

Ministry With Minors and Vulnerable Adults Policy

At Geneva Presbyterian Church, our ministry with minors (those under the legal age of consent and responsibility, 18 years of age) and vulnerable adults serves to fulfill our baptismal vows to guide and nurture all of God's children in the love and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. In keeping with the requirements of the PCUSA Book of Order (G-3.0106), this policy is written to safeguard minors and vulnerable adults, as well as the interests and reputation of employees and volunteers who take part in the church's faith formation programming.

To be eligible to apply to do ministry with minors and vulnerable adults at Geneva Presbyterian Church, the following requirements must be met:

- An adult (age 18 or over) must be either a paid staff member, or a volunteer who has been active in the life of Geneva for at least the prior six months.
- A teen (14 – 17 years old) must have completed a babysitter certification course, unless working alongside an approved adult.

All adults, both paid staff and volunteers, working with minors and/or vulnerable adults at Geneva Presbyterian Church must complete an Application to Work in Ministry with Minors and Vulnerable Adults (MWM-1); have a background check performed through the MinistrySafe website (Level 3 or higher); and be approved for this ministry by the Session. Employees of Geneva Preschool are screened, trained, and approved for service in a separate process according to the policies and procedures of Geneva Preschool.

All youth, whether compensated or uncompensated, working with minors at Geneva Presbyterian Church must complete an Application to Work in Ministry with Minors (MWM-2); have two clear reference checks; and be approved for this ministry by the Session. Under no circumstances shall youth be in positions of responsibility for vulnerable adults.

Adult volunteer helpers who have not been formally screened, background-checked, and approved by the Session shall not serve in positions of classroom leadership or solo supervision and will never be alone with minors or vulnerable adults. They may, however, assist approved ministry providers in ad-hoc situations of need.

Application/Screening/Training Process

1. An adult applicant will complete and sign the Application to Work in Ministry with Minors and Vulnerable Adults for adults aged 18 and older (MWM-1). A minor applicant and their parent or legal guardian will complete and sign the Application to Work in Ministry with Minors and Vulnerable for youth ages 14-17 (MWM-2). Because these forms contain confidential information, they must be stored securely.

2. A background check of Level 3 or higher will be performed on all adult applicants through MinistrySafe, an online background check provider. (Attached to this policy is a chart describing the searches included in a Level 3 search via MinistrySafe.) Minors are exempt from background checks. When minor volunteers turn 18, however, they are required to have a background check through MinistrySafe. The results of those background checks are stored securely on the MinistrySafe website and can be accessed by those with log-in access: the pastor, the church secretary, and the Children's Ministry Director.
3. If a MinistrySafe background check flags anything that may preclude an individual from serving in this area, it is the Children's Ministry Director/Elder, Discipleship Elder, or and Pastor/Head of Staff's responsibility to contact the applicant and discuss the findings. Depending on the nature of the infraction or offense, the Geneva Session may opt to allow an individual to serve in a specific capacity, under supervision. For example, a non-violent offense or an offense connected to chemical dependence that has since been treated might not necessarily eliminate an individual from this ministry. The Children's Ministry Director, Discipleship Elder, Pastor/Head of Staff, and every member of Session must be in unanimous agreement with a decision to approve for ministry anyone who has a flagged background check.
4. Upon Session approval, all volunteers and employees will undergo mandatory training on the safeguarding of minors and vulnerable adults, offered online through MinistrySafe.
5. Background checks must be completed for adult volunteers every five years.

Code of Conduct

All volunteers and employees at church-sponsored events and activities must abide by a code of conduct to ensure safety and eliminate opportunities for maltreatment of children, youth, and vulnerable adults. These practices apply to children, youth, and vulnerable adults who are being ministered to, as well as those youth and adults serving in a ministering capacity.

- A minimum of two ministry volunteers must be present at all events. At least one childcare provider present must be at least 5 years older than the oldest minor participant. If there is only one adult present, there should be a minimum of two minors or vulnerable adults.
- In keeping with the terms of the church's Childcare Policy, every effort will be made to adhere to the following ratios:

AGE	NUMBER OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, or VULNERABLE ADULTS	NUMBER OF ADULTS + NUMBER OF ASSISTANTS (Adult or Teen)	NUMBER OF TEENS Without Direct Adult Supervision
0-12mos	4	1 + 1	Not allowed
1-4yrs	1-12	1 + 1	2
1-12yrs	2-12	1 + 1	3
5-12yrs	2-12	1 + 0	3
5-12yrs	12+	1 + 2	4
12-18yrs	Ratio of 1 adult for every 6 youth		n/a
18 yrs +	Ratio of 1 adult for every 6 vulnerable adults, depending on the level of need		n/a

- Whenever possible, minors and vulnerable adults must remain within sight and “ear-shot” of those in a supervisory capacity. When that is not possible, the “Rule of Three” is a recommended practice. At no point should an individual be alone with another individual, including using the bathroom or transportation in a vehicle. All indoor activity rooms or areas must have doors with windows or Dutch doors; alternately, doors must be left open. Anyone passing an activity room must be able to see into the room at all times. Confidential discussions with minors shall be conducted with open doors or a door with a clear window, at times when other adults will be nearby and aware.
- Supervisors and childcare providers are responsible for ensuring that appropriate safety precautions are followed during activities (helmets during a bike ride, gloves during construction service projects, etc.). This includes adherence to state or local laws.
- At the start of each program year, parents/guardians must complete Yearly Permission Forms (MWM-4). If medication could or will be needed during a church-sponsored or co-sponsored event, parents/guardians must complete in advance one or all of the following forms:
 - Permission to Dispense Non-Prescribed Medication (MWM-5)
 - Permission to Dispense Prescribed Medication (MWM-6)
 - Permission to Self-Administer Prescribed Medication (MWM-7)

Supervisors may dispense medication only as directed according to the medication form(s) submitted by parents/guardians. Prescribed and/or non-prescribed medication must be received from parents/guardians in the original containers, along with instructions or dispensing information, clearly labeled with the name of the child, youth, or vulnerable adult. Supervisors will keep any medication provided by parents in a safe place, inaccessible to other children. If any medication is considered a controlled substance, the medication must be locked at all times.

When dispensing medication, whether prescribed or non-prescribed, the responsible adult must adhere to the following procedure:

1. Identify an adult witness to observe dispensing of medication.

2. Confirm that the child's name and the name on the dosage container match.
 3. Dispense medication.
 4. In the log (MWM-8), record dosage amount, date given, and time given.
 5. Along with the witness, sign the log (MWM-8).
 6. Upon completion of dispensing period, review the filled-out log (MWM-8) with the parent/guardian and obtain their signature and date.
- No child, youth, or vulnerable adult will possess, have access to, or be under the influence of cannabis, illegal drugs, alcohol, tobacco, vape products, or weapons.
 - Technology will not be used to bully others or view or send explicit violent, sexual, or obscene material. One-to-one online contact or text messaging between children and the adults who supervise them should be avoided to the greatest extent possible. Youth leaders shall utilize group texting apps (like WhatsApp, Remind, Signal) and send group emails. A parent, guardian, or other leader shall be copied into every email, text message, or other message that a child receives.
 - Those in a ministry capacity may not:
 - Display sexual affection toward a child, youth, or vulnerable adult;
 - use profanity or off-color jokes in the presence of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult;
 - discuss sexual encounters with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult;
 - stare at or comment on the body of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult;
 - or become "romantically" involved with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
 - Any act of corporal punishment as a means to discipline, correct, or control a child, youth, or vulnerable adult is strictly prohibited.
 - If transportation during a church-sponsored or co-sponsored program, event, or activity is provided, the event organizer shall take appropriate steps to ensure that the vehicle operators have completed the Vehicle Usage Permission Form in keeping with the Transportation Policy of Geneva Presbyterian Church. All drivers must be at least 21 years of age and have valid drivers' licenses, and that the vehicles have valid registrations and insurance on file. All vehicle operators must comply with all traffic laws, including use of cell phones while driving. All vehicle operators should also be informed that if their vehicle is used, their insurance would be primary if an accident occurs. Note that this policy does not apply to youth who drive themselves to church-sponsored activities.

Intervention Procedures

The following procedures require the response of any supervisors, childcare providers, or event organizers upon discovery, or receipt of either a verbal report or a written allegation, of any accidental injury to or maltreatment of children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

In the event of any accidental injury:

1. Emergency medical treatment shall be administered as needed.
2. Childcare providers shall immediately notify a supervisor.
3. The supervisor shall immediately notify the parent/guardian(s) of any case of injury requiring medical treatment.
4. The supervisor shall immediately notify the event organizer of any case of injury requiring medical treatment.

In the event of any maltreatment:

If there is a reasonable concern that a child, youth, or vulnerable adult was maltreated during a church-sponsored or co-sponsored event, activity, or program, whether by an adult or another child, the following steps should be taken:

- Emergency medical treatment shall be administered as needed.
- The Children's Ministry Director/Elder, Discipleship Elder, and/or Pastor/Head of Staff must be notified as soon as possible verbally. A verbal report must be followed up with a written account of events.
- The Children's Ministry Director/Elder, Discipleship Elder, and/or Pastor/Head of Staff shall immediately notify the parent/guardian(s). If the situation warrants, the Children's Ministry Director/Elder, Discipleship Elder, and/or Pastor/Head of Staff may notify the state Child Abuse Hotline.

If anyone in a ministry capacity discovers or has a reasonable concern that a child, youth, or vulnerable adult may be in danger or abused in **another context**, they shall contact first the event or activity supervisor, who will then contact the Children's Ministry Director/Elder, Discipleship Elder, and/or Pastor/Head of Staff. Please note that per Michigan state law, all clergy and those who work in ministry for minors and vulnerable adults are mandated reporters.

Violation of Policy by a Supervisor or Childcare Provider:

If any items in the "Code of Conduct" section of this policy are violated by supervisors or childcare providers, they may be sent home immediately at their own cost and replacements may be found as needed. Parents of children at the event will be notified of the change immediately.

Violation of Policy by a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult:

If any items in the "Code of Conduct" section of this policy are violated by a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, the parent/guardian(s) must be contacted and the child, youth, or vulnerable adult may be sent home.