

PACIFIC NORTHWEST CONFERENCE
YOUTH AND CHILDREN EVENT POLICY
(revised 05/08/06)

A. INTRODUCTION

Scripture and our United Methodist tradition inform us in our belief that all of human life is of sacred worth, perhaps children most of all. Hear the words of Jesus in Matthew 18:5-6: “Whoever welcomes [a] child, welcomes me. If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones...it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.”

With The Book of Discipline, we affirm that our youth and our children are full human beings in their own right but, because they are particularly vulnerable, they are our sacred trust to whom we have special responsibility (Paragraph 162.III.C.). The Church is therefore particularly accountable to provide a safe environment for youth/children (Paragraph 161.II.H.). “Children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional, and sexual exploitation and abuse” of any kind (Paragraph 162.III.C.).

Therefore, as a covenanted Christian community of faith, the Pacific Northwest Conference pledges to conduct Conference events in ways that promote the safety and spiritual growth of all of our youth/children as well as all of the workers with youth/children who participate in these Conference events.

B. SCOPE

This policy and its provisions shall apply to all paid and unpaid staff, whether lay or clergy who have any direct or indirect contact with youth/children who participate in any Conference or District activities or events. For the purposes of this document, children are grades first through fifth, junior high are grades sixth through ninth and senior high are grades ninth through twelfth. During the summer, the grade level of the child is defined as the grade that they will be entering in the fall.

C. PROCEDURE FOR UPDATING AND REVISING CONFERENCE YOUTH AND CHILDREN EVENT POLICY

As passed by the 1997 PNW Annual Conference: Resolved; that the Conference Camping Commission (now the Camping Board of Stewards), in consultation with the Conference Council on Youth Ministries and the Conference Chancellor, have authority to revise and update their policies for Reporting Suspected Abuse without action by the Annual Conference. Any changes to these guidelines will be reported regularly to the Annual Conference in the Report Section of the Pre-Conference Handbook.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST CONFERENCE
YOUTH AND CHILDREN EVENT GUIDELINES

I. Risk Management

A. General Safety Requirements

1. Parents shall be given advance notice and full information regarding Conference events and meetings to which their children are invited.
2. All water sports require the presence of a lifeguard and shall conform to American Camping Association guidelines. All water sports also require the presence of a lookout to assist the lifeguard. A lookout is someone who watches to make sure that there are no signs of distress or inappropriate behavior in the water. Lookouts shall be at least 18-years old. There shall be a minimum of one certified lifeguard per 25 youth/children involved in a water activity, plus one lookout per every 10 youth/children involved in a water activity, OR one certified lifeguard and two lookouts for 45 participants OR two lifeguards and one lookout for 60 participants, etc.
3. The following activities require the presence of an experienced and/or certified guide or instructor: river rafting, rock climbing and, challenge course. Participation in these activities shall also be properly insured with a certificate of liability insurance in favor of the Annual Conference with a minimum of one million dollars liability coverage limits. If the activity is contracted to an outside party, then the contractor shall also be properly insured with a certificate of liability insurance providing a minimum of one million dollars liability coverage limits.
4. If any special equipment is used that requires special instruction, the instructions for its use will be posted and followed. Participants will also be instructed verbally in the use of the equipment.
5. Medical permission forms are required from all youth/children and adults participating in a Conference event or meeting. These forms shall accompany the adult coordinator of the event or meeting and shall include a waiver of liability in favor of the Annual Conference. In the case of an accident that requires medical attention, the person who is responsible for the event or the meeting will use all means possible to contact the parent, guardian or emergency contact while ensuring that the youth/children receive the proper care.
6. There shall be a first aid kit on the premises at all Conference events and accompanying a qualified adult at all outdoor Conference youth events. That first aid kit shall include disposable vinyl gloves, assorted

gauze and bandages, antiseptic/alcohol wipes, adhesive tape, antibiotic ointment, cold compress, soft splints, triangle bandages, scissors and a CPR barrier.

7. Every Conference event shall have, at the least, first aid staff certified in first aid and CPR who can administer minor first aid, dispense medicine as needed, and who are capable of determining whether additional medical attention is necessary. These staff are also responsible for reporting all incidences to event and Conference leadership using the appropriate Accident Report Form.
8. For all events that primarily target minors, all medicine including supplements will be given to the first aid staff at the beginning of the event and it will then be distributed as appropriate by first aid staff.
9. The first aid staff shall also maintain an ongoing log of all medications dispensed and treatments administered.
10. Conference events shall be designed in such a way that participants consistently remain in groups of three or more.
11. All participants at a Conference event and parents or guardians whose youth/children are participating in the Conference event shall also sign the Conference event covenant.
12. If anyone notices unrecognized people at an event, the event or meeting coordinator shall be informed as soon as possible.

B. Driving Regulations

1. Only those who are 18 or older may drive on event business and during an event. If there are passengers involved, the driver shall be at least 23.
2. The driver shall possess a valid driver's license and appropriate insurance.
3. If an adult other than a parent or guardian provides rides to or from a Conference event or meeting for youth/children, the parent or guardian must provide written permission to the chaperone who is driving.
4. Youth are discouraged from driving themselves to Conference events. If, due to extenuating circumstances, a youth needs to drive to a Conference event, keys for the automobile will be held by the event coordinator during the event.

5. If a youth drives to an event or meeting, the youth who is driving shall carry written permission to drive to the event from his/her parents.
6. There shall be no "in and out" privileges for youth/children. Exceptions to this rule shall be approved in advance by the event coordinator.
7. Vehicles that are used for and during events shall meet all legal requirements.

C. Overnight Events

1. Boys and girls may not sleep in the same room unless there is no other option as a result of shortages of chaperones or because of the nature of the space. If they are in the same room and there is a divider available, it shall be used to separate the genders. If there is no divider available, boys and girls shall be at least six feet apart from each other.
2. There shall be at least one adult of the same gender in the sleeping quarters, two adults for each gender if less than three youth/children are present.
3. At overnight events, a minimum of eight consecutive hours of sleep shall be scheduled per night. These hours begin with lights out and quiet time and end at least one half hour prior to breakfast.

D. Designated Safety Officer (DSO)

1. Every Conference event shall be staffed with a Designated Safety Officer (DSO) who is not the event coordinator. The DSO is responsible for promoting and maintaining Conference event policies/guidelines. The Conference staff person(s) assigned to oversee youth ministry and camping shall ensure that a task force is assigned the responsibility of developing, overseeing and reviewing the training of DSO's. This training may include the following subject areas:
 - Appropriate boundary guidelines
 - Types of abuse, the relationship between imbalances of power and abuse
 - Causes and indicators of abuse
 - Reporting
 - What to do when you suspect or discover child abuse
 - Understanding the victim and the abuser
 - Working with abuse victims

- Conference youth event policies
- Media reporting policies

This task force shall also develop, oversee and review more generalized training for use in the local church and among Conference and camping staff and volunteers.

2. This DSO is responsible for communicating and maintaining Conference guidelines relating to abuse at every Conference event involving youth/children, informing youth/children of these Conference policies, serving as the resource person on these issues, and assisting the participants of the event in understanding appropriate boundaries and appropriate guidelines concerning issues of touch, etc. Youth/children shall be encouraged to report to this person in cases of abuse but it shall be made clear that all staff members are capable of receiving reports of abuse. This person will be introduced to the event participants during the opening of the event and their role will be made clear.
3. The DSO is responsible for carefully documenting all aspects of an abuse incident on the Abuse Incident Report Form. This report shall be forwarded immediately to the Conference staff person assigned to oversee youth ministry and/or camping.
4. If a person reports that they have been abused in another setting, the DSO shall consult with the event coordinators or other oversight staff and they shall make a determination of who should be informed; which may include the local pastor, the District Superintendent, CPS, law enforcement, etc.

E. Policy for Screening Paid and Volunteer Staff:

1. All adults shall pre-register for an event at least 30 days prior to that event except under extenuating circumstances. The registration shall include the standard screening questions for the Washington State Patrol Criminal History Check.
2. An adult who works in a role that places them in direct contact with youth/children shall complete a reference check and a Washington State Patrol Criminal History Check. Idaho residents shall provide three reference checks from a prior church, school or employer who are not related to the applicant. Copies of these documents shall be filed with the Conference Treasurer's Office.

3. Those who are not residents of Washington or Idaho or who have resided in Washington less than three years shall provide three reference checks from a prior church, school or employer who are not related to the applicant. Copies of these documents shall be filed with the Conference Treasurer's Office.
4. Prior to the beginning of each event/meeting, the Conference staff person assigned to oversee youth ministry and/or camping shall ensure that the following screening checks are completed for every adult who is involved in the event:
 - a. Review of the application/registration form.
 - b. Washington State Patrol Criminal History Check.
 - c. The adult shall require a pastoral reference check from their local pastor. This reference check shall state, "These adults are registered to attend from the church you are serving; do you have any knowledge to suggest, or any question in your heart to suspect, that any of these adults might need to be further screened in their work with youth/children?" All background checks shall be kept strictly confidential.
 - d. Review of the Conference records to check for prior offenses.
 - e. Ensure that the adult fits the appropriate age requirements.
 - f. Ensure that at least the minimum standards of supervision as outlined in the Code of Behavior (Section II) are followed.
5. Approval for adults to serve as paid or volunteer staff is at the sole discretion of the Conference staff person assigned to oversee youth ministry and/or camping. A criminal conviction for a sexual offense disqualifies an applicant from working with youth/children. Other automatic disqualifiers usually are convictions for incest, rape, assaults involving minors, murder, kidnapping, child pornography, domestic violence to the other parent and physical abuse.

II. Code of Behavior

A. Rules of general supervision for adults working with youth/children:

1. The behavior of adults working with youth/children must reflect the highest standards of Christian maturity, foster trust at all times, and be above reproach. Adults engaged in Conference events or activities with youth/children present should never engage in sexually suggestive behavior or inappropriate touching.
2. Any sexual or sexually suggestive behavior by an adult toward any fellow worker or event participant at a Conference event where an

imbalance of power exists between the acting adult and the other person constitutes an abuse of power. Consent is not a defense to an abuse of power.

Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual advance, physical or verbal demand, or sexually suggestive behavior which is perceived as demeaning, intimidating or coercive. Prohibited behavior includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual or coercive overtones, including:

- a. Sexually suggestive or coercive communication of any kind such as obscene letters, notes or invitations, comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits or sexual orientation, sexual propositions;
 - b. Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; and
 - c. Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, sexually suggestive gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines.
3. The following guidelines for touching are to be carefully followed by anyone working with youth/children:
- a. Touching should always be initiated by the youth/child. The adult should respond to the child's need for comfort and encouragement and not base touching on their own emotional needs. Appropriate touching by an adult involves holding hands as part of a group activity; touching only the head or shoulders, and/or a side-on hug of the shoulders.
 - b. Touching between an adult and a youth/child shall only occur in the presence of other adults.
 - c. A youth's or child's preference not to be touched should be respected by adults and others. This includes youth to youth and child to child.
4. Anytime an adult thinks that their own or another adult's behavior towards a youth/child, either touching or verbal, may have been perceived as inappropriate, that adult shall report the behavior to their DSO.

5. All adults shall avoid being alone, one-on-one, with youth/children. Whenever possible, interaction with youth/children shall be conducted within the sight/supervision of at least one other adult. In cases where it is impossible to directly avoid one-on-one interactions, the following guidelines shall be observed:
 - a. If an adult or leader is alone with youth/children, two or more youth/children shall be present with the adult or leader.
 - b. If interactions are being conducted in a classroom and there is only one adult available, there shall be a roamer on premises and the classroom door shall remain open.
 - c. When private consultation is needed between a youth/child and an adult, another adult shall be informed of the activity and of the location in which the activity is taking place. The monitoring adult shall strive to ensure that the consultation takes place in a public space within sight of others but not necessarily within hearing range.
6. Adults shall respect the privacy of youth/children when changing clothing or showering to the extent safety allows.
7. Youth/children shall be supervised at all times by at least one adult who is at least four years older than the oldest youth/child who is attending the event as a participant.
8. When only two adults are required for supervision the second adult shall not be a spouse, parent, sibling, or child to the first adult.
9. There shall be one adult for every six youth/children with junior high events and one adult for every eight youth/children with senior high events. Ratios for ninth graders will be the ratios of the dominant age group at the event.
10. At least 50% of adults at an event where junior high are present shall be at least 21 or older.
11. Those adults who participate in an event shall have no personal interaction with youth/children via e-mail or otherwise, with the exception of simply informational communication, without informing the parent of the same.
12. Anyone not registered for an event is required to check in and out with the event director.

13. There will be absolutely no drinking of alcohol or use of illegal drugs at or during Conference events. Any drinking of alcohol or use of illicit or illegal drugs will lead to immediate suspension and removal from the event.
14. Possession of firearms is forbidden.
15. All adults working with youth/children shall abide by all laws and regulations applicable to the location of the event.

B. Youth Behavior

Prior to the event, youth/children shall be required to sign and abide by a covenant defining appropriate behavior.

III. Responses to Code Infractions at an Event

A. Responding to Behaviors that Hinder Our Mission:

In addition to the behaviors that are described above, there are other behaviors that may hinder our mission and our purpose. Examples of these incidents include a chaperone who continually undermines program objectives or an event planner who neglects staff training or health and safety concerns, etc. When serious concerns arise:

1. The event coordinator shall encourage the person raising the concern to talk directly with the person whose behavior is considered detrimental.
2. If the person raising the concern is unwilling or unable to talk directly on their own with the person in question or if the initial conversation is unproductive, then the event coordinator shall meet with the two individuals to seek resolution.
3. If a mutually agreed-upon resolution is not possible, then the event coordinator shall have the authority to prescribe a resolution.
4. Anonymous complaints or evaluations shall be considered unverifiable, and therefore, will have no foundation for being officially addressed.
5. Persons whose behavior hinders the mission and goals of the ministry or whose negative behavior is repetitive may face review of their participation in leadership for that behavior by the person or group to whom they are accountable.

6. If the person who is perceived to be hindering the mission is the event coordinator then the person who is raising the concern may report to the Conference staff person assigned to oversee youth ministry and/or camping or to the DSO if the former are not readily available.

B. Responding to Incidents Involving Physical Accidents:

1. The person who witnesses the accident shall share this information with the first aid staff at the event. The first aid staff shall in turn fill out the Accident Report Form, report the incident to the key leaders of the event and notify the parents of the incident if this is deemed necessary by the first aid staff.
2. The first aid staff and/or the event coordinator is responsible for carefully documenting all aspects of the incident using the Accident Report Form. This report shall be recorded in the log and forwarded immediately to the Conference staff person assigned to oversee youth ministry and/or camping.

C. Responding to Allegations of Abuse:

1. All reports of abuse shall be treated with utmost seriousness and confidentiality.
2. The highest priority shall be placed on securing the safety of the victim. In no case shall the accused be confronted until the safety of the victim is secured.
3. The person who receives the report of abuse shall immediately share this information with the DSO or with the event coordinator if the person suspected of abuse is the DSO at the event. If the allegation is concerning the DSO, the event coordinator shall assume the responsibility of the DSO. The acting DSO is in turn responsible for filling out the Abuse Incident Report Form and for reporting the incident to the key leaders of the event.
4. The DSO is responsible for carefully documenting all aspects of the incident using the Abuse Incident Report Form. This report will be forwarded immediately to the Conference staff person assigned to oversee youth ministry and/or camping.
5. The person who first hears the allegation of abuse, in partnership with the DSO, is responsible for reporting to the Child Protective Services or to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

6. The DSO will notify the parents when and if it is clear that it is safe to do so.
7. Any volunteer or hired staff person accused of abuse shall be immediately relieved of duties related to this or any other Conference-sponsored event and shall be isolated from further contact with participants, guests and others who may be negatively impacted by the individual's presence until the review process is completed. The individual accused of abuse may not return to duties until the Conference staff person assigned to oversee youth ministry and/or camping has completed a review. This applies whether or not the alleged act of abuse occurred during a Conference-related event.

D. Responding to Illegal Behavior

Any volunteer or hired staff person accused of felonious activity shall be immediately relieved of duties related to this or any other Conference-sponsored event and shall be isolated from further contact with participants, guests and others who may be negatively impacted by the individual's presence until the review process is completed. If the felonious activity was not committed during a Conference-related event, then the Conference staff person assigned to oversee youth ministry and/or camping shall have discretion as to whether immediate or remedial action is required. The individual accused of felonious activity may not return to duties until the Conference staff person assigned to oversee youth ministry and/or camping has completed a review.

IV. Conference Responses to Code Infractions

A. Responding to accusations of abuse, illegal activity and behaviors which hinder our mission:

1. The Conference staff person assigned to oversee youth ministry and/or camping is responsible for carefully documenting all aspects of the incident.
2. Whether or not the alleged act occurred during a Conference-related event, the Conference staff persons assigned to oversee youth ministry and/or camping shall jointly review the incident to determine whether any additional actions are required. They shall also report the incident to appropriate parties (i.e. civil authorities, the Conference insurance company, the chancellor, etc.). All information concerning the incident shall be held in strict confidence by all parties involved.

3. If the incident is put under investigation by appropriate civil authorities, the investigation will be monitored by the Conference staff persons assigned to oversee youth ministry and/or camping until there is an outcome.
4. If there is no civil investigation or once the investigation by civil authorities is completed, the Conference staff persons assigned to oversee youth ministry and/or camping shall jointly investigate the incident to determine whether any further actions are needed.
5. The Conference staff persons assigned to oversee youth ministry and/or camping is responsible for contacting the accused and informing the accused of the nature of the process. The purpose of this meeting is not to interrogate the accused but to discuss the accusation. During meetings with the accused, one other mutually agreed-upon witness shall be present (e.g. a local pastor, district superintendent, the other coordinator, etc.).
6. After conducting a thorough investigation, the Conference staff persons assigned to oversee youth ministry and/or camping shall report the findings to the accused. If the Conference staff persons determine that the person has committed an act of abuse, engaged in an illegal activity or a behavior which hindered the Conference's mission, the final goal of this process is to establish a future covenant with the offender that regulates his or her behavior at all levels of involvement with the United Methodist Church. This covenant shall include both an agreed-upon record of what offending actions were committed and agreed-upon solutions about what should be done in the future.
7. If no covenant is established, the accused shall remain suspended from working with youth/children at the Conference level until mediation is complete.
8. If no covenant is established, the accused may pick one mediator and the coordinator another mediator. These two mediators will then pick a third mediator and these three people, combined with the accused and the coordinator will come to a decision. The mutually-agreed upon mediator will serve as the facilitator for this group.
9. The covenant that governs participation in Conference-related youth events shall clearly state that failure to abide by the provisions of the investigative process shall result in permanent suspension from working with youth/children at the Conference level.

10. All documentation relating to the incident will be confidentially filed in the Conference treasurer's office.
11. A list will be maintained in conjunction with the state patrol forms at the Conference office of those who may not participate in Conference-related events involving youth/children. The purpose of this list is to screen those who are requesting to work with youth/children. The Conference is not under obligation to report the reason for placement on the list with anyone other than the accused.
12. If a person is under some form of suspension due to violation of any of these policies/guidelines and fails to report the same to a local church when initiating a desire to work with youth/children, that person shall be permanently suspended from working with youth/children at the Conference level.

B. Responding to Incidents Involving Physical Accidents

1. The Conference staff person assigned to oversee youth ministry and/or camping is responsible for carefully documenting all aspects of the incident.
2. The appropriate Conference staff person shall make contacts as needed with the Conference insurance company, the chancellor, the director of the council and the other coordinator. This coordinator shall also determine whether there is need for an investigation or additional follow-up.

V. Crisis Communication

The Bishop shall be informed of all investigations or allegations of abuse. All public communication shall be coordinated by the Bishop's Office.

**(Addendum A to the PACIFIC NORTHWEST CONFERENCE
YOUTH AND CHILDREN EVENT POLICY & GUIDELINES
DEFINITIONS)**

Young Adults: defined by the Book of Discipline as persons aged 18 to 30. For the purposes of this document, young adults are defined as those who are 18 to 30 and have been graduated from high school for three months or more.

Interactive Youth and Young Adult events: Any events where “participants” rather than “chaperones” aged 16 to 22 are together.

These are occasions when it is important and desirable for youth and young adults to meet jointly and to have opportunities for interaction. In these instances the Youth and Children Event Policy and Guidelines remain the primary guidelines for the event and apply to all the ages participating in the event with the following amendments:

1. IA10 of the guidelines reads as follows: “Conference events shall be designed in such a way that participants consistently remain in groups of three or more.” Whenever youth and young adults are together as participants at events, there shall always be more youth than young adults in situations of isolation from the larger group.
2. IA11 of the guidelines reads as follows: “All participants at a Conference event and parents or guardians whose youth/children are participating in the Conference event shall also sign the Conference event covenant.” As implied above, young adults shall also enter into the same covenant.
3. IB1 of guidelines reads as follows: “Only those who are 18 or older may drive on event business and during an event. If there are passengers involved, the driver shall be at least 23.” This 23-year old limit does not apply if all passengers are young adults.
4. As implied above, IB6—“there shall be no “in and out” privileges for youth/children. Exceptions to this rule shall be approved in advance by the event coordinator” – applies equally to young adults at an event where youth and young adults are interactive.
5. At overnight events youth and young adults may not sleep in the same quarters.
6. Adults may not serve jointly as chaperones to the event and participants at the event.
7. The standard ratios that apply to youth also apply to youth at interactive events. These ratios apply only to participating youth, not young adults. At least 25% of adults at a mixed event where both youth and young adults are present shall be at least 25 or older.
8. All young adults participants shall submit a WSP check prior to the event.
9. These events are specifically designated as “Interactive youth and young adult events.” Events that are not for young adults shall be designated as either a “high school event” (For example, CONVO or Fort Flagler), a “junior high event” (for example, the junior high retreats) or a “youth

event". When an event is designated as anything other than an interactive youth and young adult event, young adults are not permitted to participate.

- Addendum A Submitted by the Conference Council on Youth Ministries and the Conference Camping Board of Stewards

**REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION OF A PROVISIONAL YOUTH
WORKER IN CONFERENCE OR DISTRICT EVENTS
(Addendum B to the PACIFIC NORTHWEST CONFERENCE
YOUTH AND CHILDREN EVENT POLICY & GUIDELINES)**

Provisional Youth Worker – A provisional youth worker is a youth worker, either paid or volunteer, whose role is defined by a local church as central to youth ministry but whose age does not conform to the four year rule in Conference event policy.

There are occasions when it is important to the local church ministry for the provisional youth worker to attend an event that is governed by Conference policies and guidelines. In these instances, the Conference staff person assigned to oversee youth ministry and/or camping may waive the four year rule in order to allow them to attend. When this is the case, the following conditions shall apply:

1. For every specific Conference event, the local church pastor is required to sign a waiver document or a letter that explains and acknowledges the need for the participation of the Provisional Youth Worker in that event.
2. The Provisional Youth Worker shall not be a part of the adult to youth ratios and shall not be defined as an adult chaperone when it comes to guidelines such as sleeping. Provisional Youth Workers may sleep in the same quarters as their youth as long as there are additional chaperones in those quarters who do meet the Conference guidelines.
3. Both the Provisional Youth Worker and those chaperones who are assigned to the youth for that Provisional Youth Worker shall make every effort to avoid situations where they are isolated with participating youth. Additionally, it is the responsibility of the Provisional Youth Worker and event leadership to make sure that all other chaperones are aware of the Provisional Youth Worker's status at the event.
4. The Provisional Youth Worker shall be a certified Designated Safety Officer (DSO) but they shall not serve as the primary DSO at an event.
5. The provisional Youth Worker is subject to all other Conference policies and guidelines that are not stipulated in the waiver document.
6. The Conference staff persons assigned to oversee youth ministry and/or camping reserve the right to develop additional conditions in writing if it seems appropriate to the situation.

-Addendum B Submitted by the Conference Council on Youth Ministries and the Conference Board of Stewards