

SCREENING AND RELEASE OF LIABILITY FOR CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Church _____

Project Location _____

City, State _____

Project Dates _____

Due to the fallen nature of the world in which we live, and our responsibility to evaluate each participant to best of our ability, we would ask you to fill out and return this form to the *MTW* office, Attn: 2 Week Program. Please consider the following as you fill out this form.

Screening is required and refers to a process in which you obtain references for those adults who will work with youth. If the pastor or leadership of the church has had five or more years experience with an individual, then you may feel that is sufficient screening. The **process** for screening is at your discretion. See suggestions on the back of this form.

Background checks are only required if questions arise during screening (see above); they are done through your local sheriff's office and usually involve a financial charge.

“By virtue of our participation on this MTW project, **we assume the responsibility to screen** all adults who participate on the project to ensure that no one with a background of child sexual abuse participates. We also agree to run a criminal background check when questions arise from the screening process that warrants such a step.

We assume full responsibility for the conduct of all our participants on this MTW project (including adults and minors), and hereby agree to waive and release any and all claims and causes of action for damages or other relief that we may have against MTW, the Presbyterian Church in America, any of their affiliated or member entities, and their respective officers, directors, employees, agents, attorneys, or representatives, arising out of this MTW project, including but not limited to the conduct of our participants toward youth involved in this project.

We further agree to indemnify and hold harmless MTW, the Presbyterian Church in America, any of their respective officers, directors, employees, agents, attorneys, or representatives, from and against any and all liability that they may incur, including attorney's fees or other legal expenses, arising directly or indirectly from the conduct of our participants in this MTW project, including but not limited to the conduct of our adults toward youth involved in the project.”

Signed: _____

Position held in church: _____

(Must be pastor or clerk of session)

Date: _____

The following policy was approved at the October 1994 Committee on Mission to the World meeting:

*Anyone who has a criminal background in child sexual abuse or has admitted guilt to child sexual abuse (including crimes committed against teenagers) will not be allowed to participate in any one or two-week **MTW** programs involving minors, regardless of when the offense occurred.*

For further information on how your church can take such precautions on behalf of your children, contact the Administrative Committee of the PCA.

Critical Strategies for Screening and Selecting Volunteers

Education about your organization and youth-protection policies

By letting applicants know your organization is serious about protecting youth, you may deter some people at risk of abusing youth from applying for staff or volunteer positions.

- **Inform applicants** about your organization's policies and procedures relevant to child sexual abuse prevention.
- **Require applicants** to sign a document describing the policies and procedures of your organization to demonstrate their understanding and agreement.
- **Ask applicants** if they have a problem with any of the policies and procedures.

Written application

The written application provides the information you need to assess the background and interests of applicants. Questions should help you determine whether applicants have mature, adult relationships as well as clear boundaries and ethical standards for their conduct with youth.

- Ask about previous work and volunteer experiences.
- Use disclosure statements to ask applicants about previous criminal histories of sexual offenses, violence against youth, and other criminal offenses. The applicant may not disclose past offenses, but the inquiry will demonstrate your organization's seriousness about protecting youth and potentially discourage applicants at risk for perpetrating child sexual abuse.

Personal interview

- Ask open-ended questions that encourage discussion.
- Clarify and expand upon the applicant's answers to questions from the written application.

The following questions may be used in a written application or personal interview.

- 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 in a particular 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 applicants have mature, adult relationships—not just relationships with youth.

References

To provide a more complete picture of the applicant, the references should come from a variety of sources and should not be limited to family members or friends.

The following questions may be useful for reference checks:

- How would you describe the personal characteristics of the applicant?
- How does the applicant interact with youth?
- Why would this person be a good candidate for working with youth? Is there any reason this person should not work with youth?
- Have you seen the applicant discipline youth (other than his or her own children)?