

**VASHON PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

***SAFECONDUCT*<sub>(TM)</sub> POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

**As Revised by Session: November 18, 2014**

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## Statement of Policy

*“Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct.”  
(1 Peter 1:15)*

As a community of Christian faith, Vashon Presbyterian Church (VPC) is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities and a community in which members, friends, staff and volunteers can worship, learn and work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation. The congregation of VPC supports principles of **SafeConduct™** which include individual responsibility to fulfill the highest standards of personal conduct toward others and to lead and guide the congregation in fulfillment of the standards, set by our Christian faith.

VPC strongly opposes and prohibits “sexual exploitation”, “sexual harassment” or any form of exploitation or abuse of others regardless of age, sex, sexual orientation, sexual identification or mental capacity. It is the intention of our congregation to affirmatively nurture good behavior and to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy and as necessary, discipline those persons who violate this policy.

Every member of the Congregation, whether “authorized clergy”, leader, lay staff, volunteer or parent has a role to lead those who look to them individually for guidance, to monitor their behavior and redirect them as they cross boundaries of **SafeConduct™**. Our congregation shall nurture good conduct as demonstrated by personal behaviors that are consistent with our Christian values. As we might conduct an orchestra, we shall guide and lead in ministry.

### **Ministers -- Ministerial Conduct**

Consistent with our understanding of the priesthood of all believers, as used herein all “authorized clergy”, employees, elected and appointed lay leaders and authorized volunteers including teaching elders, ruling elders, deacons, Nominating and Personnel Committee members, Mission Team Leaders and volunteers who work with youth, children and vulnerable adults are Ministers to the congregation.

It is especially important that every Minister be adequately prepared and educated for the ministry in which they serve others and understand the ways in which their use or misuse of authority may impact others. Each Minister is obligated to demonstrate and encourage **SafeConduct™** by being attentive to self-care, continuing education, maintenance of personal boundaries and support of those who are vulnerable or in need of support or refuge. Every Minister should seek to protect vulnerable individuals of every kind and to comply with State of Washington laws, as may be their statutory obligation.

The foundation of VPC’s **SafeConduct™** Policy is contained in our **Code of Conduct** and **Ministry Standards**, Appendices C and D respectively. Each Minister shall acquire knowledge of the details of the **Code** and **Standards** and related procedures described herein in order to:

1. Prevent “sexual exploitation” or “sexual harassment” of parishioners, employees or others by anyone engaged in ministry on behalf of VPC.
2. Prevent abuse or exploitation of “vulnerable adults”, including financial exploitation.
3. Prevent abuse or mistreatment of children including abuse of one child by another.
4. Demonstrate appropriate physical contact or verbal interaction as defined in this policy and prevent or re-direct inappropriate interaction or physical contact by others.

5. Enforce standards for contact between employees, staff and children outside of scheduled programs.
6. Communicate to others and practice guidelines regarding electronic communications and social media.
7. Manage risk of one-on-one contact between adults and children.
8. Recognize the importance of policy boundaries and act upon observations or allegations of behavior outside such boundaries including personal interactions, use of social media and use of church computers.
9. Understand and accept obligations and know how to report suspected abuse of children or other “vulnerable adults” as required by this policy or as required by the State of Washington, and cooperate with investigations as may follow.
10. Recognize circumstances of “sexual harassment” and the obligation and means to report to church leadership.
11. Understand how they, by their own action or inaction, may individually pose a risk to the church in the form of legal liability or loss of reputation.

Every Minister shall refrain from using a position of power or authority to exploit an advantage over any other person, adult or child.

Ministers who are “authorized clergy” and serving the congregation in any capacity (active, retired, employee, volunteer) shall hold themselves to a higher standard of care with respect to their personal conduct and relationships with the congregation, church staff and volunteers, whether pastoral, administrative or personal in nature. Utmost care and good faith are expected as described at G-2-0104 and G-2.0504, Book of Order, PC (USA).

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## Screening & Selection

Prior to beginning their duties as Ministers, each candidate for employment and others seeking to be Ministers to the congregation shall be subject to the following qualifying steps:

### **Application & Qualification --**

All employment candidates shall:

1. Complete an application reciting work history, education, 10 years of residence history and disclosure of criminal convictions. An affirmative response is required to each question; no answers may be omitted. Falsification of any aspect of the application shall be grounds for immediate dismissal. (Appendix B – Applications & Forms)
2. Provide a minimum of three references, which shall include both work-related (professional) and personal.
3. Grant written permission to conduct a background check as specified by this policy.
4. Upon selection, sign an acknowledgement of VPC's **SafeConduct™** Policy and Procedures and fulfill all training obligations within one month after assuming duties.

All others seeking to be Ministers to the congregation shall:

1. Provide a minimum of three personal references.
2. Complete a criminal conviction disclosure questionnaire.
3. Grant written permission to conduct a background check as specified by this policy.
4. Upon selection, sign an acknowledgement of VPC's **SafeConduct™** Policy and Procedures and fulfill all training obligations within one month after assuming duties.

Volunteers shall be active members of the church, or otherwise affiliated with the church, for no less than six months before being permitted to work in child oriented programs. There shall be **no exceptions** to this policy, even when volunteer candidates come from another church with similar programs.

### **Screening -**

The Personnel Committee Chair or suitable alternate and Mission Team Leader of the related mission area or suitable alternate shall each interview separately and in person every candidate for employment.

The Nominating Committee Chair or suitable alternate and a suitable, currently active elected lay leader shall interview separately and in person every candidate for an elected lay leader position prior to being presented to the congregation for a vote.

The Mission Team Leader of the related program or a suitable alternate and a currently active Minister to the congregation in the related program shall each interview separately and in person all other candidates for Minister to the congregation positions.

Each interviewer shall employ behavioral interviewing techniques to assess suitability for working with youth, children and vulnerable adults and specifically discuss the church's commitment to protecting children and other vulnerable persons from abuse. (Appendix C – Interview & Reference Questions)

The Personnel Committee Chair or suitable alternate shall directly contact and interview at least three references, a combination of professional and personal, for each employment candidate.

The Nominating Committee Chair or a suitable alternate shall directly contact and interview at least three references for each candidate for an elected lay leader position prior to being presented to the congregation for a vote.

The Mission Team Leader of the related program or a suitable alternate shall directly contact and interview at least three references for all other candidates for Minister to the congregation positions.

Each interviewer shall ask standardized questions to assess suitability and document responses. (Appendix C – Interview & Reference Questions)

### **Background Checking --**

The Personnel Committee Chair or suitable alternate shall conduct a criminal background check on all Minister to the congregation candidates meeting the following criteria:

1. National multi-state criminal records search.
2. National sex offender registry search.
3. Social security number trace and alias search.
4. County criminal records search for every county where the applicant has lived or worked over the past 10 years:

Written permission to conduct a background check shall be obtained from each applicant prior to executing the check.

Criminal background checks shall be repeated every three years for employees and volunteers who perpetually work with children. Seasonal employees or volunteers who have been absent from work more than six months shall have a new background check prior to resuming work.

**Approval Procedure --** A committee of three consisting of the Personnel Committee Chair or suitable alternate, the appropriate Mission Team Leader or Nominating Committee Chair or a suitable alternate and a suitable, currently active Minister to the congregation shall review each background check to determine if the applicant is eligible for employment or to serve as a volunteer Minister to the congregation. .

Where a criminal record exists, consideration shall be given to:

1. Seriousness of the crime;
2. Statutes that may legally disqualify the person from working with minors;
3. Length of time since the last offense;
4. Pattern of criminal activity; and
5. Activities the applicant has been involved in since the offense(s) occurred.

Conviction for the following crimes shall be considered barriers to employment or volunteer work with children:

1. Violent crimes
2. Sexual assault
3. Sexual abuse or neglect of a child
4. Drug offenses or driving offenses (depending upon position requirements)

Arrest data are not grounds for disqualification, only convictions. The status or relevance of other crimes will be considered individually.

Following the review, each committee member shall sign and date one of two documents that becomes part of the applicant's or employee's permanent personnel file:

“We have reviewed the criminal history of Applicant (X) and determined, based on the information we had available at this time, the applicant would be **acceptable** for the position.”

OR

“We have reviewed the criminal history of Applicant (X) and determined, based on the information we had available at this time, the applicant is **not acceptable** for the position.”

**Confidentiality –**

At all times, the privacy and security rights of individuals are to be protected with utmost care. The Personnel Committee Chair shall assure that physical means and processes are in place to protect individual rights.

**Grandfathering Not Permitted –**

Each Minister to the congregation now serving and regardless of length of service must be willing to set an example for all others who follow in their ministry. Therefore, at the time this policy is first adopted, all incumbent Ministers shall submit to the same background check and complete the training required for new Minister to the congregation candidates.

**Record Retention –**

Volunteer applications shall be retained for 20 (twenty) years in the same manner as employee applications with due regard for the safety of private information such as Social Security numbers. The individual record shall include:

- Employee or volunteer application.
- Permission to perform a background check (and credit check as may be required for certain employees).
- Results of the background check.
- Background Investigation Results form (Appendix B – Applications & Forms)

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## Training

The mission of VPC is first to prevent abuse of children and other “vulnerable adults”. We wish to identify and nurture **SafeConduct™** and to lead and to guide through adequate training. It is difficult to comprehend that those among us, our friends and family, would commit such acts willingly. Nevertheless, persons who have been presented no behavior standards and do not understand boundaries may unwittingly engaged in behaviors that may be perceived as predatory. Their personal reputations and that of VPC are then at risk.

To fulfill our leadership obligation to our Ministers, each new employee and new volunteer shall complete a specific program of training within 30 days of assuming duties. Fulfillment of training requirements shall be documented by the (**Training Administrator – Armatus program**) and respective Mission Team Leader.

Training shall be repeated annually. Records shall be maintained by the (**Training Administrator – Armatus Program**) and respective program Directors. The Personnel Committee Chair or suitable alternate shall audit training records annually.

### **Child Abuse prevention curriculum shall include:**

1. Organization level
  - Review of expected conduct and boundaries defined in this policy. (Appendix E – **Code of Conduct**).
  - Review of standards applicable to ministry (Appendix F – **Ministry Standards**).
  - Explanation of procedures for internal reporting violations of standards of conduct and suspected child abuse.
  - Explanation of individual statutory reporting obligations.
  - Identifying and managing high-risk situations such as bathroom use, transition times, and free times.
  - Physical security procedures.
2. Abuse prevention education:
  - Effects of sexual abuse.
  - Types of child molesters.
  - Characteristics of abusers.
  - How child molesters operate: access, privacy, and control.
  - Protecting oneself from false allegations.
  - Examples of child-on-child sexual abuse, even among young children.
  - Characteristics of children more likely to act out sexually.
  - Characteristics of children more likely to be abused.
  - High-risk activities and circumstances.
  - Specific monitoring and supervision activities to prevent child-on-child sexual activity.
  - How to respond to incidents of sexual activity between children.

**Elder Abuse prevention curriculum will be:**

1. Organization level
  - Review of expected conduct and boundaries defined in this policy. (Appendix E – **Code of Conduct**)
  - Review of standards applicable to ministry (Appendix F – **Ministry Standards**)
  - Explanation of procedures for internal reporting violations of standards of conducts and suspected vulnerable adult abuse.
  - Explanation of individual statutory reporting obligations.
2. Abuse prevention education
  - Praesidium's Armatus Training System courses covering this topic.

Mission Team Leaders or suitable alternates shall assure that each Minister to the congregation has mastered requirements and provide additional supervision and guidance as required to assure required conduct.

## Monitoring & Supervision

Each Minister who is in a position of leadership shall regularly supervise and provide leadership in the fulfillment of our congregation's **Code of Conduct** (Appendix E) and **Ministry Standards** (Appendix F).

Our intent is to sustain relationships which encourage employees and volunteers to meet our abuse prevention objectives while being mutually supportive as a team. All must be comfortable in reporting repeated violations of the **Code of Conduct** or **Ministry Standards** to leadership. The objective of monitoring is, first, to protect children, then to protect staff from false allegations, and to protect the reputation of VPC and its ministries.

In support of a practice of "progressive discipline", violations of the **Code of Conduct** and **Ministry Standards** are to be recorded in personnel files. Concurrently, employees and volunteers are to understand that their job descriptions include the obligation to observe and report patterns of behavior that violate the **Code of Conduct** or **Ministry Standards**.

Mission Team Leaders or suitable alternate shall continuously monitor performance using a variety of techniques including:

1. Scheduled visits;
2. Unannounced random visits at unpredictable times;
3. Spontaneous interviews with children;
4. Planned interviews or surveys of children, employees, and volunteers;
5. Meeting regularly with individual Ministers to the congregation;
6. Group supervision meetings;
7. Reviewing site documentation (e.g. progress notes, incident logs, etc.).

**TBD** shall:

1. Monitor computer use and internet use.
2. Utilize filtering, firewalls and encryption technology to the extent practicable
3. Assure that employees have signed the computer use policy

Monitoring efforts are to be documented and individual employment records annotated as appropriate. Efforts and results shall be reported semi-annually to **TBD**.

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## Internal Feedback Systems

In ordinary administrative matters we expect employees and volunteers to address concerns with their immediate supervisors. However, situations affecting the health and welfare of children and “vulnerable adults” require a direct and expedited means of communication to Ministers in leadership who can act upon concerns when an observer or victim is uncertain their concerns will be given attention.

When any employee or volunteer observes violations of the **Code of Conduct**, whether committed by an employee, volunteer or other person, or observes any other circumstance they find suspicious or feel is inappropriate, or may rise to the level of “suspected abuse”, they have a **right and duty to report** it directly to the Leader of the particular ministry to which the observation applies (primary contact). Respective Leaders are identified in Appendix D – Leadership & Reporting Roster.

If for any reason, the observer believes that the primary contact has failed to respond or has not given credibility to the observer, the latter may contact the church **Ombudsman** to report the observation. **The observer or victim shall be permitted to report violations of policy or circumstances of abuse anonymously.**

The **Ombudsman** (Appendix D – Leadership & Reporting Roster), while respecting and protecting the confidentiality wishes of the observer or victim, if any, shall ascertain with reasonable certainty the relationship of the observer to the incident and the credibility of the information being provided. The **Ombudsman** shall report the circumstances to the Personnel Committee Chair. The Personnel Committee Chair shall initiate (1) investigation of the facts, (2) corrective action or (3) reporting as may be required by statute.

In the conduct of annual training, respective **Mission Team Leaders** shall identify themselves and the **Ombudsman** as contacts for reporting violations or suspicious circumstances or activity.

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## Congregational Awareness

We at VPC are dedicated to a policy of open communication and education for the benefit of the children, parents, “vulnerable adults” and guardians we serve. They are entitled to know what to expect of our ministries, the Ministers who serve them and to know the related policies and procedures created to protect the respective ministry constituencies. Constituencies include the children, the parents, the “vulnerable adults”, the guardians, and the Ministers.

This entire policy shall be posted on the VPC website, [www.yourchurch.org](http://www.yourchurch.org), under **(Your Subject)**. The **Webmaster** will keep it up to date at the direction of the Personnel Committee Chair .

At the time children or “vulnerable adults” are enrolled in VPC programs, parents or legal guardians shall be provided:

1. A copy of the VPC **Code of Conduct** (Appendix E), and **Ministry Standards** (Appendix F);
2. A summary of the content of the orientation to be provided to children and “vulnerable adults” regarding boundaries and reporting.
3. Information regarding the means to report violations of policy or suspicions of abuse.
4. Information regarding their personal obligation to report suspected abuse as it may exist under the laws of the State of Washington.
5. An invitation to visit programs in progress at any time at their convenience.

Children and “vulnerable adults” shall be provided an orientation covering the following subjects:

1. Age-appropriate information about boundaries (with reference to the **Code of Conduct**);
2. How to protect themselves from abuse; and
3. How to report boundary violations or incidents of abuse.

The orientation shall be provided:

1. Individually at the time a child or “vulnerable adult” begins participation in a ministry of the church; or
2. As a group at the opening of a school term, event or league; and
3. Annually when a program, event or league is perpetual.

Parents and guardians shall be invited to receive the same “abuse prevention” training as provided to Ministers to be taken at their option.

Parents/guardians shall be encouraged to report violations of policy, boundaries or suspected abuse to the Director of the respective ministry at which an incident has occurred or the Pastor. Alternatively, they may report incidents to the **Ombudsman**. Anonymous reporting is permitted in the same manner and with the same precautions as reporting by Ministers or other observers.

If for any reason, parent/guardian believes that the primary contacts have failed to respond or have not given credibility to the parent’s/guardian’s concerns, the latter may contact the church **Ombudsman** to report those concerns.

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## Responding

VPC is committed to prompt, professional and measured response to all circumstances, which may range from violations of these policies and procedures to suspicions or allegations of abuse. We are committed to (1) seriously consider the concerns of victims; (2) undertake a fair investigation of policy violations; (3) protect the confidentiality of parties involved in investigation; (4) report to as required and cooperate fully with public authorities; and (5) communicate fully with the congregation within the bounds of individual rights to confidentiality.

Fulfillment of this commitment requires every Minister to assume responsibility as part of their respective duties, whether “authorized clergy”, employee or volunteer.

### **Responsibility of Ministers to the congregation–**

Each Minister is obligated to fulfill the **Code of Conduct** (Appendix E) and **Ministry Standards** (Appendix F) both by living the standard and helping others to do the same. Each is obligated to guide and gently correct others as they would in a circumstance of high personal risk. When another person, regardless of status, rank or power, repeats a violation of the **Code of Conduct** or **Ministry Standards**, the Minister observer must report the violation to his/her own immediate supervisor or the next level of authority if necessary.

Reporting responsibility includes incidents of child-on-child sexual activity, dangerous behaviors, employee-on-employee “sexual harassment”, bullying of any kind, and exploitation of a “vulnerable adult” or circumstances which rise to the level of abuse requiring action by a “mandatory reporter”.

### **Responsibility of Authorized Clergy, Lay Leaders & Mission Team Leaders**

VPC expects that the Pastor and elected and appointed Lay Leaders will relate to each other in a cordial and professional manner (as described at G-2-0104 and G-2.0504, Book of Order, PC (USA)) and in matters of **SafeConduct™**, will support, encourage and mentor each other.

Each person in a Ministry leadership capacity is required to fulfill the above standards for **Monitoring & Supervision** along with the **Code of Conduct** and **Ministry Standards**. Church Leaders shall foster **SafeConduct™** by example and by correcting, mentoring and counseling followed by “progressive discipline”. Whether upon direct observation or as a result of reports from others, each church Leader shall take affirmative steps to correct behavior or enforce policies. Each Leader shall document by notes in an individual file actions taken to counsel and correct individuals to include verbal warnings or written notices.

At such time as verbal warnings are found to be ineffective and a written notice is required in order to correct behavior, each Leader shall do so with the advice and approval of his/her supervisor. A Leader may proceed to a higher level of supervision if he/she feels there is a conflict of interest created by another relationship such as family ties.

At such time as warnings, verbal and written, are deemed unsuccessful, and termination from ministry, employment or volunteer status is required, a termination letter shall be issued only with the authority and over the signature of the Personnel Committee Chair and **TBD**.

A Leader may be expected to recuse him/herself from the reporting and disciplinary process in situations where there appears to be a conflict as a result of family ties or outside-of-church relationships, but may not do so when he/she is a “mandatory reporter” as prescribed by Washington law.

## **Responsibility of Mandatory Reporters –**

**State of Washington:** In addition to the procedures outlined herein, each person who is considered a “mandatory reporter” under the statutes of the State of Washington shall in good faith report reportable “abuse” received by a child or vulnerable adult, **either while at VPC, a VPC-sponsored event or outside VPC.** Such abuse is defined by the State of Washington as:

### Child Abuse or Neglect

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Sexual Exploitation
- Negligent Treatment or Maltreatment
- Abandonment (RCW 26.44.020 (1) and WAC 388-15-009)

### Vulnerable Adult Abuse

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Mental Mistreatment or Emotional Abuse
- Exploitation
- Neglect
- Self Neglect
- Abandonment

See **APPENDIX A - Definitions** under **Mandatory Reporter** for further State of Washington definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect and Vulnerable Adult Abuse

### **Presbyterian Church (USA):** Book of Order G-4.0302 Mandatory Reporting:

“Any member of this church engaged in ordered ministry and any certified Christian educator employed by this church or its congregations, shall report to ecclesiastical and civil legal authorities knowledge of harm, or the risk of harm, related to the physical abuse, neglect, and/or sexual molestation or abuse of a minor or an adult who lacks mental capacity when (1) such information is gained outside of a confidential communication as defined in G-4.0301, (2) she or he is not bound by an obligation of privileged communication under law, or (3) she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of future physical harm or abuse.”

VPC prefers that a “mandatory reporter” first report circumstances requiring reporting to authorities to Personnel Committee Chair without delay, the highest-level leader who is considered to be a “mandatory reporter” shall make the initial report to police or child welfare authorities on behalf of VPC.

Nothing in this policy shall be considered a restraint of an individual’s statutory obligation to report to authorities. Furthermore, no person shall be restrained from reporting an incident on the basis that (s)he is not a “mandatory reporter”.

### **Other Reportable Abuse –**

While the State has defined abuse for the purpose of child and vulnerable adult protection statutes and mandatory reporting, other kinds of abuse, which may occur but are outside the bounds of those statutes and mandatory reporting requirements yet to which VPC requires a response.

The following circumstances constitute reportable abuse, which require response to include counseling, correction, progressive discipline and termination.

1. Child-on-child sexual activity;
2. Dangerous behaviors (hazing, truth or dare, drinking, etc.);
3. Bullying, whether child-on-child or adult-on-child;

Ministers shall report all such activity in the same manner as any violation of the **Code of Conduct** or **Ministry Standards**. In the event of out-of-program circumstances where there is not an identifiable direct Minister supervisor, reports shall be made to the Personnel Committee Chair or **Ombudsman**.

#### **Other Disciplinary Processes –**

Other behaviors not necessarily involving children or “vulnerable adults”, or which may not be considered strictly illegal, are subject to other disciplinary practices as may be set out in governing documents of the congregation or of the denomination. Behaviors subject to other adjudication may include but are not limited to:

1. “Sexual harassment”, whether among Ministers to the congregation or others ;
2. Clergy professional boundary violations see Book of Order (**citation**);
3. “Sexual exploitation”;
4. Sexual relationship between a Minister and a minor even though permitted by law.

All such activity shall be reported by Ministers to their supervisors in the same manner as any violation of the **Code of Conduct** or **Ministry Standards**. In the event of out-of-program circumstances where there is not an identifiable direct Minister supervisor, reports shall be made to the Personnel Committee Chair or **Ombudsman**.

#### **Cooperation with Investigations –**

VPC expects and requires the cooperation of all ministers in the investigation of violations of the **Code of Conduct**, **Ministry Standards** or other misconduct, including a complainant, witness, and the accused offender. We may interview these individuals privately and take oral and/or written statements from them. Any person who fails to cooperate with such an investigation or to provide complete and truthful information may be subject to disciplinary action.

#### **Notification of Parents –**

A minor child may be party to an incident either as an initiator or as the victim. Whether a child is initiator or victim may not be clear in all circumstances, such as a child-on-child incident. And violation of policy does not necessarily create a victim. While notification of parents of such circumstances may be warranted, utmost care in communication is required.

Therefore, a Minister having knowledge of an incident which warrants communication to a parent shall first advise their immediate supervisor, who shall consult with the Personnel Committee Chair. While communicating with a parent, and **being mindful of the importance of timely communication**, care shall be given to assessing:

1. The specific facts;
2. Whether a disciplinary or termination process is required;
3. Whether a child should be dismissed from a program (requiring notification of other parents/guardians);
4. Whether “mandatory reporting” is a factor;
5. Who shall and in what manner communicate with the parents/guardian;
6. Whether the Pastor should be involved in the communication;
7. Tentative remedial steps to prevent a further incident.



Notification of parents shall not be delayed when immediate medical care is required.

**Victim Needs –**

In the event of cases of reportable abuse, the policy of VPC is to be responsive to the needs of victims within the constraints or obligations imposed under insurance contracts. In general, we will attend to the immediate needs of victims by providing support and pastoral care.

As VPC is a client of the Insurance Board, an incident of alleged abuse that requires medical or psychological care for a victim or family shall be reported to the Insurance Board by the Mission Resource Team Leader. The latter shall discuss with the Insurance Board Claims Department whether the circumstances warrant initiation of Crisis Management services, which may include psychological counseling. Upon approval, counseling services may be offered to a perceived victim(s), which may include family members.

**Responding to Media --**

Media publicity following an incident of abuse or exploitation may be detrimental to the reputations of individuals, the congregation and VPC. Without intending ever to evade the media, contacts with media must be managed and conducted only by a person specifically designated by the session to represent the church. No other person(s) may speak on behalf of the church. Unless designated differently by session in a particular circumstance, the exclusive spokesperson for the church shall be the **TBD**.

Prior to speaking to media, the **TBD** shall contact and consult with Seattle Presbytery (PCUSA) Stated Clerk to obtain an understanding of appropriate statements or admissions and issues of privacy that may apply to the situation.

The **TBD** shall give immediate consideration to securing Insurance Board media relations and crisis management resources. Considering the speed of news cycles, a prompt determination is required, erring on the side of seeking help.

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## Administrative Practices

### **Reporting to Leadership--**

Each ministry of VPC is directly responsible to session to report activities and developments that may have a bearing on the well being of a member of the congregation or the reputation of the church, its ministries and its congregation. Each Mission Team Leader shall report directly to the Personnel Committee Chair incidents of suspicious or inappropriate interactions (adult-child; child-child; adult-vulnerable adult), sexual activity between children and allegations of abuse or violations of professional boundaries.

### **Ministry Standards –**

VPC ministries subject to the **Appendix F-Ministry Standards** shall include any program or activity in which children or “vulnerable adults” participate, whether either on-site or off-site.

No new ministry or program may be created at VPC without the expressed written consent of the session, after consideration of the benefits to the church, intended constituents of the program, financial viability, the risks attendant to the activity and methods to be employed to manage risk.

Each ministry of the church, based upon its activities, participants and constituent interests, shall establish ministry standards governing its activities, to include such details as age eligibility, safety practices, training of staff, documentation, etc. Ministry standards shall be consistent with and not in conflict with the church’s ministry standards defined at “**Appendix F – Ministry Standards.**”

When a ministry is subject to State regulation (for example, day care, pre-school) such regulations shall constitute minimum requirements. Without creating unnecessary duplication, Ministry Standards shall apply in addition to regulatory requirements.

### **Outside organizations -**

Prior to use of church facilities by outside organizations (lessees) to conduct activities equivalent to those sited above, whether or not rent or contributions are provided to VPC (lessor), there shall be an evaluation conducted by the Mission Resource Team Leader or suitable alternate to determine whether the organization has established sufficient standards to be regarded as a competent partner in ministry.

A lease or use agreement shall be required with the organization, which lease shall:

- cite fulfillment of the organization’s written or statutory standards as a condition of continued occupancy of church property;
- contain terms requiring that “lessee hold harmless, defend and indemnify lessor for claims arising out of its occupancy of and activities on lessor’s property” (or equivalent language).

The organization shall be required to demonstrate maintenance of insurance, to include personal property, workers compensation, general liability and professional liability coverages that may apply to the activity (for example, sexual misconduct liability, professional counseling liability, educators professional liability).

### **Monitoring Compliance with Standards —**

The success and strength of this policy is not created by its words, but by the actions of our Ministers who must carry it out. While the policy generally prescribes **SafeConduct™**, Ministers are called upon to document that they are engaged in achieving the objectives of the policy. From time to time Ministers will be required to re-direct, correct and remediate individuals who have not maintained the **Code of Conduct** (Appendix E) or **Ministry Standards** (Appendix F). While violations of the **Code of Conduct** or **Ministry Standards**, do not constitute an incident of “suspected abuse” requiring statutory reporting, they do require a response.

In the aftermath of an incident of “suspected abuse” or a significant violation of the **Code of Conduct** or **Ministry Standards**, it may be necessary for the church and its Ministers to defend their actions which support this policy. Therefore, every Minister of the church shares in the obligation to regularly observe and document their good management.

Following the pattern of good employment practices, Ministers shall follow a process of “progressive discipline” in supervisory relationships with both employees and constituents. This process recognizes that an isolated violation of the **Code of Conduct** or **Ministry Standards** may not have been intended or malicious; the first transgression may simply indicate the failure to properly train. Nevertheless, repeated violations cannot be tolerated.

Each Minister shall employ “progressive discipline”, and maintain records of both monitoring and disciplinary activity. (Monitoring activity is described above under Monitoring & Supervision.) As required elsewhere in this policy, reports shall be provided to supervisors and the Board which shall document regular monitoring activity and that steps in “progressive discipline” have been taken. While in most situations “progressive discipline” will be the normal process, it is understood that an egregious violation of the **Code of Conduct** or **Ministry Standards** may require immediate termination of a Minister (employee or volunteer), subject to the conditions for termination specified in— Definitions, “Progressive Discipline” (Appendix A)

\*\*\*\*\*

## APPENDIX A -- Definitions

### **Mandatory Reporter - Child Abuse**

Those persons required by the State of Washington law to report “suspected child abuse” to police or child welfare agencies are defined as follows:

- Any person who, in his or her official supervisory capacity with a nonprofit or for-profit organization, has reason to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect by a person responsible for the child’s care;
- Any adult who has reasonable cause to believe that a child who resides with them has suffered severe abuse, and is able or capable of making a report. (RCW 26.44.030);
- Any other person who has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect may report such incident to the proper law enforcement agency or to the department of social and health services as provided in RCW26.44.040

### **State of Washington Mandatory Reporting Laws Require:**

- Mandated Reporters must report suspected child abuse or neglect (or cause a report to be made) to law enforcement or CPS when they believe a child has suffered abuse or neglect or may be at risk of abuse or neglect. RCW 26.44.030 (1)(a)
- The report must be made at the first opportunity, but no later than forty-eight hours after there is belief that the child has suffered abuse or neglect. RCW 26.44.030 (1)(f)
- A child is defined as any person under the age of 18 years. RCW 26.44.020 (6)

### **State of Washington Definition of Child Abuse and Neglect**

**Physical Abuse** means the non-accidental infliction of physical injury on or physical mistreatment of a child. This includes:

- Throwing, kicking, burning, or cutting a child;
- Striking a child with a closed fist;
- Shaking a child under age three;
- Interfering with a child’s breathing;
- Threatening a child with a deadly weapon;
- Doing any other act that is likely to cause and which does cause bodily harm greater than transient pain or minor temporary marks or which is injurious to the child’s health, welfare, and safety. (WAC 388-15-009)

**Sexual abuse** means either committing or allowing any sexual offense against a child as defined in criminal code. This includes:

- Intentional touching, either directly or through the clothing, the sexual or other intimate parts of a child or,
- Allowing or causing a child to engage in touching the sexual or other intimate parts of another for the purpose of sexual gratification of the person touching the child, the child, or a third party.

**Sexual exploitation** means allowing or causing a child to engage in:

- Prostitution;
- Sexually explicit, obscene, or pornographic activity to be photographed, filmed, or electronically reproduced or transmitted; or
- Sexually explicit, obscene, or pornographic activity as part of a live performance, or for the benefit or sexual gratification of another person.

**Negligent Treatment or Maltreatment** means an act or failure to act or cumulative effects of a pattern of conduct, behavior, or inaction that shows a serious disregard of consequences and constitutes a clear and present danger to a child's health, welfare, or safety. Neglect includes, but isn't limited to:

- Failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, supervision, or health care necessary for a child's health, welfare, or safety. Poverty and/or homelessness do not constitute negligent treatment or maltreatment in and of themselves;
- Actions, failures to act, or omissions that result in injury to or that create a substantial risk of injury to the physical, emotional, and/or cognitive development of a child.

**Abandonment** means the parent:

- Deserts the child with the intent to abandon;
- Leaves the child without the basic necessities of life, such as food, water, shelter, etc;
- Forgoes parental rights, functions, duties, and obligations for extended period of time.

### **Mandatory Reporter – Vulnerable Adult Abuse**

Persons required by the State of Washington to report “suspected vulnerable adult abuse” to police or welfare agencies are defined as follows:

- Mandatory Reporters are professionals identified by law who **MUST** make a report if they have reason to believe that the abuse, abandonment, neglect, or financial exploitation of a [vulnerable adult](#) has occurred;
- Persons other than mandatory reporters can report abuse by calling:
  - the Complaint Resolution Unit toll-free hotline at **1-800-562-6078** if the person that you suspect is being abused or neglected **is living in a nursing home, boarding home, or adult family home;**
  - the Adult Protective Services (APS) office in your county **1-866-221-4909** if the person that you suspect is being abused **is living in their own home or somewhere other than a residential care facility.**

### **State of Washington Types and Signs of Vulnerable Adult Abuse**

See [www.altsa.dshs.wa.gov/APS/abusetypes.htm](http://www.altsa.dshs.wa.gov/APS/abusetypes.htm)

### **Authorized Clergy --**

Includes any person who is admitted to ministry by the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) who serves the congregation in any capacity whether called as pastor or serving in a retired, *emeritus*, administrative or volunteer capacity. Clergy who are active, have pastoral responsibilities and are called by the congregation shall have fulfilled the background checking requirements of the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)

### **Progressive Discipline --**

A system of escalating discipline as an alternative to summary termination for a policy infraction, even a minor one. Progressive steps in discipline are as follows:

1. Counseling or a verbal warning -- It is necessary to document that such a meeting occurred. It is sometimes appropriate that more than one supervisory person be present for this step.
2. Written warning -- A formal letter is prepared and delivered to the employee/volunteer, while a copy is maintained in the employee/volunteer file.
3. Suspension or demotion – This may be appropriate for repeated violations of **Ministry Standard** violations. This step might be skipped for **Code of Conduct** violations.

4. Termination – Repeated willful violations of the **Code of Conduct** or **Ministry Standards** call for termination of employment, whether employee or volunteer. However, no Minister has authority to terminate an employee or volunteer unilaterally; at least two levels of supervision must make a judgment on termination. No one shall be terminated without the advice of legal counsel.

In extreme circumstances it will be appropriate to skip steps and proceed with immediate termination. However, the same rules apply to a summary termination.

An equivalent to progressive discipline shall apply to children and “vulnerable adults” (clients) served by our church. When clients are observed engaging in inappropriate interactions or sexual contact, it is expected that they will be immediately stopped or redirected to another activity. When violations are repeated and the client is unresponsive, the next step is to engage the parent or guardian in a meeting about the behavior with the expectation that the parent will provide follow-up discussion and discipline of the client. If this step fails to achieve positive results, then additional steps must be taken culminating with expulsion of the client from the church program. Legal counsel shall also be engaged before expulsion, especially if there may be the appearance of unjustified discrimination.

#### ***Sexual Exploitation --***

Sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a Minister engaged in the work of the church takes advantage of the vulnerability of a participant by causing or allowing the participant to engage in sexual behavior with the Minister.

#### ***Sexual Harassment --***

Repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person’s sexuality or sexual orientation with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or circumstance of instruction, employment, or participation in any church activity;
- Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making personnel or church-related decisions affecting an individual; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s performance or participation in church activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or church environment.

Prohibited sexual harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones, particularly:

- Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, or invitations including through use of social media through e-mail, texting, Tweeting or Facebook comments;
- Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits or sexual orientation, sexual propositions;
- Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another’s body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; and
- Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another’s body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines.

Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome and using sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another. It is not permissible to suggest, threaten, or imply that failure to accept a request for a date or sexual intimacy will affect a person’s job prospects, church leadership, or comfortable participation in the life of the

church. For example, it is forbidden either to imply or actually withhold support for an appointment, promotion, or change of assignment, to suggest that a poor performance report will be given because a person has declined a personal proposition; or to hint that benefits, such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendations or reclassifications, will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

***Suspected Abuse --***

Actual abuse consists of physical, sexual or mental abuse inflicted by a person responsible for a child's health, welfare or care, who may be a parent, guardian or other person having access to a child. Abuse may include neglect of a person's health as a result of failure to properly feed, clothe or attend to apparent illness or mental well-being. As a caregiver in ministry, one need not directly witness, nor is one likely to directly witness actual abuse. It is sufficient to suspect abuse based upon observations of general health, physical condition, patterns of irregular behavior and environmental factors. Examples of observations might include: bruising on multiple occasions, weight loss, chronic physical illness, and anti-social or excessively withdrawn behavior. Environmental factors may include highly contentious divorce and custody battles, or parental drug use. One must use judgment in assessing multiple factors which lead to suspicion of abuse.

While "suspected abuse" is defined here for the benefit of "mandatory reporters", the definition, for the purpose of this policy, includes "suspected abuse" of a "vulnerable adult".

***Vulnerable Adult --***

Any adult person who by reason of profound physical disability or dependence, developmental disability, mental illness, relative social power or cultural circumstances may be susceptible to physical abuse, sexual exploitation, financial exploitation or manipulation as a consequence of being unable to physically resist, or render judgments regarding physical, mental, financial or environmental well-being. Such persons may be unable to act independently and may, to their detriment, manifest high levels of trust or fear of persons of perceived power or authority.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **APPENDIX B – Applications & Forms**

1. Employee Application and Disclosure Form
2. Non-Employee Minister to the Congregation Application and Disclosure Form
3. Professional Reference Interview Form
4. Personal Reference Interview Form
5. Field Trip Preparation Checklist
6. Volunteer Driver Qualification Form & Agreement for Use of Personally Owned Vehicles



**Vashon Presbyterian Church  
Employee Application and Disclosure Form**

**APPLICANT**

NAME:

LAST

FIRST

M.

ADDRESS:

STREET

CITY

STATE ZIP CODE

DAYTIME PHONE

EVENING PHONE

EMAIL

**WORK HISTORY (Past four years):**

EMPLOYER:

ADDRESS:

FROM/TO (MM/YY / MM/YY):

CONTACT (NAME, TITLE, PHONE #):

EMPLOYER:

ADDRESS:

FROM/TO (MM/YY / MM/YY):

CONTACT (NAME, TITLE, PHONE #):

EMPLOYER:

ADDRESS:

FROM/TO (MM/YY / MM/YY):

CONTACT (NAME, TITLE, PHONE #):

(Attach additional page(s) as necessary.)

**EDUCATION:**

SCHOOL:

FROM/TO (MM/YY / MM/YY):

HIGHEST LEVEL ACHIEVED

SCHOOL:

FROM/TO (MM/YY / MM/YY):

HIGHEST LEVEL ACHIEVED

(Attach additional page(s) as necessary.)

**RESIDENCY (PAST 10 YEARS)**

STREET ADDRESS

CITY/COUNTY/STATE

FROM/TO (MM/YY / MM/YY):

STREET ADDRESS

CITY/COUNTY/STATE

FROM/TO (MM/YY / MM/YY):

STREET ADDRESS

CITY/COUNTY/STATE

FROM/TO (MM/YY / MM/YY):

STREET ADDRESS

CITY/COUNTY/STATE

FROM/TO (MM/YY / MM/YY):

(Attach additional page(s) as necessary.)

**Personal and Professional References, at least one of each: *One reference must be related to you and the other references must not be related to you.*** (Attach additional page(s) as necessary.)

**NAME (1)**

---

RELATIONSHIP

---

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE ZIP CODE

---

TELEPHONE

EMAIL

---

**NAME (2)**

---

RELATIONSHIP

---

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE ZIP CODE

---

TELEPHONE

EMAIL

---

**NAME (3)**

---

RELATIONSHIP

---

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE ZIP CODE

---

TELEPHONE

EMAIL

---

I have been a member of this church since

---

I have been a friend of this church since

---

**APPLICANT:**

---

**I have never been convicted of, nor pled guilty or no contest to a crime.** (*Exclude convictions that have been sealed, expunged or legally eradicated, misdemeanor convictions for which probation was completed and the case was dismissed, or offenses about which inquiry is not permissible in this state*)

True       Not true

*If not true, please briefly describe the nature of the crime(s), the date and place of conviction and the legal disposition of the case. The church will not deny a position to any applicant solely because the person has been convicted of a crime. The church, however, may consider the nature, date and circumstances of the offense, as well as whether the offense is relevant to the duties of the position applied for.*

**No civil lawsuit alleging actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct has ever resulted in a judgment being entered against me, been settled out of court, or been dismissed because the statute of limitations has expired.**

True       Not True

*If not true, give a short explanation of the lawsuit. (Please indicate the date, nature, and place of the incident leading to the lawsuit; where the lawsuit was filed; and the precise disposition of the lawsuit.)*

**I have never terminated my employment, professional credentials, or service in a volunteer position or had my employment, professional credentials, or authorization to hold a volunteer position terminated for reasons relating to allegations of actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct.**

True       Not True

*If not true, give a short explanation. (Please indicate the date of termination; name, address, and telephone number of employer or volunteer supervisor; and nature of the incident(s) leading to your termination.)*

**Do you have a valid drivers' license?**

Yes       No

**With respect to my driving record, I have not had my license suspended or revoked within the last five years due to reckless driving or driving while intoxicated and/or under the influence of a controlled substance.**

True       Not True

**Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the responsibilities of the position for which you are applying?**

Yes       No

*If yes, please provide a brief explanation.*

The covenants between persons seeking employment in the church and the church require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the church. To that end, I attest that the information set forth in this application is true and complete. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of consideration for or termination of the position I am seeking to fill. I acknowledge that it is my duty in a timely fashion to amend the responses and information I have provided if I come to know that the response or information was incorrect when given or, though accurate when given, the response or information is no longer accurate.

Beginning such relationships with an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for a continuing and healthy covenant between employees and the church they seek to serve. To that end, I authorize VPC and/or its agents to make inquiries regarding my character and qualifications, including all statements I have set forth above. I also authorize all entities, persons, former employers, supervisors, courts, law enforcement, and other public agencies to respond to inquiries concerning me, to supply verification of the statements I have made, and to comment on and state opinions regarding my background, character, and qualifications. To encourage such persons and entities to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses, comments, and statements.

VPC's employee recruitment process involves the sharing of information regarding applicants with those persons in a position to recruit, secure, and supervise both the position I am seeking to fill and program I am seeking to participate in. To that end, I authorize VPC and its agents to circulate, distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application to such persons for these purposes. I understand that VPC will share with me information it has gathered about me if I request it to do so.

If I am offered and accept employment with VPC, I agree to comply with its published policies and rules, including those related to harassment of employees, reporting known or suspected child neglect or abuse and similar requirements. If requested to do so, I will cooperate with any church investigation of a possible violation of church policies and rules by providing complete and truthful information in an oral and/or written statement.

I acknowledge my receipt and understanding of the VPC **SafeConduct™** Policy and Procedures.

---

PRINT NAME & SIGN

DATE

---

PRINT NAME & SIGNATURE PARENT OR GUARDIAN FOR APPLICANTS UNDER 18

DATE

**NOTES:** (Not True and No answers above.)

**Background Investigation Results**

EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER APPLICANT: \_\_\_\_\_

Personal interview conducted by \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

Reference inquiries completed by \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

A criminal background check was conducted on the candidate using the following sources:

- National multi-state criminal records search
- National sex offender registry search
- Social security number trace and alias search
- County criminal records search for every county where the applicant has lived or worked over the past (xx) years:
- Motor Vehicle Record
  
- Other (Identify)

The (Employment Committee) has reviewed the investigation with the following result:

- We have reviewed the criminal history of Applicant and determined, based on the information we had available at this time, the applicant would be acceptable for the position.”

OR

- We have reviewed the criminal history of Applicant and determined, based on the information we had available at this time, the applicant is not acceptable for the position.”

This clearance shall remain as a permanent record in the employment file.

MEMBER \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

MEMBER \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

MEMBER \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

**Non-Employee Minister to the Congregation Application and Disclosure Form**

NAME:

LAST

FIRST

MIDDLE

ADDRESS:

STREET

CITY

STATE ZIP CODE

DAYTIME PHONE

EVENING PHONE

EMAIL

**Three Personal References: *One reference must be related to you and the other references must not be related to you.*** (Attach additional page(s) as necessary.)

**NAME (1)**

RELATIONSHIP

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE ZIP CODE

TELEPHONE

EMAIL

**NAME (2)**

RELATIONSHIP

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE ZIP CODE

TELEPHONE

EMAIL

**NAME (3)**

RELATIONSHIP

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE ZIP CODE

TELEPHONE

EMAIL

I have been a member of this church since \_\_\_\_\_

---

I have been a friend of this church since \_\_\_\_\_

**APPLICANT:**

---

**I have never been convicted of, nor pled guilty or no contest to, a crime.** *(Exclude convictions that have been sealed, expunged or legally eradicated, misdemeanor convictions for which probation was completed and the case was dismissed, or offenses about which inquiry is not permissible in this state)*

True       Not true

*If not true, please briefly describe the nature of the crime(s), the date and place of conviction and the legal disposition of the case. The church will not deny a position to any applicant solely because the person has been convicted of a crime. The church, however, may consider the nature, date and circumstances of the offense, as well as whether the offense is relevant to the duties of the position applied for.*

**No civil lawsuit alleging actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct has ever resulted in a judgment being entered against me, been settled out of court, or been dismissed because the statute of limitations has expired.**

True       Not True

*If not true, give a short explanation of the lawsuit. (Please indicate the date, nature, and place of the incident leading to the lawsuit; where the lawsuit was filed; and the precise disposition of the lawsuit.)*

**I have never terminated my employment, professional credentials, or service in a volunteer position or had my employment, professional credentials, or authorization to hold a volunteer position terminated for reasons relating to allegations of actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct.**

True       Not True

*If not true, give a short explanation. (Please indicate the date of termination; name, address, and telephone number of employer or volunteer supervisor; and nature of the incident(s) leading to your termination.)*

**Do you have a valid drivers' license?**

Yes       No

**With respect to my driving record, I have not had my license suspended or revoked within the last five years due to reckless driving or driving while intoxicated and/or under the influence of a controlled substance.**

True       Not True

**Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the responsibilities of the position for which you are applying?**

Yes       No

*If yes, provide a brief explanation.*



**APPLICANT:**

---

The covenants between persons seeking authorized volunteer positions in the church require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the church. To that end, I attest that the information set forth in this application is true and complete. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of consideration for, or termination of, the position I am seeking to fill. I acknowledge that it is my duty in a timely fashion to amend the responses and information I have provided if I come to know that the response or information was incorrect when given or, though accurate when given, the response or information is no longer accurate.

Beginning such relationships with an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for a continuing and healthy covenant between volunteers and the church they seek to serve. To that end, I authorize VPC and/or its agents to make inquiries regarding my character and qualifications, including all statements I have set forth above. I also authorize all entities, persons, former employers, supervisors, courts, law enforcement, and other public agencies to respond to inquiries concerning me, to supply verification of the statements I have made, and to comment on and state opinions regarding my background, character, and qualifications. To encourage such persons and entities to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses, comments, and statements.

VPC authorized volunteer recruitment process involves the sharing of information regarding applicants with those persons in a position to recruit, secure, and supervise both the position I am seeking to fill and program I am seeking to participate in. To that end, I authorize (name of Local Church) and its agents to circulate, distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application to such persons for these purposes. I understand that (name of Local Church) will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so.

If I am offered and accept employment or volunteer service with the church, I agree to comply with its published policies and rules, including those related to harassment of employees, reporting known or suspected child neglect or abuse and similar requirements. If requested to do so, I will cooperate with any church investigation of a possible violation of church policies and rules by providing complete and truthful information in an oral and/or written statement.

I acknowledge my receipt and understanding of the (name of Local Church) Safe Church Policy.

---

PRINT NAME & SIGN \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

---

PRINT NAME & SIGNATURE PARENT OR GUARDIAN FOR APPLICANTS UNDER 18 \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTES: (Not True and No answers above) Background Investigation Results**

**EMPLOYEE/VOLUNTEER APPLICANT:**

---

Personal interview conducted by \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

Reference inquiries completed by \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

A criminal background check was conducted on the candidate using the following sources:

- National multi-state criminal records search
- National sex offender registry search
- Social security number trace and alias search
- County criminal records search for every county where the applicant has lived or worked over the past (xx) years:
- Motor Vehicle Record
  
- Other (Identify)

The (**Employment Committee**) has reviewed the investigation with the following result:

- We have reviewed the criminal history of Applicant and determined, based on the information we had available at this time, the applicant would be **acceptable** for the position.”

**OR**

- We have reviewed the criminal history of Applicant and determined, based on the information we had available at this time, the applicant is **not acceptable** for the position.”

This clearance shall remain as a permanent record in the employment file.

MEMBER \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

MEMBER \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

MEMBER \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

**Vashon Presbyterian Church**  
**Professional Reference Interview Form**

Employee/Volunteer Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Reference: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ with VPC. (Applicant) \_\_\_\_\_ has applied for a position/seeking to volunteer with us and said you might be able to tell us about his/her previous work with youth, children or vulnerable adults. Is this a good time for you to talk with me?

I would like to start by letting you know that the applicant has applied for a position working with children, so it is extremely important for us to make sure that every applicant is suitable for this type of position. I appreciate your help with this.

How long have you known the applicant? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you know the applicant? \_\_\_\_\_

How would you rate the applicant's ability to learn new information and skills?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

Can you give me an example of when the applicant was able to learn something new and use it in his/her work?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

We are looking for someone who will adhere to the standard policies of our organization. How would you rate the applicant's ability to follow policies and procedures?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

How would you rate the applicant's ability to work with and relate to other adults?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

Have you observed the applicant working with children? \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

If yes, how would you rate the applicant's ability to relate to children?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

Can you give me an example of how the applicant relates to children?

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---

In what types of situations have you observed the applicant working well with children (enjoying the work, being effective)?

---

---

In what types of situations have you observed the applicant not working well with children (becoming frustrated, angry, resentful or non-productive)?

---

How would you rate the applicant's ability to use good judgment in normal conditions?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

How would you rate the applicant's ability to maintain appropriate boundaries with children?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

How would you rate the applicant's ability to use good judgment in stressful conditions?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

Can you give me an example of when the applicant used good judgment?

---

Are you aware of any reason why we should not allow the applicant to work with the children we serve?

---

---

Do you have any additional comments or questions?

---

Signature of Screening Manager

---

Date

**Vashon Presbyterian Church  
Personal Reference Interview Form**

Employee/Volunteer Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Reference: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ with VPC. (Applicant) has applied for a position with us and said you would be a good person for us to talk with about him/her. Do you have a few minutes to talk with me now? I would like to start by letting you know that (Applicant) has applied for a position working with children, so it is extremely important for us to determine that every applicant is suitable for this type of position. I appreciate your help with this.

How long have you known the applicant? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your relationship to the applicant? \_\_\_\_\_

How would you rate the applicant's ability to work with and relate to children?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

Can you give me an example of how the applicant relates to children?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

We are looking for someone who can stay calm and control frustration even under very frustrating conditions with children. How would you rate the applicant's ability to be patient and stay calm?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

Can you give me an example of how the applicant relates to children?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever known the applicant to use harsh or abusive discipline with a child?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Would you be comfortable placing one of your own loved ones in the care of the applicant?  
Why or why not?

---

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What are the applicant's hobbies and recreational activities?

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---

How would you rate the applicant's ability to relate to adults?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

Can you give me an example of how the applicant relates to adults?

---

---

We need a person who can be supportive and understanding of a child's needs. How would you rate the applicant's ability to be genuinely supportive and understanding to a person in need?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

Think of a time when the applicant was able to show genuine concern for another person who needed comfort. Tell me about that time.

---

---

How would you rate the applicant's ability to maintain appropriate boundaries with children?

\_\_\_\_ Above satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Satisfactory \_\_\_\_ Below satisfactory

Do you have any additional comments or questions?

---

Signature of Screening Manager

\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Vashon Presbyterian Church  
Field Trip Preparation Checklist**

1. Specific location of the off-site activity. (Example: The Children's Museum)

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2. Name of the primary contact at the off-site location (Example: Mary Smith, Director of Group Sales at the Children's Museum)

---

3. Address and telephone number for the location.

---

4. Parent permission sheet attached to this document for review.

---

5. Name and cell phone number of the supervisor for the off-site activity.

---

6. The employee to child ratio for the trip and names of all who will be attending.

---

7. Required attire for employee and child during the off-site activity.

---

8. Amount of time required for the off-site activity.

---

9. Estimated departure time and estimated return time.

---

10. Method of transportation.

---

11. Completed seating chart attached.

---

12. Overall supervision guidelines for location (employees will be assigned groups of children to monitor throughout the trip, employees will monitor children in "zones," etc.).

---

13. Location of restrooms/locker rooms at off-site location.

---

14. Cost of the activity.

---

**Last Minute Checklist:**

- 1. All permission sheets returned and compiled for the off-site activity (children cannot participate without a permission slip). Employees must take permission slips to the off-site activity to ensure correct parent contact information.**
- 2. Roll sheets printed and distributed to all employees for all children attending the off-site activity.**
- 3. All required employees present.**
- 4. All employees and children are in approved attire.**



**Vashon Presbyterian Church  
VOLUNTEER DRIVER  
Qualification Form & Agreement for Use of Personally Owned Vehicles**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Years of driving experience \_\_\_\_\_

Driver license No. & State\*: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date : \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance Carrier \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration date: \_\_\_\_\_

Liability Policy Limit -- Bodily Injury \_\_\_\_\_ Property Damage \_\_\_\_\_

1. Are all licensed vehicles you own covered by insurance as required by law? Yes, No

2. Have you ever been denied a driver's license or had one suspended or revoked? Yes, No

3. Have you had any moving traffic violations or accidents in the past three years? Yes, No

**If the answer to questions 2 or 3 is YES, explain. Give dates and details of violations and accidents on the back of this form.**

**I AGREE to the following as a condition of being permitted to act as a Volunteer Driver:**

1. The vehicle owner's insurance is the primary liability insurance coverage in the event of an accident.
2. The owner of the vehicle which I am driving is responsible for keeping the vehicle in safe working order.
3. The owner of the vehicle is responsible for all damage to the owned vehicle however caused.
4. The owner of the vehicle shall maintain liability insurance in the amount of at least
  - Bodily Injury -- \$50,000 per person and \$100,000 per accident or \$200,000 combined single limit; and
  - Property Damage -- \$25,000 per accident
5. The church's insurance shall apply in excess of the vehicle owner's liability insurance limits in the event the primary limits are exhausted, and only to the extent the church is legally obligated to pay damages.
6. **I will not receive or initiate phone calls while operating a vehicle for church activities, to include receiving or initiating text messages.**
7. I will indemnify and hold the church harmless from liabilities and damage resulting from my operation of a motor vehicle not owned by the church. The church will indemnify and hold harmless the volunteer driver for liabilities and damages resulting from acts or negligence of the church.

**I hereby AFFIRM that the information I have given is stated truthfully and that I shall abide by the terms of the church's Vehicle Use Policy.**

**Attach a copy of Driver's License and current Insurance ID Card**

Driver Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPROVED:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Expiration:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Vashon Presbyterian Church</b> <b>Suggested Interview and Reference Check Questions</b>
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The following questions may be used in a written application or personal interview. A single answer should not determine whether an applicant is selected or rejected. Along with other forms of information, answers to these questions can help you build a more complete picture of an applicant.

- What type of supervisory situation do you prefer?

If applicants are very independent, they may not fit in an organization whose policies and procedures require close supervision.

- What age/sex of youth do you want to work with? How would you feel about working with a different age/sex?

If an applicant seems fixated on one age/sex, be wary. However, it may be that the applicant has experience or is gifted with working with certain age groups. Asking follow-up questions about why an applicant has a strong preference can help you determine if there is cause for concern.

- Is there anyone who might suggest that you should not work with youth? Why or why not?

- Why do you want the job?

- What would you do if/when \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer to describe a hypothetical situation; set up scenarios that involve potential concerns, boundary issues, or youth protection policies and interactions to gauge the applicant's response. Be concerned if applicants disregard the organization's policies and procedures or handle a situation poorly.

- What makes you a good candidate for working with youth?

- What would your friends or colleagues say about how you interact with youth?

- What other hobbies or activities do you enjoy?

Determine if applicant has mature, adult relationships—not just relationships with youth

## APPENDIX C - Limited Access Agreement for Cases of Convicted Sex Offenders

### This Limited Access Agreement is executed between:

**Vashon Presbyterian Church (VPC)**, referred to below as “we”, “the congregation” and “clergy”;

And

**(Petitioner Name)**, referred to below as “you” and “your”

VPC, is an “open and affirming congregation” and as such affirms the dignity and worth of all persons as expressed in our Welcome Statement. We are committed to being a religious community open to those who are in need of worshiping with us, especially in times of distress and serious personal troubles. However, based on your background, we have concerns about your contact with children and youth in our congregation. The following guidelines are designed to reduce the risk to both you and them of an incident or accusation. We welcome you to our congregation and our membership but your participation will be limited to ensure the safety of our children and youth and to assure that you will not be subject to future accusations.

Within these guidelines, the congregation welcomes your participation in worship services, coffee hour, meetings, adult education, and all adult social events. Do not enter the classroom wing or the lower level of the church building. You are to avoid all contact with children and youth on church property or congregation-sponsored events. This includes the following:

- Do not talk with children.
- Do not volunteer or agree to lead, chaperone or participate in events for children and youth including such things as religious education classes, stories or talks for worship, youth group events, activities during intergenerational events, driving or otherwise transporting children and/or youth.
- You will remain in the presence of a Parish Associate who knows your situation at all times. You must meet that person before coming onto church property (or before arriving at any church-sponsored event), remain with him at all times, and depart with him.
- If a child or youth in the congregation approaches you, either at church or in a community place, politely and immediately excuse yourself from the situation.
- Avoid being in the church or any church-owned building or church-rented space at any time without a Parish Associate present with you at all times.
- Do not ask for, seek access to, nor remove from the church any materials, files, directories, etc. listing members and friends of the church.
- We ask that you limit your time in coffee hour to about ten minutes.

As a part of this agreement it is understood that you will have three (3) members of this congregation, approved by the clergy, who know thoroughly your history and are willing to serve as your Parish Associates. You will be welcome on church property and at church-sponsored events but must be accompanied at all times by one of the Parish Associates named below:

(Named Parish Associate 1)

(Named Parish Associate 2)

(Named Parish Associate 3)

To engage your integration into the congregation and to assist you in maximizing your experience with the church it is agreed that you will meet on a bi-monthly basis with the Parish Associates and a member of the clergy together or separately to discuss matters of mutual interest and concern. These meetings will also serve as an ongoing review of the implementation of this agreement.

Implementation of this agreement is based upon a review by the clergy of the most current supporting documents as follows:

- A statement from the court as to the nature of the conviction.
- A risk assessment from a qualified therapist.
- A report from a certified treatment provider indicating that you are not at too high a risk for recidivism.

Any change in the above must be reported immediately to a member of the clergy.

**REASONS FOR EXCLUDING A PERSON FROM ALL CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:**

- Refusal to allow the clergy to contact the treatment provider and parole officer.  
Refusal to go for a risk assessment with a qualified therapist.
- Report by a treatment provider that the individual is at too high a risk for recidivism.  
Refusal to sign a Limited Access Agreement.
- Refusal to comply with the requirements of the Limited Access Agreement.

This agreement will remain in effect until/unless:

- You fail to honor the terms of the agreement, thus nullifying it.
- It is superseded by any policies and procedures put in place by the church's **SafeConduct™** Committee. The **SafeConduct™** Committee in consultation with the clergy is the body responsible for providing you with guidelines, support and counsel for your participation in the life of the congregation.
- You, the clergy, and the **SafeConduct™** **SafeConduct™** Committee mutually agree to change the terms of this agreement.

**ATTEST:** I have reviewed the terms of the above limited access agreement and agree to abide by its provisions. Failure to honor its terms will result in my being denied access to church property and all church events.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Petitioner Name

---

Address

**WITNESS FOR THE CHURCH:**

---

Signature

---

Date

---

Name

---

Church Official Title

**YOUR CHURCH**  
(Address)

**Vashon Presbyterian Church**  
**APPENDIX D – Leadership & Reporting Roster**

The persons listed below are considered “primary contacts” for reporting for their respective Ministry or program. Each is also a “mandatory reporter” in the State of Washington for the purpose of reporting “suspected child abuse” to law enforcement or child welfare authorities.

Any employee, volunteer, Minister or member of the congregation of VPC may report policy or procedure violations or circumstances of “suspected child abuse” to any of the persons listed below, but preferably to the person in whose ministry or program the incident has occurred.

<b>Position</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Telephone</b>	<b>e-Mail address</b>
Pastor	Dan Houston		
Personnel Committee Chair	Larry Commeree	206 567 5707	Islandtime206@gmail.com
Journey Mission Team Leader	Michelle Houston		
Ombudsman	TBD		
Media Spokesperson	TBD		
<b>Law Enforcement Agency</b>	King County Sheriff	911 emergency 800 344 4080	na
<b>State of Washington</b>	Child Protective Service	800 609 8764 8am-4pm 800 562 5624 after hrs	na

Prior to making an anonymous report, a person reporting must take into account how technology may reveal their identification (caller i.d., e-mail address, etc.). Nevertheless, the Ombudsman will take care not to further compromise confidentiality.

**Vashon Presbyterian Church**  
**APPENDIX E – Code of Conduct**

This **Code of Conduct** defines individual responsibilities as Ministers, leaders, employees or volunteers to meet the expectations of VPC with respect to behavior or conduct in the service of the ministries of the church, especially those which serve children and “vulnerable adults”.

**General Requirements --**

Each person subject to this **Code** shall

1. Act as a team member in fulfilling ministry objectives
2. Treat children and “vulnerable adults” (clients) with respect, and fairly without regard to race, age, gender, sexual orientation or religion
3. Practice those behaviors we regard as necessary and positive as well as to refrain from those behaviors which have been defined as prohibited.

**General Prohibitions --**

The following behaviors are prohibited at all times:

1. Display affection toward a child/client in privacy.
2. Use profanity or tell off-color jokes.
3. Discuss their sexual encounters with or around children or in any way involve children in their personal problems or issues.
4. Date or become romantically involved with children.
5. Use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of children.
6. Possess sexually oriented materials, including printed or online pornography, on Church property.
7. Have secrets with clients
8. Stare at or comment on children’s bodies.
9. Engage in inappropriate or unapproved electronic communication with children.
10. Work one-on-one with children in a private setting.
11. Abuse clients in anyway including (but not limited to) the following:
  - Physical abuse: hit, spank, shake, slap, unnecessarily restrain
  - Verbal abuse: degrade, threaten, curse
  - Sexual abuse: inappropriately touch, expose oneself, or engage in sexually oriented conversations
  - Mental abuse: shame, humiliate, act cruelly
  - Neglect: withhold food, water, shelter
  - Permit children to engage in the following: Hazing, bullying, derogatory name-calling, games of Truth or Dare, ridicule or humiliation or sexual activity
12. Manipulate or exploit a “vulnerable adult” in any way.

**Reporting Obligations --**

Each Minister or statutory “mandatory reporter” shall report:

1. Concerns or complaints about other employees and volunteers, other adults, or children to a supervisor. (Appendix D – Leadership & Reporting Roster)
2. Allegations or incidents of “suspected abuse” to the designated law enforcement or child welfare authority. (Appendix D – Leadership & Reporting Roster)

**Specific Interaction Standards –**

Each Minister, employee or volunteer worker of VPC shall conduct him/herself in a manner that fosters understanding of **SafeConduct™** in the context of serving children and “vulnerable adults”. The standards articulated below serve two purposes:

- To protect children and “vulnerable adults” from abuse or grooming for abuse elsewhere; and
- To protect/prevent church staff from engaging in patterns of behavior that may be construed as abusive or predatory. While a single infraction of guidelines may not constitute abuse, a pattern of repeated violations will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from ministry.

1. **Approval and Affection** – In providing approval or affection, the following guidelines apply:

<b><i>Appropriate Physical Interactions</i></b>	<b><i>Inappropriate Physical Interactions</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Side hugs</li> <li>• Shoulder-to-shoulder or “temple” hugs</li> <li>• Pats on the shoulder or back</li> <li>• Handshakes</li> <li>• High-fives and hand slapping</li> <li>• Verbal praise</li> <li>• Pats on the head when culturally appropriate</li> <li>• Touching hands, shoulders, and arms</li> <li>• Arms around shoulders</li> <li>• Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations)</li> </ul> <p>These may be inappropriate if unwanted by the child or the employee or volunteer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full-frontal hugs</li> <li>• Kisses</li> <li>• Showing affection in isolated area</li> <li>• Lap sitting</li> <li>• Wrestling</li> <li>• Piggyback rides</li> <li>• Tickling</li> <li>• Allowing a child to cling to an employee’s or volunteer’s leg</li> <li>• Any type of massage given by or to a child</li> <li>• Any form of affection that is unwanted by the child or the employee or volunteer</li> <li>• Compliments relating to physique or body development</li> <li>• Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas</li> </ul>

2. **Verbal Interactions** – The manner of speaking with children establishes respect. The following guidelines apply:

<b><i>Appropriate Verbal Interactions</i></b>	<b><i>Inappropriate Verbal Interactions</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive reinforcement</li> <li>• Appropriate jokes</li> <li>• Encouragement</li> <li>• Praise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name-calling</li> <li>• Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving children in the personal problems or issues of employees and volunteers</li> <li>• Secrets</li> <li>• Cursing</li> <li>• Off-color or sexual jokes</li> <li>• Shaming</li> <li>• Belittling</li> <li>• Derogatory remarks</li> <li>• Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate children</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Derogatory remarks about the child or his/her family</li> </ul>
--	--

**3. Out-of-Program (Off-Site) Contact –**

VPC strongly recommends that Ministers, employees or volunteers do not have outside contact with children from church programs. However, if off-site contacts are unavoidable, the following forms of outside contact are appropriate and inappropriate:

<b><i>Appropriate Outside Contact</i></b>	<b><i>Inappropriate Outside Contact</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking groups of children on an outing</li> <li>• Attending sporting activities with groups of children</li> <li>• Attending functions at a child’s home, with parents present</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking one child on an outing without the parents’ written permission</li> <li>• Visiting one child in the child’s home, without a parent present</li> <li>• Entertaining one child in the home of a church employee or volunteer</li> <li>• A lone child spending the night with a church employee or volunteer</li> </ul>

In addition, when outside contact is unavoidable, the following steps are to be taken:

A Mission Team Leader shall identify for employee and volunteers what types of outside contact are appropriate and inappropriate (above)

A Mission Team Leader shall assure that the employee or volunteer has the parents’ permission to engage in outside contact with the child. When time permits, parents shall execute a permission form with a waiver of liability (if permitted by state law).

**4. One-on-One Interactions –**

Because most abuse occurs when an adult is alone with a child, private one-on-one meetings with a child are prohibited unless approved in advance by the appropriate Mission Team Leader or Personnel Committee Chair. When so permitted, the following guidelines shall apply:

<b><i>One-on-One Interaction Guidelines</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When meeting one-on-one with a child, always do so in a public place in full view of others.</li> <li>• Avoid physical affection that can be misinterpreted. Limit affection to pats on the shoulder, high fives, and handshakes.</li> <li>• If meeting in a room or office, leave the door open or move to an area that can be easily observed by others passing by.</li> <li>• Inform other employees and volunteers that you are alone with a child and ask them to randomly drop in. (Ask to be supervised.)</li> <li>• Document and immediately report any unusual incidents, including disclosures of abuse or maltreatment, behavior problems and how they were handled, injuries, or any interactions that might be misinterpreted.</li> </ul>

To the extent any of these guidelines may appear to be in conflict, the spirit of them is that one shall seek to be under the supervision of others while meeting privately with a child.

## **5. Social Media – Electronic Communications –**

**General Social Media Policy** -- No Minister, employee, volunteer or member of VPC shall create or use a media site (web, Facebook, YouTube, or similar) in the name of or purporting to represent the church without the explicit written permission of the Session. When clergy or staff, acting in their capacity as a representative of the church, lead or coordinate a group activity using social media, each may use only official church sites/channels when they have been made available by the church. These may include web pages, Facebook, e-mail and similar means.

### **Social Media Communications –**

In order to extend the life of the congregation, enhance communication and develop participation of young people in the life of the church and its ministry, VPC will authorize certain Ministers to manage the church's official website and the organization's social media page. Use by Ministers of private pages and private profiles are prohibited.

Ministers who shall create public pages on behalf of church programs are responsible to monitor communications and to assure that employees and volunteers do not have private (and possibly inappropriate) conversations with children.

Ministers having social media privileges on behalf of the church, shall treat unsolicited communication or "friending" from children under age 14 as an unauthorized text message. No reply may be given except to indicate by a posting that accepting a "friend" invitation by under-age children is a violation of the **Code of Conduct**.

If a child reveals abuse or inappropriate interactions with an adult, the Minister must report this

When using social media to communicate with children, the authorized Minister shall inform parents/guardians of each child that the latter is communicating with the Minister via social media, providing the parent/guardian the opportunity to disapprove or to participate in a Group.

### **Social Networking Code of Conduct –**

Each Minister who leads using the resources of social media shall apply this Social Networking Code of Conduct:

- Prohibit comments that are, or could be construed by any observer, to be harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.
- Prohibit sexually oriented conversations or discussions about sexual activities.
- Prohibit private messages between employees and volunteers and children.
- Prohibit posting inappropriate pictures (for example, sexually suggestive, exploitive or voyeuristic) or inappropriate comments on pictures.
- Provide children and their parents with this Social Networking Code of Conduct.
- Encourage parents to play a role in monitoring their children's interactions with employees and volunteers.
- Continuously remind children how to interact appropriately through social networking sites.
- Deny participation by individuals who repeatedly violate the **Code of Conduct**.

At the institution of the use of social media, the authorized Minister shall present this Social Networking Code of Conduct to children (or other client group) and parents/guardians.

\*\*\*\*\*

If offered a position as Minister, employee or volunteer, I affirm that application disclosures are complete and truthful. I agree to comply with the policies and rules contained in this **SafeConduct™** policy, to include training, monitoring, reporting and ministry administrative procedures. I agree to meet standards for one-on-one relationships with children/clients as defined above. If requested to do so, I will cooperate with any investigation of a possible violation of church policies and rules by providing complete and truthful information in an oral and/or written statements.

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Signature

---

Date

---

Name

**Vashon Presbyterian Church**  
**APPENDIX F – Ministry Standards**

These ministry standards are intended to provide a safe environment for children and “vulnerable adults” in a variety of circumstances. From time to time it may not be possible to fulfill the standard to the letter. Permission is granted to Ministers in leadership to waive a standard with justification. If it is found that consistent fulfillment of a standard is not practicable, the matter shall be elevated to the Personnel Committee for resolution or amendment of these standards.

**- Minister:Child Ratios –**

For all activities of VPC Ministries involving children or vulnerable adults, a minimum of two Ministers must be present. For large groups, additional Ministers will be required to conform with the State of Washington’s legislated adult:child ratios:

<b>Age group of children</b>	<b>ratio</b>
Infants	1:4
Toddlers	1:7
Pre-schoolers	1:10
School aged	1:15

(e.g., a group of 20-30 preschoolers require three Ministers.)

Qualified youth Ministers at least 14 years of age may be included in the Minister total. In all cases, Ministers under the age of 21 shall be:

- under the direct supervision of a Minister at least 21 years of age;
- at least three years older than the oldest child in the group being supervised.

**Bathrooms, Locker Room and Out-of-the-Way Locations –**

The following practices shall apply to supervision of bathrooms and changing areas:

1. Minimize presence of diverse child age groups at the same time.
2. No employee/volunteer shall enter with a single unrelated child unless the entry door is ajar (propped open) in a way that (s)he can be observed by others.
3. Children shall not enter alone in pairs.
4. Children shall not enter unsupervised.
5. Require children to ask permission before using bathrooms.

Employees and volunteers in leadership are to frequently and randomly check bathrooms to assure their security.

The following areas are to be locked at all times: *(Your rules)*

The following areas are to be off-limits: *(Your rules)* Typically a place where a predator and child might find unsupervised privacy, such as an unsupervised floor, basement, balcony , or adjacent building.)

**Transition and “Free” Time --**

Especially during day long, off-site or overnight activities, children will periodically not be engaged in a supervised activity. Supervision shall be maintained during transition times through the use of chaperones, hall monitors and escorts to minimize the opportunity for security breach or child-on-child incidents.

(Leadership titles) shall assess at what times and places additional duties are to be assigned to employees and volunteers to assure supervision of transition and free time.

### **Transportation of Children –**

Transportation of children, whether on buses, motor coaches or private passenger vehicles, is a serious responsibility. Especially when utilizing church owned vehicles or private vehicles of employees and volunteers, utmost care shall be taken in view of the risks associated with managing transportation.

The following standards shall apply:

1. No Minister shall transport a single child that is not his/her own, except as may be required in an emergency with the approval of a supervisor. Communications shall be established to verify the whereabouts, expected arrival and change of custody of the child.
2. Any driver operating a vehicle which holds 16 passengers or more, including the driver, shall possess a valid Commercial Driver License (CDL).
3. Any person who drives on behalf of VPC sponsored programs shall be previously qualified under our transportation and driver qualification procedure. (Appendix B – Applications & Forms)
4. Minister-child ratios shall be maintained and within the safe loading limits of the vehicles being used.
5. As practicable, mixed age groups are not to sit together.
6. Ministers are not to make unauthorized or unplanned stops.
7. On each trip, a vehicle log shall be maintained which documents the departing time, arrival time, destination, mileage, names of passengers and supervising staff and volunteers and any unusual occurrences.
8. All passengers are to be seated and to use safety belts as available.
9. Ministers are to be seated on larger vehicles in a way that permits them to supervise young passengers.
10. When passengers must disembark at a rest facility or destination, care shall be taken to obtain a headcount on arrival and departure. All passengers shall be required to complete a trip on the same vehicle to assure accountability.

### **Off-site Activities (Day Trips) --**

Off-site activities require special additional planning, taking into account the nature of the destination and exposure to the public at large. For example, attendance at a public venue, such as an amusement park, will require greater supervision than a visit to a sister church. Due to the increased risk of a child becoming lost or injured during an off-site activity, extra care shall be taken to assure adequate supervision.

The following are minimum requirements:

1. All off-site activities shall be approved in advance by (Leadership title).
2. The trip leader shall provide a plan outlining transportation and supervision for the activity.
3. Parent/guardian permission shall be obtained. Permission forms are to site the destination(s) and activities in which the child might engage (.e.g., climbing wall, horseback riding, soccer, baseball, etc.)
4. Parent/guardian providing permission shall indicate who will receive the child on return if other than the person signing the permission.
5. Adult-child ratios shall be increased by at least one person, which may include a person age 16 or older who is qualified to drive. One adult may supervise only one person under the age of 18 (employee or volunteer).
6. Each Minister shall be assigned to a specific group of children to supervise. Each Minister must then maintain a roll sheet listing all of the children in his or her group. Head counts and roll checks will be conducted routinely.
7. Standards for bathroom activities, transition time and transportation shall be maintained.
8. Parents/guardians shall be provided a means to make emergency contact with the trip leader.

### **Over-night Activities --**

Camps generally have the experience and staffing to adopt different standards than these below. The assumption for the purpose of this standard is lodging at a public hotel in an unfamiliar city.

As with off-site activities, over-night activities present an even higher level or risk to children than day trips due to isolation from parents and the 24-hour supervision that is required throughout the activity.

The following standards will apply in addition to standards for off-site activities:

9. All overnight activities, whether on the church site or not, shall have prior approval of **(Leadership title) TBD.**
10. All overnight activities include a minimum of two adult chaperones over 21 years of age.
11. All volunteers and employees under 18 years of age must be supervised at all times.
12. Parent/guardian permission shall be obtained. Permission forms are to site the destination(s) and activities in which the child might engage (.e.g., climbing wall, horseback riding, soccer, baseball, etc.)
13. The parent/guardian providing permission shall indicate who will receive the child on return if other than the person signing the permission.
14. At all times through the night a Minister must remain on duty at a location to supervise the coming and going of any child and to assure safe evacuation during an emergency and to prevent children sneaking out. (Maximum two hour watches through the night are recommended.)
15. Trip leaders or other designated adult shall conduct routine walk-throughs of high risk areas
16. For the event of a building evacuation, an outdoor rally point will be designated in advance.
17. A roster will be maintained of the room assignments for each child and adult.
18. A bed check will be conducted at a specific time known to all.
19. Adult-child ratios are to be maintained for outings away from the lodging site.

20. A daily schedule of events shall be maintained with supervisory duty assignments included.
21. Double-queen lodging is preferred at hotels, four to a room. Children in each room will be of similar age. No adult will share a bed with a child.
22. Adult rooms will be scattered among rooms occupied by children. There shall be at least one adult lodged on any floor on which children are sleeping.
23. Standards for bathroom, out-of-the-way, off limits locations and transition time shall be maintained as the site circumstances and facilities may require.

**Vashon Presbyterian Church**  
**APPENDIX G -- Registered Sex Offender Policy**

As a community of faith, serving by the example of Jesus Christ, we also seek to attend to the needs of all who seek healing, redemption and fellowship among us. We shall be prepared to accept in our midst those who have violated the most sacred mores of our society at large, in order to provide them refuge, peace, example and support in their recovery and penitence. We commit to doing so with utmost care for the welfare of our congregation, collectively and individually, and the community we serve.

We accept that there are risks to be born in our deliberate association with and ministry to sex offenders who are considered a pariah among the community-at-large as evidenced by the many constraints placed upon their interaction with the community. We agree to honor the needs of the congregation and our community to have reasonable assurance that a sex offender in our care will not have an opportunity to re-offend as a result of lapses in our management of the offender.

We shall consider limited participation or membership of a sex offender in our congregation with utmost care which shall include the following elements:

1. Document understanding of the statutory limitations applying in the State of Washington to the movement and activities of a sex offender, taking into account the programs of the church or the operations of tenants. (Examples: Sunday school, day care, pre-school, sports leagues, seasonal camps and associations which serve children and “vulnerable adults”.)
2. Consider and understand the character of the crimes which have resulted in requiring an individual to register as a sex offender, the passage of time without repeated conduct or behavior and the risk and opportunity of re-offending that is presented by the particular programs of our congregation.
3. Document understanding of limitations and prohibitions placed upon the offender by courts and probation authorities. The opinion of a mental health professional regarding the suitability of the person to participation in the life of the church shall be obtained. In all cases where probation is in force, we shall obtain the explicit approval of and conditions of participation specified by the probation officer. A recommendation by law enforcement or mental health professionals to deny participation to an offender shall be honored in all cases.
4. Understanding that, with respect to a person who is an employee, volunteer or member, who has previously been conviction for acts of sexual misconduct as defined by insurance contracts, knowledge by church leaders and managers of such prior conviction will have the effect of voiding coverage for the individual employee, volunteer or member and for the church for future acts of sexual misconduct by that person.
5. Given that criminal convictions are a matter of public record, there shall be no expectation of secrecy on the part of the offender. As a condition of participation in our faith community, the offender must agree that the leadership of the church shall make it known to the members, constituencies and customers of the church that we have accepted among us a registered sex offender. The conditions and limitations that apply to participation in the life of the church shall be known to all.
6. With the advice of legal counsel, and in all cases, the conditions of participation by a registered offender shall be defined by a “limited access agreement” (Appendix B –



Applications & Forms) executed by the offender and church. Such agreement shall be approved by probation authorities as may be necessary according to para. 3, above. The agreement shall be reviewed annually to validate on going eligibility. Violation of the agreement by the offender shall be considered as grounds for immediate cancellation of the agreement.

The following additional considerations shall apply:

**Victims in the congregation** – In such case as the victim of a RSO (registered sex offender) is a member of the congregation, employee or is a client of other services provided by the congregation, the RSO shall not be permitted to attend the church or church activities.

**Clergy-penitent privilege** – “Clergy-penitent privilege” is a “Rule of Evidence” defining or limiting information which clergy may reveal in a court of law only. “Clergy penitent privilege” does not prevent clergy from informing the congregation of matters which may be relevant to their safety; it does not require clergy to hold information in secrecy.

Ordained clergy shall assume responsibility and take extraordinary care to understand the scope and limitations of clergy-penitent privilege in the State of Washington and the parameters of confidence and privilege as defined by the Presbyterian Church (USA) . Authorized clergy shall inform the leadership of the church of the general principles of confidence and privilege under which (s)he performs his/her clerical duties.

**Escorts (Parish Associate)** – Conditions of limited access for a RSO will commonly require that the offender have an escort while on the church premises or at church events elsewhere. A person serving as an escort shall not be a spouse, partner or relative of the offender.

#### **Approval & Supervision –**

With the advice and prior approval of the Church Board, a Limited Access Agreement with a Petitioner (known RSO) may be signed only by the Senior Pastor.

The Senior Pastor, in association with other “authorized clergy” and parish associates (escorts), who shall be named in the Limited Access Agreement, shall be responsible for the general supervision of the Petitioner in all of the latter’s activity in relation to the church. Elements of supervision shall include the following:

- Knowledge of the terms of the Limited Access Agreement, including activity limitations placed upon the Petitioner.
- Knowledge of the Petitioners offense history sufficient to understand the risks of association with the church and its ministries.
- Willingness to assert activity limitations and to report any violation of restrictions placed upon the Petitioner.
- Willingness to intervene in any onset of a risky or problem behavior.
- Willingness to report all cases of non-compliance to the Senior Pastor.

The Senior Pastor shall assess, prior to selection, whether a proposed parish associate is willing to fulfill the above elements of supervision.

**Professional privacy** – Members who are employed in certain occupations may have a statutory obligation to maintain privacy around the criminal history of their clients who may also be parishioners. Such members shall decline to accept leadership roles which may put them in a position of decision-making regarding individuals who may be their professional clients.

**Juveniles** – While the criminal record of a juvenile is ordinarily concealed by the courts, the church may come to know the juvenile's history by other means. Honest disclosure by a juvenile and parents in the volunteer application and screening process may reveal that a record exists without knowing the specifics. While a limited access agreement will be required for the juvenile, as for others, every precaution will be taken to preserve the privacy and confidentiality which the law affords a juvenile.

**Vashon Presbyterian Church**  
**APPENDIX H – Other Restrictions on Building Use to Ensure**  
**Guest and Member Safety and Comfort**

To ensure that guests and members using the VPC premises enjoy a safe and comfortable environment, the following restrictions apply:

- A. Use of tobacco products or non-tobacco smoking devices is prohibited in the VPC building or within 25 feet of entrances.
- B. The following may not be brought onto the VPC premises: firearms (unless carried by law-enforcement personnel), alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia, pornography, personal knives (other than small folding pocket knives, not to be displayed), marijuana and marijuana products, and contraband.
- C. Animals. Only state-approved guide or companion animals are permitted within VPC's building or play area.