



**Policies for the Protection  
of Children and Youth**

**2012**

## **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

Relationships among people are at the foundation of ministry and are central to the life of the church. Defining healthy and safe relationships through policies and a Code of Conduct is not intended to undermine the importance of personal interaction in the ministry of Wellspring Community Church. The policies and code are intended to assist in more clearly defining behaviors and practices that allow Wellspring Community Church to more fully demonstrate love and compassion for children and youth in sincere and genuine relationships.

Relationships in ministry should, ideally, always be experienced without intention to do harm or to allow harm to occur. The following Code of Conduct has been adopted by Wellspring Community Church to help the church create safe environments for children and youth and for those who minister to them. All Wellspring Community Church employees and volunteers are asked to carefully consider each statement in the Code of Conduct and the Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth before agreeing to adhere to the statements and continue in service to the church.

### **Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children and Youth**

- I agree to do my best to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth involved in church activities and services.
  
- I agree to not physically, sexually, or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
  
- I agree to comply with the policies for general conduct with children and youth as defined in the *Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth*.
  
- I agree to comply with the *Guidelines for Appropriate Affection*.
  
- In the event that I observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations between or among adults and children or youth, I agree to immediately report my observations to a Wellspring Community Church staff member.
  
- I acknowledge the obligation and responsibility to protect children and youth and agree to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to appropriate church leaders and state authorities in accordance with the policies for the Protection of Children and Youth.
  
- I understand the church will not tolerate abuse of children and youth and agree to comply in spirit and in action with this position.

## **POLICIES FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

### **General Definitions**

#### **A. Staff and Volunteers:**

- 1. Pastoral & Ministry Staff:** Paid personnel who are engaged in ministry or service to the church.
- 2. Support Staff/Employees:** All paid personnel employed in areas of service to Wellspring Community Church other than ministry to individuals.
- 3. Contractors:** Those who contract their services to Wellspring Community Church but who are not otherwise defined as pastoral staff or employees.
- 4. Volunteers:** Any person who enters into or offers him or herself for a church related service, or who actually assists with or performs a service, whether or not they have been selected or assigned to do so.

#### **B. Children and youth**

A **child** is defined as anyone under the age of 11 years.

A **youth** is defined as anyone who is at least 12 years old, but not yet 18 years old. A youth may also be an individual who is 18 years old or older who is still in high school.

#### **C. Regularly or Occasionally Work With or Around Children or Youth**

For the purpose of this policy, the following are included in the definition of persons who Work With or Around Children or Youth:

- 1.** All Wellspring Community Church pastoral staff who are engaged in ministry or service to the church.
- 2.** All persons who supervise, assist with supervising, or host children or youth in ministries, programs, or activities.
- 3.** All persons who provide transportation to children or youth without other adults in the vehicle.
- 4.** Any person whose living quarters are on the grounds of the church or property owned, leased, or rented by Wellspring Community Church.
- 5.** All members of decision-making groups that have the authority to approve the creation of ministries, programs, or activities for children or youth.

Examples of persons who Work With or Around Children or Youth include, but are not limited to:

- Children's church teachers;
- Volunteer youth directors or ministers; and
- Adults who participate in overnight activities with children or youth.

## **D. Types of abuse**

- 1. Physical Abuse:** Non-accidental injury that is intentionally inflicted upon a child or youth.
- 2. Sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult:** Any contact or activity that occurs between a child or youth and an adult, that is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult, child, or youth.
- 3. Sexual abuse perpetrated by another child or youth:** Any contact or activity that occurs between a child or youth and another child or youth when there is no consent, when consent is not possible, or when one child or youth has power over the other child or youth, which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children or youth involved in the contact or activity.
- 4. Emotional abuse:** Actions, conduct, or statements that result in mental or emotional injury to a child or youth's growth, development, or psychological functioning.
- 5. Neglect:** The failure to provide for a child or youth's basic needs or the failure to protect a child or youth from harm.
- 6. Economic exploitation:** The deliberate misplacement, exploitation, or wrongful temporary or permanent use of a child or youth's belongings or money.
- 7. Bullying:** Any pattern of written, verbal, electronic expression, physical act or gesture, by an adult, child, or youth that is intended or perceived to cause distress to another.

## **SAFEGUARDS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

### **A. Background Check Process Policy**

- 1.** Any and all persons who Regularly Work With or Around Wellspring Community Church's Children or Youth shall be screened and selected utilizing a background check process encompassing the following elements of which (a) and (b) are required elements.
  - a.** A standard application completed by the applicant that includes an authorization for the release of information to conduct background checks and the Code of Conduct (Appendix C).
  - b.** Criminal records check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years, and other states, if any, as determined by the Children's Ministry Team.
  - c.** Sexual offender registry check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years.
  - d.** Driving or Motor Vehicle records check if the person will be transporting children or youth.
- 2.** All information gathered about an applicant will be carefully reviewed and evaluated by the Children's Ministry Team to make a determination, in consultation with others as necessary, of whether the person should be permitted to work with Wellspring Community Church's children or youth.
- 3.** Wellspring Community Church will maintain a file on persons who work with or around Wellspring Community Church's children or youth. The files will be maintained in a confidential and secure manner and all information maintained will be properly disposed of when no longer necessary.

4. Criminal records checks and sexual offender registry checks will be conducted every seven (7) years for persons who regularly Work With or Around Children or Youth. The Church will request a background check authorization before the Church conducts a background check.

## **B. Education and Training Requirements**

1. One hour of Volunteer training is required for all persons who Regularly Work With or Around Wellspring Community Church's Children or Youth. Trainings will be offered semi annually (August and January).

2. Prior to a Volunteer's start date, he/she is required to attend a policy education and expectations training with Children's and/or Youth Directory.

3. Staff members who are responsible for screening, selection, and supervision of others to work with Wellspring Community Church's children and youth are required to complete one hour of specialized training in screening, selection, and ministry expectations once every year.

## **C. Monitoring and Supervision of Programs**

The monitoring and supervision of programs and activities involving children or youth is important for safeguarding children and youth and involves several aspects. One aspect involves having structural guidelines or standards for the programs and activities for children and youth. Structural guidelines include approval of new programs, determination of how many, and the like. In addition to setting structural guidelines and standards, the Children's Ministry Team must make sure the structural safeguards are followed by monitoring and supervising programs and activities.

The Children's Ministry Team will monitor and supervise the behavior of adults, youth, and other children with children and youth so that inappropriate behaviors and interactions can be detected and stopped. Some behaviors and interactions are potentially harmful to children or youth in and of themselves. Examples include the provision of alcohol or drugs to children or youth or actually having sexual contact with a child or youth. Other behaviors and interactions are not necessarily harmful in and of themselves, but are behaviors and interactions known to be used to "groom" children for abuse or which provide the privacy child molesters need to abuse children or youth. Examples of such behaviors include an adult transporting a child or youth alone, or an adult being alone with a child or youth in a room with the door closed.

## **Specific Structural Guidelines:**

1. Staff and Volunteers are prohibited from being alone with a child or youth or multiple children or youth where other adults cannot easily observe them or in rooms where the door is closed.
2. Requests to develop new activities for children or youth should be submitted in writing to the Children's Ministry Team. The Team will consider whether the plan for a new activity includes adequate adult supervision.
3. The Children's Ministry Team will develop age-appropriate procedures to ensure the safety of children and youth using restrooms and showers or baths.
4. When supervising or assisting private activities such as dressing, showering or diapering infants or children, Volunteers or Staff will remain in an area observable by other adults or work in pairs.

## **D. General Conduct for the Protection of Children and Youth**

These guidelines should also be used to make decisions about interactions with children and youth in church sponsored and affiliated programs. They are not designed or intended to address interactions within families. Exceptions to these guidelines must be reported to the Children's Ministry Team by the Employee or Volunteer making the exception as soon as possible.

1. All Staff and/or Volunteers who work with children or youth must agree to comply with the Wellspring Community Church Guidelines for Appropriate Affection (Appendix A).
2. No person will be allowed to volunteer to Regularly Work With Children or Youth until the person has regularly attended Wellspring Community Church for at least three (3) months.
3. Programs for children from birth through 5th grade will have procedures in place to ensure that children are released only to their parents/guardians or those designated by them.
4. Staff and/or Volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, distribution of and/or from being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while participating in or assisting with programs or activities for Wellspring Community Church's children or youth.
5. Parents or guardians must complete written permission forms before Staff and/or Volunteers transport children and youth for Wellspring Community Church sponsored activities.
6. Staff and/or Volunteers will respond to children and youth with respect, consideration, and equal treatment, regardless of gender, race, culture, or socio-economic status, and will portray a positive role model for children and youth by maintaining an attitude of respect, patience, and maturity.
7. One-to-one counseling with children or youth will be conducted in an open or public or other place where private conversations are possible but occur in full view of others.
8. Staff and/or Volunteers are prohibited from dating or becoming romantically involved with a child or youth.
9. Staff and/or Volunteers are prohibited from having sexual contact with a child or youth.
10. Staff and/or Volunteers are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing etc.) on church property or in

the presence of children or youth.

**11.** Staff and/or Volunteers are prohibited from using the Internet to view or download any sexually oriented materials on church property or in the presence of children or youth.

**12.** Staff and/or Volunteers are prohibited from discussing their own sexual activities, including dreams and fantasies, or discussing their use of sexually oriented or explicit materials such as pornography, videos, or materials on or from the Internet, with children or youth.

**13.** Staff and/or Volunteers are prohibited from sleeping in the same beds or sleeping bags with children or youth unless the adult is an immediate family member of the child or youth in the bed or sleeping bag. If adults must share a tent, hotel room, or other sleeping area with children or youth, multiple adults should be present.

**14.** Staff and/or Volunteers are prohibited from bathing, or showering in the presence of children or youth.

**15.** Staff and/or Volunteers are prohibited from using physical punishment in any way for behavior management of children and youth. No form of physical discipline is acceptable, including spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force. Physical re-direction may be used to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the individual or to another child, youth, or other person, or guide a child to a specific destination.

**16.** Staff and/or Volunteers are prohibited from using harsh language, degrading punishment, or restraint such as rope or tape for behavior management.

**17.** Staff and/or Volunteers are prohibited from participating in or allowing others to conduct any hazing activities relating to children's or youth ministry.

## **RESPONDING TO PROBLEMS**

### **A. Reporting Inappropriate Behaviors or Policy Violations**

1. When Staff and/or Volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors, behaviors that are inconsistent with the **Guidelines for Appropriate Affection** or which may violate any provision of these Policies, they must immediately report their observations. Examples of inappropriate behaviors or policy violations would be seeking private time with children or youth, taking children or youth on over-night trips without other adults, making suggestive comments to children or youth, or selecting or using Staff and/or Volunteers without the required background screening.

2. Such inappropriate behaviors or possible violations that relate to interactions with children or youth should be reported in one of the following ways:

- a. A telephone call or meeting and/or written communication with an individual on the Children's Ministry Staff;
- b. A telephone call or meeting and/or written communication with a member of the Pastoral Staff;

3. All reports of inappropriate behavior or policy violations with children or youth will be taken seriously and will be promptly investigated.

### **B. Reporting Suspected Abuse of Children or Youth**

1. Failure to report suspected abuse of children or youth will be taken very seriously. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously.

2. In addition to reporting to the state authorities, Staff and/or Volunteers are required to report any suspected or known abuse of children or youth that may have been perpetrated by Wellspring Community Church Staff and/or Volunteers directly to an individual on the Children's Ministry Team or a member of the Pastoral Staff so that the immediate and proper steps may be taken to ensure the safety of the alleged victims.

3. Staff and/or Volunteers are required by this policy to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to appropriate state authorities.

Reports of suspected or known abuse must also be reported to The Children's Ministry Team and/or a member of the Pastoral Staff:

- a. A telephone call or meeting to a member of the Pastoral Staff or Children's Ministry Staff;
- b. A telephone call or meeting with the Senior Pastor.

5. Wellspring Community Church will cooperate with any investigation by state authorities to the fullest extent appropriate and inform authorities that a concurrent internal investigation will be directed by Wellspring Community Church.

### **APPENDIX A:**

## **Guidelines for Appropriate Affection**

Wellspring Community Church is committed to creating and promoting a positive, nurturing environment for our children's and youth ministries that protect our children and youth from abuse and our Staff and/or Volunteers from misunderstandings. When creating safe boundaries for children and youth, it is important to establish what types of affection are appropriate and inappropriate; otherwise that decision is left to each individual. Stating which behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate allows Staff and/or Volunteers to comfortably show positive affection in ministry, and yet identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children or youth. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all Wellspring Community Church Staff and/or Volunteers.

**1.** Love and affection are part of church life and ministry. There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children and youth.

Some positive and appropriate forms of affection are listed below:

- Brief hugs;
- Pats on the shoulder or back;
- Handshakes;
- "High-fives" and hand slapping;
- Verbal praise;
- Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of children or youth;
- Arms around shoulders;
- Holding hands while walking with small children;
- Sitting beside small children;
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children;
- Holding hands during prayer;
- Pats on head when culturally appropriate.
- Holding babies and small children

**2.** The following forms of affection are considered inappropriate with children and youth in a ministry setting and/or can be, in and of themselves, sexual abuse:

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces;
- Kisses on the mouth;
- Touching bottoms, chest or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers;
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff-only areas, or other private rooms;
- Any form of unwanted affection;
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development
- Snapping bras or giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear, whether or not other clothing covers it.