

Policy for Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

Village Chapel Presbyterian Church Policy for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults.

This policy was adopted by vote of the Village Chapel Presbyterian Church (USA) session on March 21, 2018

This policy supersedes the previous version, adopted on December 20, 2017.

Policy Statement

The members of Village Chapel Presbyterian Church (USA) (VCPC) believe that we are called by God to create a safe haven for children, youth and vulnerable adults (referred to as children in this policy) in our care, protecting those who are powerless.

During each baptism of an infant, child or adult into this covenant community of faith, the members of this church pledge to uphold that person in Jesus Christ and to teach, strengthen and support the individual's relationship with the household of God.

Therefore, the members of VCPC are committed to the physical, emotional and spiritual safety of all children participating in the activities and programs of this church.

This policy applies to congregants, pastors, officers, employees, volunteers and other groups using the VCPC facilities.

All leaders of non-VCPC groups using VCPC facilities are expected to adhere to the Policy for Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults for Outside Groups which is based upon this policy.

These practices are designed to protect children from harm. The VCPC Disciplinary Policy will be used should actual or alleged harm to a child occur.

Parents bear the primary responsibility for teaching their children about protection and safety issues. Nonetheless, VCPC may offer age-appropriate educational opportunities for children to provide them with necessary information about child protection issues, including their right to be free from unwelcome and inappropriate touching or remarks, how to report their concerns, and church policies regarding their safety.

Definitions

Child is anyone under the age of eighteen, or a person eighteen or older who is mentally challenged, mentally incapacitated or physically helpless.

Child abuse is the infliction of non-accidental harm to a child. Child abuse may include

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- a.) *Emotional abuse*, when adults responsible for the well-being of a child endanger the mental or emotional health of that child by chronic and persistent acts. This may involve rejection, ignoring, terrorizing, corrupting, constant criticism, mean remarks, insults, and giving little or no love, guidance or support
- b.) *Neglect*, the unreasonable failure to exercise a minimum degree of care to assure a child's health, safety or welfare
- c.) *Physical abuse*, an injury or pattern of injuries that are not accidental. This may manifest as beatings, burns, bruises, bites, welts, strangulation, broken bones or death.
- d.) *Sexual abuse*, any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult person or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. West Virginia law states that a child less than 16 years old cannot give consent to sexual relations (WV Code 61-8B-2-c). Therefore any sexual interaction between an adult and a child under 16 is always considered child sexual abuse.
- e.) *Spiritual abuse*, when religious references are used to shame or by guilt to motivate a child into a particular action or behavior.

Church, unless otherwise noted, refers to Village Chapel Presbyterian Church (USA) abbreviated as VCPC.

Congregation refers to members and participants at VCPC.

Mentally challenged means that a person suffers from a mental disease or defect which renders that person incapable of appraising the nature of his or her conduct.¹

Mentally incapacitated means that a person is rendered temporarily incapable of appraising or controlling his or her conduct as a result of the influence of a controlled or intoxicating substance administered to that person without his or her consent or as a result of any other act committed upon that person without his or her consent. (WV Code 61-8B-1-(4)).

Misuse of technology is the use of technology to text or email suggestive messages and images to children and includes the viewing and transmission of pornography.

Pastor refers to the minister and the educator/pastoral assistant of VCPC.

Persons are the congregants, pastors, officers, employees, volunteers of VCPC and other groups using VCPC facilities.

Physically helpless means a person who is unconscious or for any reason is physically unable to communicate unwillingness to an act (WV Code 61-8B-1-(5)).

¹ This is equivalent to the "mentally defective" definition in WV Code 61-8B-1-(3).

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Pornography is material that the average person using contemporary adult community standards finds offensive, material that appeals to prurient interests, or is patently offensive.²

Volunteer is a person who meets the requirements of this policy and who interacts with children. The term includes employees of VCPC who work with children.

Vulnerable adult is a person age eighteen or over who is mentally challenged, mentally incapacitated or physically helpless.

Youth is a child of middle school or high school age.

General Prevention Practices

The following acts towards a child are prohibited and will not be tolerated or accepted during any VCPC activity or program.

- a.) Child abuse as defined by this policy or by WV State Code;
- b.) Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind including such behavior between children;
- c.) Possessing obscene or pornographic materials at any function of VCPC;
- d.) Possessing, consuming or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while leading or participating in a children's function of VCPC.

All VCPC activities and programs, regardless of location, involving children will be subject to the following policy:

- a.) At least two approved adult volunteers will supervise all church sponsored programs and activities involving children whether on or off VCPC property. Exceptions to this rule may occur as outlined in this policy. Since spouses cannot be compelled to testify against one another in a court of law, a married couple will count as one adult.
- b.) Teachers will be assigned in teams of two or more in every class of children.
- c.) Volunteers supervising activities must remain in sight of one another at all times except as provided in this policy.
- d.) No adult volunteer may date program participants under 18 years old.
- e.) All volunteers working with middle school or high school youth must be 21 years of age or older.
- f.) Persons under 18 years old may assist volunteering adults.
- g.) Volunteers are required to report to the pastor or chairperson of the Education Ministry Team any circumstances that affect the ability to comply with this policy.
- h.) Volunteers shall ensure that all children through 2nd grade are returned to or picked up by a family member or guardian before leaving the classroom or event.

² This is based on the definition for "obscene matter" in WV Code 61-8A-1-k.

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In cases involving disputed custody of a child, the chairperson of the Education Ministry Team will obtain written instructions from the parents or guardians regarding who will pick up the child.

Reporting and documentation

Any observations or personal knowledge of violations of this policy must be immediately reported to the chairperson of the Education Ministry Team or the pastor.

Any person who knows of, or suspects, child abuse must report to

- a.) the Centralized Intake for Abuse and Neglect Hotline 1-800-352-6513 and
- b.) the WV State Police Crimes against Children unit 304-293-6400

within 48 hours of becoming aware of the situation.

Failure to report as required can result in heavy penalties under WV law. Consult the VCPC Disciplinary Policy for additional information and procedures.

Concerns about issues that are not clearly abuse related but impinge on child safety and protection should be discussed with the pastors, chairperson of the Education Ministry Team, or chairperson of the Personnel Ministry Team.

Volunteers who assist with off-site events, Bible School and other non-routine events involving children will be documented using the Volunteer Log found in Appendix D. All reports documenting volunteers assisting with off-site events will be kept in a permanent file in VCPC offices.

Responsibility of parents and guardians

In order to maintain an environment free of destructive acts toward all children, parents and guardians must be aware of their individual responsibility to report to the chairperson of the Education Ministry Team and/or the pastor and document any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation thought to be in violation of this Policy.

On-site non-routine events

On-site non-routine events, such as Bible School and Arts Camp, present challenges to adhere to the two adult volunteer rule. The two adult volunteer rule will be relaxed for these events. The following rules will apply:

No event will be held if the chairperson of the Education Ministry Team or the pastoral staff believes that children cannot be adequately protected.

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Adult volunteers from other churches will be acceptable if they have complied with a comparable child protection policy, including a criminal background check.

No adult volunteer will be allowed to supervise or watch over children unless they have had a criminal background check within the past 5 years.

All volunteers will attend a (short) informational meeting outlining the issues related to child protection before the event begins.

A parent or guardian of a child who has not complied with the terms of this policy may accompany him or her during the event as long as they are not counted as an adult volunteer and volunteers with the group are instructed that this person is not to be placed in a role of supervision or authority over other children in the group.

Guest presenters will be made aware of the relevant provisions of this policy before the event begins. Guest presenters will not be required to comply with the criminal background check requirement.

Parents or guardians will complete a written consent for participation for their child and have a current medical release form on file. (see Appendices A and B)

Volunteers preparing and serving food will not need to be approved volunteers as defined by this policy.

Discipline of children

If a child is behaving inappropriately, the volunteer will tell the child specifically what he/she is doing that is not acceptable and state what the expected behavior is, e.g. "We do not throw the blocks. We use blocks for building."

If this measure is not effective, the child will be guided to another activity.

If this is not effective, the child may be placed at a table to play or work alone away from the other children.

If the child's disruptive behavior continues, the volunteer will notify the chairperson of the Education Ministry Team who will talk with the child and work with the children's parents. A child whose behavior might harm others will be removed from the group even if this results in a lapse of the two adult volunteer policy.

Physical punishment or verbal abuse will not be used at any time.

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Verbal interactions

Speaking with children appropriately establishes respect. The following are examples of appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions

Appropriate Verbal Interactions	Inappropriate Verbal Interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Positive reinforcement• Appropriate jokes• Encouragement• Praise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Name-calling• Discussing sexual encounters• Involving children in the personal problems or issues of employees or volunteers• Secrets• Cursing• Off-color or sexual jokes• Shaming• Belittling• Derogatory remarks, generally• Derogatory remarks about the child or his/her family• Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate children• Compliments relating to physique or body development.

Touching

Physical affection should be appropriate to the age of the child. For example, it is generally appropriate for a four-year-old to sit in a volunteer's lap and give a kiss on the cheek with a hug. It is not appropriate for a teenager and volunteer to engage in this conduct.

Touching should be initiated by the child. It should be a response to the child's need for comfort, encouragement, or affection. It should not be based on the adults' emotional need.

A child's preference to not be touched should be respected. Do not force affection upon a reluctant child.

Examples of appropriate and inappropriate touching are listed below. The examples are to be applied to most children. However, as noted above certain physical interactions are appropriate for young children. In addition, the Education chairman, in consultation with the parent or guardian of a mentally challenged person may agree that certain physical interactions are appropriate for that person that would not be age appropriate for another person of that age. In these cases, the appropriate physical interactions will be in writing.

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Appropriate physical interactions	Inappropriate physical interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Side hugs• Shoulder-to-shoulder or “temple” hugs• Pats on the shoulder or back• Handshakes• High-fives and hand slapping• Pats on the head (when culturally appropriate)• Touching hands, shoulders, and arms• Arms around shoulders• Holding hands	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full-frontal hugs• Kisses• Showing affection in an isolated area• Lap sitting• Wrestling• Piggyback rides• Tickling• Any type of massage given by or to a child of any age• Any form of affection that is unwanted by the child or volunteer• Touching bottom, chest or genital areas

Diapering and Restroom supervision

The presence of two adults is particularly important when diapering a baby or helping a young child change clothes or using the restroom.

Children will always be supervised when using restrooms to ensure their safety.

Children will be sent to the restroom in pairs, if possible, with at least one adult volunteer.

A volunteer will stand in the doorway while older children are using the restroom.

A volunteer assisting younger children will keep the door to the restroom, the fire door, and the door to the classroom open while the restroom is in use to be within hearing distance of the other adult volunteer.

Water activities

If an event involves water activities all prudent safety precautions will be taken, such as the presence of a certified lifeguard when swimming and the use of adequate lifejackets if on a vessel on the water.

Overnight events

If an overnight event is planned, and the children are of mixed gender, the volunteers must include at least one male and one female.

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There must be access to a phone, or cell phone, or pager when a group is away from the church facility. This number must be available to church staff and parents before the group's departure from the church.

All children participating in VCPC-sponsored out-of-town and overnight events must have signed written consent and medical release forms found in Appendix A and B, or similar forms that obtain the information in these forms. Medical release forms will be in effect for 12 months unless otherwise indicated by the parent or guardian.

All medical release forms will be reviewed by the adults supervising the overnight events before the event occurs. Plans for dealing with potential medical issues and other concerns will be developed with the supervising adults and the parent or guardian before leaving church property.

Adults supervising overnight events will complete the medical release form found in Appendix C or other format giving relevant information.

Female staff will supervise female children in their sleeping quarters and male staff will supervise the male children. Staff and children will not occupy the same bed or sleeping bag with the exception of a child and his or her parent.

Transportation

It is preferable to have two adults in a car with children. It is permissible for one adult driver to transport several children in a single vehicle in a convoy of vehicles traveling to or from an event. Parents and guardians may waive the two-adult rule for transportation by signing the waiver form included on the Written Consent found in Appendix A.

Parents and guardians may provide transportation for their children without signing a transportation waiver or having a completed criminal background check.

All drivers must be at least 21 years old with a valid driver's license. Drivers are expected to obey state and federal laws. The chairperson of the Education Ministry Team may ask to see the volunteer's driver's license.

Drivers of personal cars must have liability insurance. The driver's liability insurance will be the primary insurance in case of accident.

All occupants must wear seat belts at all times.

Smoking is prohibited in vehicles.

If it is necessary for a child to get home after an event, without a parent or guardian providing the transportation, an effort should be made to contact the family about the situation before transporting the child without others in the car.

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Gifts

Because gift giving can be a form of buying loyalty or silence, gift giving should be done on a group basis, or for special occasions only.

No volunteer will give gifts to an individual child without the prior knowledge of the parents or pastor.

Gifts must be modest and appropriate for the occasion.

Injury and medications

Medications will be administered by a parent or guardian, if possible and practicable, except in potentially life-threatening conditions when a volunteer may administer medication. Parents and guardians may provide signed written instructions to the adult volunteers for other medical issues that may occur.

Volunteers may provide first aid for minor injuries, scrapes and bruises as appropriate. The volunteer will notify the child's parent or guardian of the treatment.

Volunteers will summon medical professionals and the parent or guardian of the child for injuries requiring treatment beyond simple first aid. If warranted by circumstances, volunteers may call an ambulance.

Emergency situations may result in a lapse in the two-volunteer rule supervising children.

Volunteer(s) will document all emergency situations using the Injury Incident Report (Appendix G) or a similar format after the incident. The Injury Incident Reports will be placed in a confidential file in the VCPC office.

Volunteer(s) will inform the chairperson of the Education Ministry Team that the report is on file. All Injury Incident Reports will be reviewed by the Education Ministry Team to determine if changes in procedures need to be implemented to avoid further injuries. The Education Ministry Team may ask others to advise them if needed.

The review and conclusions will be documented and placed in a confidential file on VCPC property.

Individual counseling

Counseling should take place in a place where one can talk privately but still be in plain view of others. If the counseling takes place in a private room, the door should remain open.

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When possible, another adult will have knowledge of the counseling session and the persons involved.

Children receiving counseling will be told that they are free to discuss the aspects of the counseling session with their parents or other adult of their choosing, especially if they are uncomfortable with anything that occurs during the counseling session.

Volunteers

A volunteer must meet the following requirements:

- a.) Must be a member or regular attendee of VCPC for at least 6 months or a member of another church who is able to provide information about the applicant's character to VCPC,
- b.) Be at least 18 years old,
- c.) Complete and sign a Volunteer Information Form and Background Check Consent form. The forms can be found in Appendix E and F. Other formats may be used as long as all required information is obtained,
- d.) Receive training from the Education Ministry Team regarding relevant VCPC policies and recognition of child abuse,
- e.) Know the locations of fire extinguishers and nearest exits from children's activity areas,
- f.) Know the location of first aid supplies, and
- g.) Sign both parts of Appendix A of the Disciplinary Policy certifying that they have read and understood the VCPC Disciplinary Policy and the VCPC Policy for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults.

Non-adult volunteers may be approved to work with children, under supervision of adult volunteers, except for on-site non-routine events as outlined above. Non-adult volunteers must be 13 years of age or at least 5 years older than the age of the persons they are supervising. They will not be required to fill out a Background Check Consent Form. They will receive appropriate training but will not be required to certify understanding of the VCPC policies.

All Volunteer Information and Background Check forms will be kept in a permanent file in the VCPC offices.

In order to maintain an environment free of destructive acts toward all children, volunteers at VCPC must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation thought to be in violation of this Policy.

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Volunteers are disqualified for an actual or pending indictment alleging the offense or any conviction for:

- a.) Murder,
- b.) aggravated assault, including domestic violence,
- c.) sexual abuse, sexual assault (rape); aggravated sexual assault,
- d.) injury to a child,
- e.) incest,
- f.) indecency with a child; inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance of a child,
- g.) possession or promotion of child pornography,
- h.) the sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a minor,
- i.) employment harmful to children,
- j.) abandonment or endangerment of a child,
- k.) dishonesty, or
- l.) use, sale and distribution of illegal substances.

The Education Ministry Team is responsible for designating the person(s) who will review the Volunteer Information Sheets and obtaining and reviewing required background checks. The individual or individuals will have decision-making authority subject to approval by the Session.

Criminal background checks will be obtained for all volunteers age eighteen or older. Criminal background checks will occur every 5 years. Criminal background checks may be obtained at other times in this 5 year period based upon the recommendation of the chairperson of the Education Ministry Team.

The Education Ministry Team may, at their discretion, ask for references and employment records. All information received from references and former employers will be documented in writing and will become confidential church property. Information received in this process will not be disclosed to the volunteer.

The information will be kept in the church office with limited access afforded to church staff and others with a need to know.

Volunteer Information Sheets will be updated every 5 years, or as needed to maintain current information.

A volunteer will be removed from working with children immediately upon receipt of a report of violation of this policy. Such removal does not assume guilt but makes the top priority the protection of those who are most vulnerable. Should the investigation show there is no harm to children likely due to this volunteer working with them, he/she will be reinstated as a volunteer.

The Education Ministry Team is responsible for scheduling volunteers.

During the implementation phase of this policy, current volunteers will have 6 months to comply with the provisions of this policy.

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Volunteer Training

The Education Ministry Team will provide volunteer training. The Team may be assisted by the Personnel Ministry Team or other suitable trainers.

Prior to working with children, volunteers must undergo training related to implementation of this policy and the Disciplinary Policy of VCPC.

The training will include the provisions of the VCPC Policy for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults and the VCPC Disciplinary Policy. Volunteers will sign a statement that the policies have been read and understood. This document is found in Appendix A of the VCPC Disciplinary policy.

Volunteers must attend a training class or event at least once in a 24 month period.

Training classes will be held at least once every 12 months or more often if needed.

Training opportunities will be made available to outside groups using the church and parents, caretakers and guardians. Educational content may be tailored to the attendees.

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APPENDIX A

VCPC WRITTEN CONSENT FOR OVERNIGHT OR OFFSITE ACTIVITIES

I give permission for my child _____ to participate at

Event name _____ Event Date(s) _____

To be held at _____

The adults supervising the event are:

The contact number for this event is _____

The VCPC Policy for Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults policy requires two adults to be present at all activities involving children. There may be circumstances providing transportation to and from the event in which only one adult is present in a vehicle. You may waive the two adult portion of the policy by signing this portion of the permission form.

I hereby give my permission for my child, _____, to be alone with _____ (name one or more of the adults involved in the event) in appropriate ways and settings for transportation purposes.

Signature of adult or guardian: _____

Printed name and date : _____

Address of the parent or guardian:

Email address of the parent or guardian:

I give permission for the adult(s) on this form to supervise my child at an offsite event for ____ (initial) today only or for ____ (initial) for 12 months from this date. This permission may be revoked at any time at my request.

Signature and today's date: _____

This form must be accompanied by a Medical Release Form for your child.

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APPENDIX B

VCPC MEDICAL RELEASE FORM - for persons 18 years old and under

Today's date: _____

This information about _____ is given to VCPC church so that in case of emergency he/she can be properly treated. VCPC church may share this information with other people in order to protect him/her from harm and to treat any illness or injury until I can be notified.

By initialing here _____ I give permission for this form to be in effect for 12 months or until I otherwise revise or revoke it.

In the event of emergency, I give my permission to VCPC volunteers for medical treatment. I can be reached at one of the following phone numbers. Home _____ Cell _____

In the event I cannot be reached in an emergency, contact _____, who is _____ (relationship to named person) at the following phone numbers. Day _____ Night _____.

Please circle if this person has a history with any of these medical problems:

Hay fever	Convulsions	Lung problems
Bee Sting allergy	Fainting	Diabetes
Food allergies (elaborate under Special Dietary Needs)	Asthma	Kidney problems
Poison ivy/oak allergies	Heart Disease	Other medical issue that the leaders should know about?
Sulfa Drug allergy	Penicillin drug allergy	

Current medications:

Special dietary needs

You may use the back of this form to provide more information

Signature of parent or guardian: _____

Printed name of parent or guardian: _____

Address: _____

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APPENDIX C

VCPC MEDICAL RELEASE FORM for persons over 18 years old

Today's date: _____

This information about _____ is given to VCPC church so that in case of emergency he/she can be properly treated. VCPC church may share this information with other people in order to protect him/her from harm and to treat any illness or injury until I can be notified.

By initialing here _____ I give permission for this form to be in effect for 12 months or until I otherwise revise or revoke it.

Please circle if this person has a history with any of these medical problems:

Hay fever	Convulsions	Lung problems
Bee Sting allergy	Fainting	Diabetes
Food allergies (elaborate under Special Dietary Needs)	Asthma	Kidney problems
Poison ivy/oak allergies	Heart Disease	Other medical issue that the leaders should know about?
Sulfa Drug allergy	Penicillin drug allergy	
Blood Pressure problems	Cancer	Ulcers

Current medications:

Special dietary needs

You may use the back of this form to provide more information

In the event this person is in need of immediate medical care I give permission for those in charge to seek appropriate treatment if the person is unable to do.

Signature and Printed name: _____

Address: _____

In case of emergency, please contact _____ who is _____ (relationship) at _____ (phone).

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APPENDIX D

VCPC LOG FOR OFF-SITE AND ON-SITE NON-ROUTINE EVENTS

Event: _____

Date: _____

Printed name and signature of each volunteer assisting with the event.

This document will be kept in a permanent file in the VCPC offices.

APPENDIX E

VCPC VOLUNTEER INFORMATION FORM

Today's date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Age: _____

Phone number (cell) _____

Phone number (home): _____

Phone number (work): _____

Email addresses: _____

Signature: _____

If the person filling out this form is under the age of eighteen, the person's parent or guardian must sign the form also: _____

If a change occurs in any of the information above, please complete a new form.

You will be contacted every 5 years from the date of the initial information form to determine that the information on this form is correct.

A completed and signed Background Check Consent Form will accompany this form on every 5 year anniversary.

Contact the Chairperson of the Education Ministry Team with questions.

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APPENDIX F VCPC BACKGROUND CHECK CONSENT FORM

The information requested is for identification purposes only and is in no manner used as a qualification for employment or service as a volunteer. VCPC abides by all applicable state and federal employment laws.

Applicant's full name (printed): _____

Other names used: _____

Social Security Number: _____ Date of birth: _____

Addresses for the past 10 years (use the back of the sheet if necessary)

Address	City	County	State	Zip	How long at this address?

Other than the above listing what states and counties you have lived in since turning eighteen years old? _____

Name as it appears on your driver's license or state ID card:

Driver's license number: _____ State issuing license: _____

I, _____, authorize Village Chapel Presbyterian Church (VCPC) and/or their agents to make an investigation of my background, reference, character, past employment, education, credit history, adult criminal or police records, and motor vehicle records. These records include those maintained by both public and private organizations for the purpose of confirming the information contained on this Background Consent Form and/or obtaining other information which may be material to my qualifications for service now and, if applicable, during the tenure of my employment or service with VCPC.

I release VCPC and their agents and any person or entity which provided information related to this consent form from any and all liabilities, claims, or lawsuits in regards to the information obtained from any and all of the above referenced sources used.

This consent form will be in effect for 5 years from today's date. I give permission to VCPC and their agents to obtain a background check based on this information at any time within the 5 year period.

The name and all information provided on this form is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature of applicant: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX G

VCPC INJURY INCIDENT FORM

Date of injury: _____

Today's date: _____

Name of person injured:

Name of person making report:

Describe what happened and the actions taken to provide aid and assistance:

Report received by: _____ Date: _____