Presbyterian Church of Western Springs
Safe Space Policy- June 2026

Presbyterian Church of Western Springs values human life and has developed this policy to help make the Church a safer place for children, youth and adults. The goal of this policy is to lower the risk of child abuse and sexual misconduct for the children, youth, volunteers, and the church community. The ethical and responsible conduct of all who minister in the name of Jesus Christ is of vital importance to the church because through these representatives an understanding of God and the gospel's good news is conveyed. "Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world" (*Book of Order,* G-2.0104).

Except as otherwise expressly provided, this policy governs all activities, proceedings, meetings, retreats, worship services and other functions of any kind carried on by the Presbyterian Church of Western Springs (PCWS).

A. **Persons Governed by Policy.** This policy governs all adult staff employed by PCWS and all adult volunteers who are engaged in any children/youth activity or function carried on by PCWS.
B. **Oversight.** The Safe Space Team (SST) shall have oversight of this policy along with Session. They are responsible for providing an effective program of prevention and response relating to abuse of all kinds, including but not limited to sexual misconduct, verbal abuse, and physical abuse among participants in PCWS events and programs. The prevention part of the program includes education and training. When an incident of misconduct is alleged, the SST works with the Pastoral staff and Session to provide for an expeditious, professional and caring response to all who are affected.
C. **Responsibilities of Outside Organizations.** Outside organizations are required to review and sign acceptance of this Safe Space Policy in order to use our facility. Failure to comply shall result in the inability to use space at PCWS.

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Purpose

As people entrusted with the lives of children and youth, we believe that we have a profound moral and legal obligation to reduce the possibility of abuse and neglect from happening to those who participate in activities of PCWS. This section describes PCWS's Safe Space Program. The purpose of the Safe Space Program is to help make PCWS activities a safer place for all people by instituting policies and procedures that guard against abuse and neglect. The Safe Space Program is designed to:

- Safeguard children, youth and adults from abuse.
- Provide assurance to families that there are systems in place at PCWS to provide a safe and secure environment during participation in PCWS activities.
- Assure proper reporting when there is reasonable cause to believe that child abuse or neglect has or is occuring.

The Safe Space Team (SST)

Formation. The members of the SST are appointed by the Session.

1. **Membership.**
   a. The SST shall consist of 3-5 persons who are members in good standing of PCWS. The members shall have backgrounds and skills that the Session considers appropriate, with consideration made to ensure reflection of the racial, ethnic and gender diversity of PCWS. The Head of Staff and staff working with children and youth shall be included on the SST.
   b. A Ruling Elder currently serving on the Session shall ordinarily be designated by the Session Moderator as the Moderator of the SST. If someone other than a Ruling Elder is designated by the Moderator of the Session as the Moderator of the SST, a Ruling Elder currently serving on the Session shall be designated as a liaison to the SST from the Session.
2. **Reports** of all meetings shall be made to the Session in the same manner as all other teams of the Church. The SST shall meet annually and the meetings shall be presided over by the moderator or by another member designated by the moderator
3. **Training**. The SST members will receive training in dealing with the prevention of child abuse or neglect, particularly in a church environment. At least one member of the SST will receive training in dealing with sexual and professional misconduct, with specific attention to sexual and other professional conduct within a church environment.

Responsibilities.

1. The SST shall identify and utilize resources for bringing awareness and training to the congregation on this policy (including PCWS procedures) and the identification and prevention of child abuse and neglect.
2. The SST shall evaluate its responsibilities under this policy annually and shall recommend any necessary changes to the Session.

Safe Space Standards

1. **Two-deep leadership.**
    a. Trips and Overnight Activities: At least two (2) approved unrelated adult leaders are required to provide leadership for all trips and outings. Appropriate adult leadership must be present for all overnight activities; coed overnight activities require male and female leadership, both of whom must be adults, and must have completed all required training and screening.
    b. On-Site Activities: There shall be at least two (2) Approved Leaders present per room at all times in which children are present. If two (2) Approved Leaders are not available, a Roaming Adult will be monitoring the classrooms. (see Approved Leader and Roaming Adult under Definitions)
    c. For off-site activities, when there are not two adults in a car, and multiple cars with one adult driving, they will depart at similar times from the same location and travel in close proximity, arriving at the same location at similar times. Failure to do so shall be investigated. This driving practice is akin to the Roaming Adult. (see Roaming Driver under Definitions.

2. **Adult-Child Ratios.**
    In addition to having a minimum of two adult leaders for each event, all reasonable efforts should be made to comply with the following ratios of adults to children for all programs and activities sponsored by PCWS:

Youth Age	Adult	Overnight Events	Day Events
4-5 years	1	5 children	6 children
6-8 years	1	6 children	8 children
9-14 years	1	8 children	10 children
15 - 18 years	1	10 children	10 children

3. **Minimum Leadership Age.** All staff and other leadership must be at least 24 months older than the oldest child participating in the activity.
4. **No one-on-one contact.** One-on-one contact between adults and children is not permitted. In situations that require personal conferences, such as pastoral counseling, such meetings are to be conducted in view of other adults.
5. **Separate accommodations.** When engaged in overnight activities, adult supervision is required in the sleeping accommodations and the adult – child ratio as stated in paragraph 2. above will be followed. Separate shower and bathroom facilities must be available for males and females. We are aware that unique gender circumstances may require special accommodations and those shall be addressed. When separate facilities are not available, separate times for male and female use should be scheduled and posted for showers. Likewise, children and adults must shower at different times.

6. **Respect for privacy.** Adults must respect the privacy of children in situations such as changing clothes and taking showers, and intrude only to the extent that health and safety require. Adults must protect their own privacy in similar situations. Respect for privacy includes wearing proper clothing. For example, skinny-dipping or revealing bathing suits are not appropriate.
7. **Alcohol, tobacco, and illegal substances.** Volunteers, employees and church leaders will not smoke, use alcohol, or illegal substances while they are supervising children or youth, nor will they be under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances while supervising children. Volunteers, employees, and church leaders will not provide alcohol or any illegal substance to minors in any context.
8. **Cameras, imaging, and digital devices.** While most persons use cameras and other imaging devices responsibly, it has become very easy to invade the privacy of others. It is inappropriate to use any device capable of recording or transmitting visual images in shower houses, restrooms, or other areas where privacy is expected by participants. Any transmission of sexually explicit photographs or videos electronically and any "sexting" by cell phones is prohibited. Illegal activity will be reported to local authorities and parents of involved minors.
9. **Hazing prohibited.** Hazing and initiations are prohibited and shall not be part of an activity.
10. **Bullying is prohibited**. Verbal, physical, and cyberbullying are prohibited.
11. **Use of social media**. For best practices, (Appendix A).
12. **Constructive discipline.** Discipline used in PCWS events shall be constructive and reflect Christian values. Corporal punishment is never permitted.
13. **Environmental Safety.** PCWS events shall be conducted so as to minimize the risk of accidental injury. Adult leaders should familiarize themselves with basic first aid, as well as applicable safety standards for food handling, aquatic activities, other outdoor environmental hazards such as poisonous plants and lightning as well as possible indoor hazards such as electric wires and cleaning substances. Necessary protective gear, such as helmets, life jackets and sturdy shoes shall be used and adults are responsible for ensuring that they are provided.
14. **Group responsibilities.** Adult leaders of group activities are responsible for monitoring the behavior of youth participants and for appropriately responding when necessary. Adult leaders should be aware of ways to correct behavior that detracts from the program and should keep parents informed of any significant disciplinary challenges or corrective actions taken.
15. **Participant Permission.** A Golden Ticket and Photo Release Form must be signed by youth and their parent or legal guardian of any child (under the age of 18) participating in youth events. Participants and their parents will sign the General Behavioral Covenant, (Appendix B) annually which outlines appropriate behaviors at off-site events. Future participation will require discussion with leaders, parents, and the youth.

PREVENTION - STAFF

All Staff must go through the approval process

Approval Process

1. **Screening Requirements**
    a. Complete application.
    b. Interview with the Pastor or their designee.
    c. Complete (MinistrySafe) training which includes Reference Check and Criminal Background Check for all adults age 18 and older. Optionally the (MinistrySafe) Driver's License check can be completed.
    d. Attend a debriefing session on the (MinistrySafe) training, and Safe Space Policy & Procedures.
    e. Submit Safe Space Receipt & Acknowledgement Form, Appendix D to the office.
    f. (MinistrySafe) training, debriefing of Policy & Procedures, and Criminal Background Check shall be conducted upon initial application and once every three years thereafter. Optional (MinistrySafe) Driver's License check shall be completed yearly.
    g. Employment is based upon successful completion of all above expectations.

All **Minor Staff,** 16-18 years of age, are subject to these requirements:

2. **Reference checks.** Adult Staff shall list three references on the application. References may not be related to applicants and no more than one reference may be affiliated with PCWS. References should be able to speak with recent and personal knowledge of the employee's trustworthiness and readiness for responsibility with children.
3. **Criminal Background Checks**. Criminal Background Checks and sex offender reviews will be performed on all Adult Staff. Persons governed by this policy shall provide such additional information and shall give such additional consents as may be necessary from time to time to carry out the purposes of this policy.
4. **Responsibility for reference and background checks**. Responsibility for the performance of reference checks and background checks shall be as follows:
    a. Adult Staff: The Personnel Team shall be responsible for overseeing Criminal Background Checks and conducting reference checks on Adult Staff employed by PCWS.
    b. Clergy: Criminal Background Checks for clergy is the responsibility of the Chicago Presbytery.
5. **Recordkeeping**. All records shall be maintained by the Church staff in separately locked storage and shall be held in strict confidence. No members shall keep personnel records.Access is permitted only to those persons who have a legitimate interest in the information.
6. **Failure to Comply.** All Adult Staff will repeat the approval process every three years and failure to comply may result in loss of employment. Approved adult staff drivers will re submit the application for driver's license and have their driving record checked yearly.

Prevention- Volunteers

Any person wanting to serve on behalf of the Church in a leadership role with children or youth must become an Approved Leader before working with children or youth.

Approval Process

1. **Screening Requirements**
    a. All adults who serve on behalf of PCWS as a leader of children or youth activities shall be subject to these requirements:
    b. Be a member of, or actively participating in the life of, PCWS for a minimum of one year. Individuals meeting all requirements, except being active in the life of PCWS, may be considered for approval at the discretion of Session.
    c. Complete (MinistrySafe) training which includes Criminal Background Check for all adults age 18 and older. Optionally the (MinistrySafe) Driver's License check can be completed.
    d. Attend a debriefing session on the (MinistrySafe) training, and Safe Space Policy & Procedures.
    e. Submit Safe Space Receipt & Acknowledgement Form, Appendix D to the office.
    f. (MinistrySafe) training, debriefing of Policy & Procedures shall be conducted upon initial application and once every three years thereafter. Criminal Background Check shall be conducted upon initial application and once every six years. Optional (MinistrySafe) Driver's License check shall be completed yearly.
2. **Criminal Background Checks**. Criminal Background Checks and Sex Offender reviews will be requested for all volunteers working with children or youth. Other background checks, such as motor vehicle record reports, will be performed as needed. Persons governed by this Policy shall provide such additional information and shall give such additional consents as may be necessary from time to time to carry out the purposes of this policy. Information obtained through background checks will only be used for the determination of whether an applicant is approved. The information will be kept confidential and only disclosed to those individuals with decision-making authority or as required by law
3. **Transportation.** All persons providing transportation must provide current copies of a valid Driver's License, registration and proof of insurance for the vehicle they intend to use for transportation, and they must consent to a background check including their driving record and thereafter receive confirmation from PCWS that they are an approved driver. In transporting children/youth, drivers agree to:
    a. transport no more than the number of persons the vehicle is equipped with working seat belts to carry,
    b. require the use of seatbelts by all passengers, including the driver,
    c. use car seats as required by law,
    d. not to drive when under the influence of alcohol or performance-impairing drugs,
    e. only drive directly to and from authorized sites.

When there are not two adults in a car, and multiple cars with one adult driving, they will depart at similar times from the same location and travel in close proximity arriving at the same location at similar times. Failure to do so shall be investigated.

4. **Recordkeeping**. The Pastor, or their designee, shall maintain the Safe Space records for all volunteers working with children or youth: (MinistrySafe) training, Debriefing, Background Checks. A database of trained volunteers shall be maintained by the Pastor, or their designee. It is the responsibility of all persons in charge of activities to ensure that all volunteers assisting with the activity are current with their training and approval by contacting the PCWS office to verify.
5. **Failure to Comply**. Any Approved Leader who does not complete all elements of the Approval Process at least once every three years, will not be allowed to volunteer until they do so. To remain approved as a driver, an individual will need to keep all driving related documents current and consent to a driving record check yearly.

Education and Training

1. **Policy**. PCWS shall post a copy of the current policy on its website. PCWS shall also furnish copies of the policy to others on request.
2. **Training**. The SST will sponsor training events at least annually. Training will include, at a minimum:
    a. Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in 'grooming' a child or youth for sexual abuse from watching the MinistrySafe training video and debrief conversation.
    b. Those working with children will be trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of neglect and of physical and sexual abuse.
    c. Training will be given regarding procedures to follow when an incident of suspected abuse, neglect, or misconduct is to be reported.
    d. Training will be given on the appropriate use of social media, (Suggested Practices for the Use of Social Media, Appendix A)

3. **Persons governed** by this policy are required to attend approved training before they volunteer at programs involving children and youth, and at least once every third year thereafter. Training may be attended at any time during the third year. For example, a person who trained at any time during 2019 will be required to attend training again during 2021.
4. **Attendance** is monitored through a training program used.

Response to Incident

1. **Immediate Safety.** If there is an immediate danger to any person, all necessary steps shall be taken to insure the person's safety. These may include calling for medical assistance, informing the parent, and/ or reporting the incident to the police.
2. **Reporting the Incident - Mandated Reporters.** In addition to state defined "mandated reporters," Clergy, Certified Christian Educators, Ruling Elders, and Deacons are required by the *Book of Order* to report knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities (*Book of Order*, Sections G-4.0302; G-4.0301).
3. **Report to Child Abuse Hotline.** In addition to the reporting described above, if the Pastor, any person employed by PCWS, or teachers becomes aware of any suspected abuse or sexual misconduct or any questionable behaviors involving children, either directly or through a report submitted as required above, such person shall act as a "mandated reporter" under the Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act by making a report to the applicable state or county Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-252-2873.
4. **Incident report.** Within 48 hours after the incident, each person with knowledge of the incident shall complete DCFS Written Confirmation of Suspected Child Abuse (Appendix C) and deliver the form to the Pastor/Head of Staff or designee.
5. **Investigation.** The person or persons making the initial report to the Pastor/Head of Staff shall NOT conduct an investigation of the incident, but shall take all necessary steps to insure the child's immediate safety. If reasonable cause exists, the Illinois DCFS will normally notify law enforcement and investigate the incident after being notified by a mandated reporter. The Church's insurance company may also conduct a separate investigation. Pastor/Head of staff shall inform Session and the Executive Presbytery of pending investigation while maintaining the confidentiality of the persons' identity.
    a. If the accused is the Head of Staff the Clerk of Session shall inform the Chicago Presbytery.
6. **Pastoral care and professional counseling.** The pastoral staff shall coordinate pastoral care and professional counseling as needed for the alleged victim, those reporting the incident, the accused, others affected by the allegations, and their respective families.
7. **Confidentiality.** Regardless of the circumstances, the identity of the reporting person, the accused, and the alleged victim, and the details of the situation should not be disclosed except to those who are professionally involved in the case or to the persons to whom reporting is mandated. All information obtained through complaints or allegations of abuse or misconduct or from subsequent investigations shall be held strictly confidential in a secure location in the Church. Access is permitted only to those few persons who have a designated legitimate interest.
8. **Media Inquiries.** It is important to anticipate that questions from the media may arise. Media inquiries shall be directed to and addressed by the Pastor/Head of Staff or by someone designated by the Pastor/Head of Staff, unless the accused is a pastor.
    a. If the accused is a pastor, the media shall be referred to the Chicago Presbytery.

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Procedures

Building Safety

Staff and volunteers are responsible for ensuring that the PCWS program areas are monitored during programs serving children/youth. No child/youth will *ever* be left unattended in an area or on a playground during regular programs, classes or activities.

First aid kits should be stocked and visible in the office, kitchen, nursery, Sunday School classroom and youth room.

Playgrounds

On the playground and outdoors, it is expected that staff and volunteers circulate, watching children/youth during play periods and games, giving particular attention to areas not easily seen from all viewpoints. (Example: under slides, in corners, behind structures.)

Any two children together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area of the playground, outdoor area.

Nursery Children

Because nursery children may require assistance with their restroom activities, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies:

Diapering

- Diaper changing will be handled by the childcare attendant or Safe Space trained volunteer of the gender(s) preferred and expressed by the parent, unless parent or legal guardian expresses their desire to handle.
- Children should be changed on changing stations only.
- Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery staff/volunteers.
- Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
- Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in nursery will be expressed or recorded on the clipboard (“Seth Adams has a medicine in the bag for rash.”)
- Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.

Toilet Training

- No child will be forced to toilet train.
- Toiletry assistance will be handled by staff or Safe Space trained volunteer of the gender(s) preferred and expressed by parent, unless parent or legal guardian expresses their desire to handle.
- Parents should be consulted on each child’s progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with staff or volunteers. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery will be expressed or recorded on the clipboard (“Georgia can use the toilet, but she needs to be reminded – ask her if she needs to go.”).
- When a child is taken into the nursery restroom, the door will be left partially open.
- Multiple young children will not be left unattended in restrooms.

- Children should be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.
- 'Accidents' should be handled by reassuring the child and contacting the parent for clean clothing.

Grades 1-6

- If you must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, seek out another staff/volunteer to accompany you if the parent is not present. If another staff/volunteer is not available, go to the exterior restroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. Do not enter the restroom.
- If a child requires immediate assistance, leave the exterior restroom door open when entering the restroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing his or her toileting activities, while the child remains behind the door of the restroom stall. Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer.

If restroom use is required:

- Only *adult* workers will assist children in the restroom (parents may request a gender preference of worker), or unless a parent is assisting their own child.
- Only one child in the restroom at a time in a single toilet facility.
- When staff/volunteer is assisting a child, the door must not be locked, and must remain ajar. In general, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities. Encourage children to do all they can for themselves.
- All students in grades 1-3 must be accompanied to the restroom by a female leader. 4th and 5th grade students may go to KIDS ONLY restrooms alone with permission one at a time from their room.
- Be aware if a child repeatedly asks to use the restroom and stays there for unusual periods of time. Report this behavior to a supervisor if it occurs.
- A single staff member or volunteer should never take a lone child to the restroom.

Grades 6-12

- All youth in grades 6-12 may go to KIDS ONLY restrooms alone with permission one at a time from their room.
- Be aware if a youth repeatedly asks to use the restroom and stays there for unusual periods of time. Report this behavior to a supervisor if it occurs.
- A single staff member or volunteer should never take a lone youth to the restroom.

Restroom Policies

DO NOT USE OR OCCUPY a restroom in use by children/youth. Adults should use a restroom separate and apart from restrooms used by children/youth during weekend services or when there are children/youth present. No volunteer OF ANY AGE should enter or occupy a restroom while children/youth are using it. When no child/youth is present, adults (and young volunteers) are allowed in a restroom (one at a time) so long as there is another adult at the doorway keeping any child/youth from entering.

Procedures

Supervision

Only parents (dropping off children), Safe Space trained volunteers, church staff members, and children are allowed in areas where ministry to children is occurring. All other adults should be asked for identification and immediately escorted out of the area. If questions or concerns arise related to any person in the area, the Head of Staff or Director of Family Ministry should be notified immediately.

Two trained, screened adults should supervise children at all times.
PCWS practices the *Two Adult Rule,* which requires a reasonable number of adult leaders (with a minimum of two) to be maintained when supervising children. A married couple or two family members comprise *one adult* for purposes of compliance with the *Two Adult Rule.*

Avoid being alone with an individual child in any room or during any ministry program. If one supervising adult must leave a group of children, another staff member or volunteer must be notified so that the *Two Adult Rule* can be followed.

If two individuals serving in a room are related, a third unrelated volunteer or staff member must also be present.

If an unusual circumstance occurs and you find yourself alone with a single child, take the child to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: if a child is the last in a class to be picked up by a parent, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present.)

If you need to talk with a child alone, do it in the hallway or a highly visible area, or have another leader with you.

Avoid distractions that would impact your ability to effectively supervise children and maintain situational awareness (i.e., use of cell phones, wearing headphones, etc.).

After every ministry event, ensure that every room, area and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

Release of Children

Any time a child has been entrusted to PCWS staff members or volunteers, the church incurs responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.

Director of Family Ministry or volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians at the close of services or activities.

It is presumed a person who drops off a child or student has authority to pick up the child.

In the event staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact the Head of Staff or Director of Family Ministry *before* releasing the child.

Procedures

Parental Involvement

Parents are invited to observe all programs and activities in which their child is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their children's programs at PCWS will be required to complete the Safe Space training.

Parents who leave a child in the care of PCWS staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in ministry programs.

Physical Contact

PCWS promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our Children's Ministries while protecting children/youth. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in Children's Ministries programs:

- Physical contact in any form should be above reproach, for the benefit of the child, and never based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
- Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in children's ministries must foster trust at all times.

AVOID the following interactions:

- Never touch a child in sensitive areas (breasts, buttocks, genitals) even if a child has been injured in one of these areas. Never allow casual contact in these areas, under or **over clothing.**
- No sitting on laps.
- No hand-holding, unless part of a worship/prayer service or a group game.
- Never touch in anger or disgust.
- Never touch in a manner that may be construed as sexually suggestive.
- Avoid touching a child between the navel and the knees.
- Never carry a child piggy-back, or on your shoulders.
- Never place hands beneath a child's clothing to play, rub or comfort.
- Never tickle, participate in 'horse-play' or wrestle with a child.

Do not force physical contact, touch or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.

Physical affection should occur only in observable locations or when in the presence of other staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.

Procedures

Staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others, including other children.

Inappropriate touch and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touch or display of affection should be immediately reported to an immediate supervisor, the Head of Staff or Director of Family Ministry.

Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by a staff member or volunteer must be reported immediately to the Head of Staff or Director of Family Ministry.

Medication

Do not administer medication of any kind to any child/youth while serving in ministry programs, including over the counter drugs. For certain trips or activities (i.e., mission trips, camps, etc.), the Safe Space trained staff or volunteer will dispense appropriate medications consistent with parent directives and signed parent permission form.

Definitions

1. **Accused.** The person against whom an accusation of sexual misconduct or child abuse or neglect is being made.
2. **Accuser.** The person claiming knowledge of sexual misconduct or child abuse or neglect by a person covered by this policy. The accuser may or may not be the victim of the alleged sexual misconduct, child abuse or neglect.
3. **Activity.** A youth and/or child activity sponsored by or under the control of PCWS. Please note: definition of 'off-site' family activities with close supervision of children/youth by staff.
4. **Approved Leader.** Person, 18 years or older, who successfully completed the volunteer Safe Space training (Criminal Background Check, (MinistrySafe) training and debriefing, optional Driver's License approval) and approved to work with children and youth.
5. **Behavioral Covenant.** Document that outlines appropriate verbal and digital interactions youth exhibit at all events they participate.
6. **Child.** Any person under the age of eighteen years and any person with a disability under the age of twenty-two years. A youth is a child between twelve - eighteen years.
7. **Emotional Abuse.** Unusually harsh, offensive or insensitive conduct toward another person that causes or is likely to cause emotional distress. Examples can include criticism, badgering, teasing, ridicule, rejection, humiliation, blame or unfavorable comparisons with other children or adults.
8. **Grooming.** The process used by an abuser to select a child/youth, win their trust (and the trust of the child's/youth's parent or guardian), manipulate the child/youth into sexual activity and keep them from disclosing the abuse.
9. **Incident.** Incident of harm or a set of circumstances that would lead a reasonable person to suspect that a child was abused or neglected.
10. **Mandated Reporter.** A mandated reporter is a person who, because of his or her profession, is legally required to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect to the relevant authorities. These laws are in place to prevent children from being abused and to end any possible abuse or neglect at the earliest possible stage. Clergy, Certified Christian Educators, Ruling Elders, and Deacons are required by the *Book of Order* to report knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities (*Book of Order*, Sections G-4.0302; G-4.0301).
11. **Minor Staff.** An employee of PCWS that is 16- 18 years old.
12. **Misuse of Technology.** The use of technology that results in sexually harassing or abusing another person, or emotionally abusing any child, including texting or emailing suggestive messages and images to people. It is never appropriate to view pornography with or in view of children. If pornography includes a person under the age of eighteen, it is considered child abuse.
13. **Neglect.** The failure of a parent or responsible caretaker to provide adequate supervision, food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education or other basic necessity to a child or an adult without the mental capacity to consent.
14. **Off-Site Activity.** When families gather for PCWS sponsored events in their home and children/youth are supervised by PCWS staff, children and youth will not have access to alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs, or inappropriate technology or engage in inappropriate physical or sexual behavior.
15. **Parent.** A legal guardian of a child who is participating in an activity.
16. **Physical Abuse.** Any act that results in non-accidental injury to another or involves harmful, potentially harmful or offensive touching of another.
17. **Presbyterian Church of Western Springs or Presbytery.** A mid-level council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); for purposes of this policy, the term 'PCWS' shall include any corporation controlled by PCWS through which PCWS employs staff and carries on its programs and activities.

Definitions

18. **Roaming Adult.** Approved Leader who monitors multiple classrooms/activities and assists when necessary.
19. **Roaming Driver.** Approved Staff/ Leader who drives in a carpool when there are not two adults in a car, but there are multiple cars with one adult driving each car. They will depart at similar times from the same location and travel in close proximity, to the same location arriving at similar times. This driving practice is akin to the Roaming Adult.
20. **Sexual Abuse.** Any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to:
    a. any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without the mental capacity to consent; or
    b. any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of office or position (D-10.0401c).
21. **Sexual Harassment/Misconduct.** Conduct that includes, but is not limited to,
    a. unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, tormenting based on gender, and other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature. In particular, sexual harassment occurs if:
    b. submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or of his or her participation in PCWS activities;
    c. submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is the basis for employment decisions or other PCWS-related decisions affecting that individual;
    d. such conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with an individual's work performance or participation in PCWS activities by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment;
    e. such conduct, regardless of its intention, is objected to by the person at whom it is directed; or
    f. such conduct includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact such as the following:
        a. written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, emails, text messages or invitations;
        b. verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes or sexual propositions;
        c. physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault or sexual coercion; and
        d. visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines.
22. **Social Media.** Social media are web-based and mobile technologies, (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Group Me) that allow people to express themselves and interact with one another.
23. **Staff** or **Employee.** A person employed by or contracted with the PCWS.
24. **Victim.** A person who has allegedly suffered an act of sexual misconduct or physical or emotional abuse, or, a child or an adult without mental capacity to consent who has allegedly suffered neglect. 25. 25. **Volunteer.** A person who provides services for PCWS and receives no benefit or remuneration. Volunteers include, but are not limited to, persons elected or appointed to serve on boards, teams, and other groups.

APPENDIX A
SUGGESTED PRACTICES FOR THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media are positive and enriching resources that connect people and enrich ministry. However, intrinsic differences between the digital and physical worlds can create confusion that affects pastoral relationships. In some cases related to ministry to youth, we understand that a group chat is not conducive for certain purposes. In order to simplify this process, while still maintaining the safety of young people PCWS has official social media accounts (Instagram: @PCWS_youth; Facebook: PCWSYouth) which are monitored by more than one approved adult that youth staff may use. If an adult staff/leader has reason to use social media to contact a student, they should follow the below.The following suggested practices are designed to support the use of social media in faith communities.

Commonly Accepted Principles of Healthy Boundaries and Safe Congregations

- Adults have more power than children and youth.
- Because of the expectations and assumptions surrounding their role, clergy generally have more power than people with whom they have a pastoral relationship.
- The mutuality of a truly egalitarian friendship does not exist when there is a disparity of power.

General Information about Digital Communications

- THERE IS NO CONFIDENTIALITY ON THE INTERNET. All digital communication, be it through email, texting, social media, blogs, etc. can be searched by others or reposted publically.
- Healthy boundaries and safe church practices are as essential in the digital world as they are in the physical world.
- Interactions in the digital world should be as transparent as those in the physical world.
- Communications should be short and should usually be a one-off communication to arrange a meeting (following Safe Space policy), or remind young people to attend an event.
- Personal conversations should not be had over email, text, or other social messaging applications. Staff and volunteers should arrange to meet with a young person if the young person would like to talk.
- Staff and volunteers shall use an appropriate tone; friendly, but not over familiar or personal. While communications should be warm and friendly, they should not suggest or offer a special relationship.
- Communication shall not take place with staff and young people between the hours of 9:00 pm and 7:00 am, unless in an emergency.
- In the digital world, a “friend” is anyone with whom you are willing to communicate. In the physical world, expectations for friendships include more intimacy, and self-disclosure than are typical in the digital world.
- Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse/neglect/ exploitation of children, youth, elders and vulnerable adults apply in the digital world as they do in the physical world.

Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Interactions with Children and Youth

- Adults who minister to children and youth are strongly encouraged to set very stringent privacy settings on any social networking profile.
- Adults should not initiate "friend" requests to children or youth. Youth may feel uncomfortable about declining such requests due to the disparity of power between youth and adults.
- Dedicated groups should have at least two unrelated adult administrators as well as at least two youth administrators.
- Dedicated groups for youth groups should be closed, but not "hidden." • The General Behavioral Covenant (Appendix B) shall govern what content is appropriate and inappropriate for each dedicated group. The covenant should be readily available to any person who wishes to join the dedicated group.
- Dedicated groups for youth should be open to the parents of the current youth members.
- When adult leaders and youth group members leave the dedicated group, they should be removed from digital communication with that dedicated group and its current members.

Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Interactions with Adults

- Clergy are strongly encouraged to set stringent privacy settings on any social networking profile.
- Clergy should generally not initiate "friend" requests to parishioners and others to whom they minister. Parishioners may feel uncomfortable about declining a friend request from their pastor. Any parishioner who does not receive a friend request may feel slighted.
- Clergy who want to connect via a social networking website with parishioners are strongly encouraged to set up a dedicated group account that all parishioners may join.
- Clergy should consider the impact of declining a "friend" request from a parishioner. These encounters may create tension in "real world" relationships.

Recommendations for Digital Content

- Remember that materials posted on any site are NOT CONFIDENTIAL. • Ask – 'Are your posts consistent with the values and mission of the church or ministry that you serve?'
- Ask – 'Will your social media participation affect your job duties?'
- Ask - 'Who, how and when may photos be tagged?'

Recommendations for Posting Images and Video

- Faith communities must inform participants when they are being taped. If the video will be posted on the web or broadcast through other media, participants must be informed accordingly.
- Photographs or videotapes of children and youth shall not be posted unless the faith community has a signed parental release.
- The names, especially last names, ages, grades, and other identifying information of children and youth should not appear in any media, especially online.

Other Recommendations

- Email is generally not an effective communication method for matters that are pastorally or legally sensitive, emotionally charged or require extensive conversation.
- Humor or sarcasm can be easily misinterpreted.
- Think before clicking 'send.'
- If there is a computer room in the church that is accessible to youth or visitors, the usage should be monitored and cookies should be regularly cleared.

APPENDIX B
General Behavioral Covenant

PCWS Youth Off-site Trip Covenant:

Name of Event:

Date of Event:

At this and all gatherings, we will be doing our best to live and play together as a family in Christian community. Family life is based on love, respect, trust, support, and on spending time together. To create and maintain this relationship of family and community, each participant agrees:

1. To follow the PCWS Youth rules of no smoking, no alcoholic beverages, no illegal drugs, no inappropriate physical or sexual behavior, no inappropriate technology usage.
2. To treat every PCWS Youth leader/volunteer and participant with respect and Christian Love.

I recognize that I am joining this Christian family and community for this event. I agree to abide by this covenant while I am a member of this community. I understand that if I break this covenant, I may be sent home at my parent's expense and my church Session may be notified.

Signature of Participant:

Signature of Parent/Guardian:

Date:

APPENDIX D

RECEIPT AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM

I have received the Presbyterian Church of Western Springs Safe Space Policy, acknowledge its contents, and agree to abide by its standards.

Date: _____

Signature:

Name:

(please print your name)