

IMMANUEL

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Thank you for your interest in ministering to the covenant kids at IRPC and taking the time to become familiar with our child protection policy. Remembering Jesus' command to be "wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Mt. 10:16), the goals of our policy are to:

- Protect the children in Immanuel's ministries and provide the safest environment possible,
- Create and promote a culture of openness and trust at Immanuel,
- Give guidance for safe and healthy interactions with children in a ministry context, thereby also protecting those ministering to children from dangerous situations and false accusations.

Because policies like this sometimes feel initially restrictive or invasive, please consider the following encouragements:

- This is definitely not a "solution in search of a problem." Satan is real, smaller congregations like ours are often targeted by abusers, and a reliance on informal systems of trust is insufficient to face this challenge.
- For a church to be genuinely welcoming to newcomers, a protection policy like this is essential to creating a baseline of trust in a church they aren't familiar with yet.
- These guidelines are designed for the context of ministry. There are ways of relating to children appropriate in other circumstances which aren't appropriate in organized ministry.
- Even if the guidelines seem restrictive to you, you can still submit to them knowing that you aren't being asked to do anything sinful and that no spiritual ministry will be hindered by these policies.

Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church Child Protection Policy

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Vision & Mission of IRPC's Children's Ministry

Realizing the Spirit's role to provide any and all fruit, the goals of IRPC's children's ministry are to...

...glorify God by participating in the discipling and equipping of children for ministry and

...support parents in their ongoing duty to disciple their children in the home

...by seeking

...salvation of souls through Biblical and theological literacy

...sanctification of saints through teaching and encouraging spiritual disciplines

...fruit for the kingdom by fostering Godly character and ministry skills

...all in the context of a safe and secure environment.

The theme verse of our children's ministry is 1 Timothy 1:5, "The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

Parameters of this policy

This policy applies to all ministries under the supervision of the IRPC session. In the case of joint ministries (e.g., youth group, presbytery events), we will seek to have these policies implemented as much as possible. The Christian Education Committee (CE) will oversee the training for and implementation of this policy.

Definitions

Preschool child - a child less than five years of age

Elementary child - a child five to ten years of age

Youth - child eleven to eighteen years of age

Personnel - anyone working with children at IRPC

Session - the collective term for the elders (leaders) of the church

1. Personnel qualifications

- A. All personnel who teach must be approved by the session. Unless otherwise specified by other policies, helpers and other volunteers must be approved by the session or an established ministry committee (e.g., the Christian Education Committee or the VBS leadership team.)
- B. No one who has been convicted of child abuse or sexual abuse of any kind or who is currently charged with such a crime may participate in any church programs for children or youth. This also includes those who have confessed to abusing others but without legal conviction.
- C. All personnel will fill out a screening application to be kept on file.
- D. All personnel will be required to attend a training time to review this policy, develop their vision for safe children's ministry and be knowledgeable and equipped to handle potential problems. The session will offer this training as needed.
- E. When classes or activities have more than one staff person, one person must be an adult (18 years or older). Younger personnel (12 years or older) may help the adult. Exceptions to the allowed age of younger personnel may be granted by the session.

II. Supervision policies

- A. Children and youth will always be supervised while participating in organized church programs.
- B. When parents or guardians are absent from the IRPC property while their children and youth are participating in a program, or when children and youth will be taken off site, the parent or caregiver will fill out a medical release form and leave contact information with the program supervisor.
- C. Nursery (0-3 years) will always be staffed by at least two people, regardless of the number of children present.
- D. When more than one class is being taught in our basement classrooms, one teacher will be sufficient, though an extra helper can aid accountability.
- E. Dismissal
 - 1. Nursery & preschool children will be released directly to the care of a parent, guardian or a parent-approved person.
 - 2. The nursery will employ a sign-in/sign-out sheet.
 - 3. Elementary children and youth may be released to find their parents after class.
- F. Restroom policy
 - 1. Nursery / preschool children will not be sent to the restroom alone.
 - a) For programs on the Lord's Day, parents are encouraged to take their children to the restroom before class.
 - b) When a teacher or volunteer assists a child in the restroom, cubicle (stall) doors in the restroom should remain open.
 - 2. Elementary children may go to the restroom alone with permission of their teacher or other volunteer. Volunteers should only accompany children in the restroom when assistance is clearly needed. Volunteers should not be alone with a child in the restroom.

III. Emergency procedures

- A. Personnel should be aware of all exits in case of an emergency.
 - 1. In the event of a fire alarm, volunteers should lead the children to safety and stay with the children until a parent or guardian comes to them.
- B. A first aid kit for minor accidents is available in the church kitchen and nursery
- C. If an injury or accident occurs, the parent or guardian should be notified as soon as possible. Additionally, one of the elders of the church should also be notified.

IV. Appropriate and inappropriate touch

A. Physical touch is an important element in showing love and care. Personnel should be aware of and sensitive to the different needs and personality of each child.

1. Appropriate behaviors include:

- a) meeting the child at eye level by bending down or sitting
- b) listening to a child with eyes as well as ears
- c) holding a young child's hand while listening or speaking to them or when walking to an activity
- d) high-fives, handshakes, and fist-bumping, especially to encourage
- e) putting one arm around the shoulder of a child when comforting or quieting
- f) patting a child's head, hand, shoulder or back when encouraging
- g) gently holding the shoulders or chin of a child when redirecting behavior
- h) holding a child less than five years of age who is crying
- i) holding a child firmly with your hands to restrain from accident or injury to themselves or others

2. Inappropriate behaviors include:

- a) kissing a child or being kissed by a child
- b) coaxing a child to hug you
- c) carrying a child five years of age or older, or holding them on your lap
- d) touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (exception: changing diapers or properly assisting a nursery / preschool or developmentally delayed child in the restroom)
- e) tickling
- f) extended hugging or full-contact, body-to-body hug
- g) being alone with a child or youth (important one-on-one conversations can take place in areas of the building which provide some privacy but are not secluded from other people)

V. **Discipline**

- A. Discipline is primarily the responsibility of parents.
- B. Corporal punishment or physical force will never be used by our personnel.
- C. Personnel dealing with children's disruptive behavior should be caring and consistent. The following methods are appropriate:
 - 1. rewarding good behavior
 - 2. reminding the child of proper behavior
 - 3. redirecting the child to a different situation or area
 - 4. removing the child from the group, using other space in the classroom
 - 5. returning the child to their parent

VI. Response and reporting

- A. Personnel responsibility: any accusation of child abuse received by a volunteer should be taken seriously and must be reported promptly to the pastor or one of the ruling elders.
- B. “Indiana law provides that any individual who has reason to believe a child is a victim of abuse or neglect has the duty to report the suspected abuse. Therefore, each citizen of Indiana is essentially a ‘mandated reporter.’ Indiana citizens who suspect that a child is a victim of abuse or neglect are required to notify child protective services or in the alternative to report the concerns to the police.

In the case of ‘mandated reporters’ who are professionals..., their requirement is to make a report directly to child protective services and not to the police.”¹

- C. Another part of Indiana law requires all individuals to report directly to child protective services if the person committing the abuse or neglect is either a parent or guardian of the child. In all other cases, except for the "mandated professionals", a citizen can fulfill his or her legal requirement by reporting to the police.
- D. Responsibilities of the elders:
 - 1. take any accusation of child abuse seriously
 - 2. promptly initiate an investigation into the accusation, appointing an individual to lead the investigation
 - 3. report the accusation to the appropriate civil authorities (Indiana Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-800-5556)
 - 4. report the matter to the church’s insurance carrier
 - 5. temporarily relieve the accused of all duties involving contact with children and youth
 - 6. report the results of investigation and recommendations for actions to the alleged perpetrator, alleged victim and parents and to the accuser (if different)
 - 7. communicate with others affected by the ministry of the accused
 - 8. provide appropriate pastoral care to all parties involved
 - 9. handle all situations forthrightly yet with due respect for privacy and confidentiality

¹ <http://www.awmlaw.com/REPORTING-CHILD-ABUSE-WHAT-IS-YOUR-LEGAL-OBLIGATION.shtml>

VII.Sickness and wellness

- A. In order to keep a healthy environment for children, parents and guardians are asked to comply with the following:
1. To keep their children out of church programs if they have any of these symptoms:
 - a) A fever currently or within the last 24 hours
 - b) An unidentified rash, any open sores or weeping wounds
 - c) A harsh cough or large amounts of yellow or green nasal discharge
 - d) Any symptom that would typically keep them home from school
 - e) Diarrhea or loose stools currently or within the last 24 hours
 - f) Vomiting currently or within the last 24 hours
 - g) Head lice, pinworms, pinkeye, ringworm, impetigo, etc.
 2. Personnel are not permitted to administer any medication (OTC or prescribed). Children and personnel should not be left with any medication (with the exception of inhalers for children over 5 years old and epinephrine injectors). Parents are permitted to come to the classroom or activity to treat the child if necessary.
 3. Personnel have the right to ask parents to keep the child with them if they are acting ill or unable to participate due to illness.
- B. Personnel ought to be in good health, not putting children at risk through communicable disease. Long-standing communicable diseases should be disclosed to the session.
1. Personnel who have any communicable diseases or infections (such as tuberculosis, Hepatitis B, HIV/AIDS, MRSA, etc.) need to disclose those to the CE committee.

VIII. Use of photos and names: The identity of children must be protected. The use of names and photos of children in promotion, advertising and/or web content must receive approval of parent or guardian.

Note: While IRPC will work to diligently apply this policy, due to the nature of ministry we make no written or implied guarantee that every aspect of the policy will be followed in every situation. Any concerns about the implementation of the policy should be directed to the elders.

Application for ministering to children at Immanuel RPC

Thank you for your interest in serving the children and families of IRPC!

Please give your completed application to one of the elders or the administrator.

Personal information:

Name _____

Date: _____

Address: _____

Daytime phone: _____

Cell phone: _____

Email: _____

Family information

I am:

Single

Married

Divorced

Widowed

Do you have any children? Yes (How many:) No

Membership information:

How long have you been a member of IRPC? _____

If not a member, how long have you been attending IRPC? _____

Prior experience:

Have you taught or cared for children in any church or parachurch ministry?

Yes (please describe)

No

Training

Have you attended IRPC's child ministry training time? Yes No

Personal References

Note: the applicant waives the right to view reference statements

If you have been a member of IRPC for less than one year, please provide:

1. A pastor or church leader from the church you most recently attended
2. A person with whom you have worked or served in the past who knows you well

If you have been a member of IRPC for more than a year, please provide another member of IRPC who knows you well and can attest to your suitability to work with children.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Relationship: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Relationship: _____

Consent for a Criminal History Background Check

IRPC reserves the right to contract a criminal background check on all children's ministry applicants. Reports are confidential and viewed only by the session and filed securely. Any reported misdemeanor or felony will be discussed with you and one of the elders and may be (but is not necessarily) grounds for denial of application to work with children.

The following information is required:

Name: First _____
Middle _____
Last _____

Address: _____

Date of birth: _____

Social Security Number: _____

Driver's License Number / State: _____

Confidential Information

This information is to help us promote a safe and secure environment for children participating in our programs. This information will be kept confidential and viewed only by the elders. If you would like to discuss any of these matters further, please indicate that on the form and the elders will be glad to speak with you.

Answering “yes” to any of these questions will not necessarily disqualify you from participating in children’s ministry at IRPC.

1. Have you ever been accused of, participated in, pled guilty to, or been convicted of child abuse, child neglect, or any other crime against a minor?

Yes

No

I would like to discuss this

Comments:

2. Have you ever have sexual interaction or sexual contact with a child?

Yes

No

I would like to discuss this

Comments:

3. Have you ever been accused of, participated in, pled guilty to, or been convicted of any kind of sexual misconduct of an illegal nature?

Yes

No

I would like to discuss this

Comments:

4. Have you deliberately and repeatedly viewed pornography recently?

Yes

No

I would like to discuss this

Comments:

Medical / Transportation Release & Contact Information Form

Medical Emergency Services Allowance Release

In the event that my minor child(ren), _____, has need of medical attention, I give my permission for the staff and sponsors of Immanuel Reformed Presbyterian Church (IRPC) to seek such help including emergency surgery if the particular emergency warrants. I understand that every effort will be made to contact me or my alternate responsible party prior to emergency surgical procedures, unless the particular situation does not allow due to the threat of loss of life.

I give my minor child full consent to attend the activities of IRPC. It is my understanding that the staff and volunteers of IRPC will take all of the necessary precautions to ensure the safety of my child. I do hereby release the above stated organization from any legal or financial obligations due to the injury of my above named minor(s).

Minor name(s): _____

Address: _____

Parent / guardian name: _____

Telephone numbers where you may be reached during church activities:

Alternate person to contact in case of emergency:

Name, relationship: _____ phone: _____

Name, relationship: _____ phone: _____

Medical history / known allergies to food, drugs, etc.

Medications currently taking & condition for which it is given

Transportation Allowance

My above listed child(ren) is allowed to travel with IRPC in the transportation provided.

I agree to the terms and conditions stated above

Signature of parent/guardian

Date