequences for the sender and the receiver.

5. Attire that is appropriate for the occasion is to be worn by all participants.

6. At all times children, youth, and adults are expected to treat one another with love and respect, guided by Jesus' words, "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you." (Matthew 7:12)

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of Bethel Murdoch Presbyterian Church not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There will be no spanking, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Neither will there be any verbal abuse, such as ridicule, sarcasm or shaming. Staff/volunteers should consult with the Pastor if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

7. Children and youth are encouraged to immediately tell an adult about any inappropriate situations.

8. Adults are expected to be alert to any situations that may place children and youth in danger. They are encouraged to establish a relationship of trust with the children and youth in their care. If inappropriate activities are reported, the adult will immediately give the information to the supervising adult.

NOTE: There are mandatory reporting laws in the state of Ohio for any crime committed against a person under the age of 18, all cases of domestic violence, and cases of abuse and neglect of persons over the age of 18 who are physically or mentally challenged. If you receive information regarding someone in one of these categories who has been sexually assaulted, or in any other way abused or neglected, you are legally obligated to report the incident to the County Public Children's Services Agency or law enforcement.

Off-site Events

1. An adult will not travel off-site with one child/youth in a vehicle. When travelling at least three people, one adult and two young people, will travel together in a vehicle.

Driving

When it becomes necessary to transport children to or from a church sponsored event, drivers will be a minimum of 25 years old and maintain insurance at levels not less than the state of Ohio requirement, and the church will maintain a copy of the drivers' current license. Whenever possible, cars should caravan or have two adults in any vehicle with children. In the event that a child needs a ride and no one is available to accompany the adult staff or volunteer, the adult should contact the parent/guardian by phone and gain express permission to drive the child without an additional adult present. Generally speaking, an adult should avoid being alone with an unrelated child or teenager.

2. Overnight Guidelines

At overnight events where youth are staying in dorm or hotel-style facilities with a capacity of only two or three to a room, unrelated adults and children shall sleep in separate rooms. On overnight trips, there shall be at least one male and one female chaperone. On domestic overnights, the ratio should be 1 adult to 6 youth. On international trips, the ratio should be 1 adult to 4 youth. Girls and boys should sleep in separate rooms. Chaperones must use their best judgment where facility constraints make it unfeasible or impractical to meet these guidelines.

Ratios for children to adults of the same gender should be 6:1 for ages 12 and under, and 9:1 for 13-18 year olds.

Other Recommendations from Presbytery:

1. Churches should not post pictures of youth or children on websites or social media sites without express written consent of the child's or youth's parents. This can be accomplished by using a release statement and having parents sign it as they join the church or as children enter children's or youth programming.
2. If churches do post pictures of youth or children on public websites or social media sites, they are encouraged exclude the child's or youth's name. Churches may consider posting names and children's pictures together if the site is private and password protected or if the social media site offers the option for limited access (for example, being "accepted" into the group on Facebook).
3. Further information about "Children and Youth Safety" is available through Guide One Insurance at <https://www.guideone.com/churches.htm> and at <https://www.safechurch.com>.