

Presbytery Camp and Youth Events Policies and Procedures Manual

Orthodox Presbyterian Church
Presbytery of the Southwest
Young People's Committee

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I. Definitions

Abuse: Refer to the current legal definition in [Texas Family Code §261.001](#)

Camp (or Presbytery Camp): Youth activities that include an overnight stay and/or take place at a Camp property/facility

Camp Health Officer: A person certified to oversee the medical and nursing requirements of a youth camp according to the requirements of [Texas Administrative Code, Title 25, Part 1, Chapter 265, Subchapter B, Rule §265.15](#)

Campers: Children ordinarily aged 8-17 who attend Camp

Counselors: YPC chosen volunteers that lead designated groups of participants

DFPS: Texas Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS)

Host Camp Staff: Everyone who volunteers or works for the organization that owns, operates, or maintains the property and facilities at which the Camp is held

Neglect: Refer to the current legal definition in [Texas Family Code §261.001](#)

OPC: The Orthodox Presbyterian Church

Participants: Children who attend a Camp or Youth Event

Personnel: All Counselors and YPC Staff

PPM: Policies and Procedures Manual for Presbytery Camp and Youth Events

PSW: The Presbytery of the Southwest of the OPC

Work Crew: YPC chosen volunteers that assist the PSW Staff and Counselors with running the Camp

Youth Event: Youth activities that do not include an overnight stay and do not take place at a Camp property/facility

YPC: The Young People's Committee of the PSW

YPC Staff: YPC chosen volunteers, including a Director, Secretary, Assistants to the Director or Secretary, and Helpers

II. Youth Events Overview

A. Definition of Presbytery Youth Event

1. Youth activities that do not include an overnight stay and do not take place at a Camp property/facility are a presbytery Youth Event.
2. Events sponsored by an individual church that do not invite other churches in the presbytery are not a Presbytery Youth Event, and fall under the oversight and guidance of the local session, not the presbytery.

B. Applicable Sections

1. Only the following sections of this document shall apply to Presbytery Youth Events: Sections I, II, IV (except A.2), V, VI (except A.1.c and A.2.c), VII (except D).

III. Camp Overview

A. Definition of Presbytery Camp

1. Presbytery sponsored Youth activities that include an overnight stay and/or take place at a Camp property/facility.

B. Purpose of Camp

1. The purpose of camp is primarily to minister to the youth of our presbytery. We seek to glorify God and grow our youth through worship services, Bible and catechism memorization, team activities, games, and discussions. The camp seeks to promote the formation of friendships for mutual Christian encouragement.

C. Selection of Camp Location

1. It is the responsibility of the Presbytery of the Southwest (PSW) Young Peoples Committee (YPC) to select the camp and verify that it complies with all necessary local, state (e.g. [*Texas Administrative Code, Title 25, Part 1, Chapter 265, Subchapter B, "Texas Youth Camps Safety and Health"*](#)), and federal requirements.
2. If the Camp facility being used does not provide medical care, the YPC shall select a Camp Health Officer (see the following TAC Rule, point c, for Camp Health Officer certification requirements) to ensure that the requirements of Texas law ([*Texas Administrative Code, Title 25, Part 1, Chapter 265, Subchapter B, Rule §265.15, Medical and Nursing Care Laws*](#)) are met. This includes the following sections of the law:
 - a) On-Call Physician
 - b) Emergency Transportation
 - c) Medical staffing
 - d) Reporting incidents of abuse and neglect of a minor

- e) Reporting of Camper Death and Communicable Diseases
 - f) First Aid Area and Required Items for a First Aid Kit
 - g) Isolation of a Child with a Communicable Disease
 - h) Medical Log
 - i) Camper Health Records
 - j) Emergency Phone
 - k) Emergency Plans
 - l) Storing and Dispensing Medication to Campers
 - m) First Aid Kits for Camp Trips
3. The YPC Camp Health Officer shall coordinate with the camp being used, formulate, and post an Emergency Plan. Refer to point k of the above Texas Code for requirements.

D. Eligibility for Participation

1. Camp Staff and Counselors shall ordinarily be 23 years old or older, and a communicant member in good standing of an OPC congregation, with a pastoral recommendation letter.
2. Campers shall ordinarily be 8-17 years old. Campers do not necessarily need to be an OPC member. Friends of covenant children are welcome to apply.
3. Work Crew members shall ordinarily be 18-22 years old, and a communicant member in good standing of an OPC congregation, with a pastoral recommendation letter.

IV. Selecting and Training Personnel

A. Counselor to Participant Ratio

1. The overall **Supervisory** ratio for any camp or youth event shall be a minimum of one Personnel for every 8 participants, *but no less than two Personnel supervising any one group of Participants.*
2. The minimum **Overnight** ratio in each cabin or sleeping area is one Personnel (Counselor and/or YPC Staff) for every six campers, with a minimum of two Personnel.

*(Texas Administrative Code Title 25, Part 1, Subchapter B, Rule §265.32
 “Minimum Overnight Camper to Counselor Ratios”)*

B. Application Form for YPC Staff, Counselors, and Camp Work Crew

1. All of the above are required to complete the online application form. They must read the Policies and Procedures Manual for Presbytery Camp and Youth Events

(PPM) and affirm that they have read and understood it. They must also submit their pastor's email, and he must submit the online recommendation form that affirms their ability to work with youth.

C. Background Check and MinistrySafe Training

1. The YPC will:
 - a) Create a MinistrySafe profile for each applicant.
 - b) Use MinistrySafe to initiate, review, and retain background and sex-offender checks.
 - c) Send the MinistrySafe Training link to the applicant to complete.
 - d) Conduct an in-person or telephone interview with each applicant.
 - e) Only allow individuals that successfully complete this process, and pass the checks, to serve.

D. Annual Renewal

1. The application, MinistrySafe Training, and the background and sex-offender checks must be completed annually.

V. Participant Enrollment and Transportation

A. Registration of Participants

1. Application and Medical Information
 - a) Participants must submit the application form, including the following medical information:
 - (1) their name and emergency contact information,
 - (2) allergy information,
 - (3) medical conditions, and
 - (4) special needs.
 - b) Medical Plan for Serious Medical Needs
 - (1) PSW camp and Youth Events are not designed to accommodate those with extensive medical needs. The YPC will work to accommodate those with medical needs as much as possible.
 - (2) In order to ensure safety and proper care for all participants, the YPC may require that a medical care plan be put in place as part of registration for Participants with significant medical needs. Circumstances that may require a medical care plan include, but are not limited to: diabetes, epilepsy/seizures, colostomy, serious allergies/anaphylactic reactions, recovery from recent surgery or serious illness, mobility issues, and/or mental/behavioral conditions.

- (3) Any medical care plan must be developed collaboratively by the YPC Staff (or Camp Health Officer), the participant's parent(s) or guardian(s), and the Participant's primary care physician, and must be agreed on by all parties before registration can be confirmed.

2. Fees

- a) The committee shall determine in advance any cost and/or deposit required, and the deadline to receive the payment.
- b) Registration must be completed and full payment made to the Presbytery of the Southwest by the deadline in order for participants to attend.
- c) Full or partial refunds may granted at the discretion of the committee at any point before the start of the event. No refunds will be granted after the start of the event.

B. Scholarships

1. Local congregations are encouraged to arrange for full or partial scholarships to address the needs of those attending.
2. The committee is not responsible for organizing or administering scholarships.

C. Transportation

1. Transportation to and from any event is the responsibility of the churches and/or parents of the Participants. Neither the PSW, nor the YPC, is responsible for arranging transportation to or from any event.
2. The YPC may require that Participants be dropped off and picked up, rather than driving their own personal vehicles.
3. No Participant may leave the premises of the camp or event except in the case of an emergency approved by the Director (or Camp Health Officer).
4. Participants may only be released to leave with a parent, the adult who brought them, or other individuals expressly authorized by the Participant's parent or guardian.
5. Participants released early to go home may not return to the camp or event.

VI. Rules for Personnel and Participants

A. Preliminary Briefings

1. Briefing of Personnel:
 - a) The Director shall brief all Personnel concerning policies and procedures.
 - b) The Director (or Camp Health Officer) shall brief all Personnel on all medical and health procedures, including any Emergency Plan.

- c) The Camp Health Officer shall instruct all Personnel at a Camp on how to use an EpiPen and administer CPR.
2. Briefing of all Personnel and Participants:
- a) The Director shall brief all concerning policies and procedures, including conduct and discipline.
 - b) Participants shall be encouraged to report behavioral and safety issues they observe to their counselor or other staff.
 - c) For a Camp Event:
 - (1) Camp property shall be described in detail to all at the beginning of the camp session, including all boundaries and prohibited areas/hazards (e.g. rocky terrain, cliffs, etc.)
 - (2) The Camp Health Officer shall brief all on all medical and health procedures, including the Emergency Plan.

B. Conduct Expected

1. Youth Camp and Events are primarily intended to help our OPC youth grow spiritually and have fun. Everyone is expected to respect each other and endeavor to have a servant's heart. Philippians 2:3-5 (ESV) reminds us:

“³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.”

2. All Personnel and Participants are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with Biblical morality (as summarized in the Ten Commandments), and follow all event policies and procedures, including behaviors required in the Discipline section.

C. Discipline

1. The Violation of Policies
- a) These rules will be posted for everyone to read and understand.
 - b) All incidents are to be handled with charity and care.
 - c) If any Personnel or Participant violates event or camp policy, two Personnel, including at least one of the same gender as the offender, shall determine the appropriate action, which may, depending upon the seriousness of the offense, be a verbal warning, withholding of a privilege, or immediate dismissal from the event or camp. In the case of immediate dismissal, the Director shall notify the parents to come and take the Participant home.

- d) While each case will be addressed on an individual basis, in general, a Personnel or Participant will be expelled from the event or camp and sent home immediately for: endangering their own safety or the safety of another individual, leaving the event or camp boundaries without permission, fighting, engaging in sexual misconduct, or using alcohol, tobacco, or illicit substances.
 - e) If the conduct violates civil law, local law enforcement will be contacted.
 - f) If the conduct involves sexual grooming or abuse, the Texas Department of Family Protective Services (DFPS) will also be contacted (Explained further below).
 - g) It is strongly recommended that Participants not bring cell phones to camp and youth events. All cell phones brought to Camp or a Youth Event by Participants must be turned in upon arrival and picked up at departure. A phone number will be provided for parents and guardians to contact the Camp Staff and speak with their child. In cases of emergency, Participants may go to the Camp Staff to call their parents or guardians.
 - h) Participants may not bring weapons or toy weapons to Camp and Youth Events.
2. Unacceptable behavior includes:
- a) Not following rules set down by the Staff of the facility
 - b) Participants possessing or using a cell phone during Camp or a Youth Event
 - c) Swearing, cursing, or abusive language
 - d) Stealing or damaging property (personal or facility property)
 - e) Refusal to participate in activities or refusal to cooperate with Personnel
 - f) Disrupting a program
 - g) Leaving a program without permission. All Participants are required to be present at all activities and events, including staying in the sleeping quarters during sleep time, unless medically excused. It is a serious offense for anyone to leave the group and go off without supervision.
 - h) Leaving the Youth Event or Camp boundaries, or entering prohibited or hazardous areas
 - i) Endangering the health and safety of children and/or other individuals
 - j) Public displays of affection
 - k) Sexual conduct of any kind
 - l) Use of alcohol, tobacco, or non-prescription drugs.

- m) Harassing or bullying Participants or Personnel
- n) Fighting of any kind
- o) Not giving proper attention to personal cleanliness
- p) Not following dress and grooming regulations established by the YPC
- q) Clothing (or jewelry, personal items, backpacks, gym bags, water bottles, etc.):
 - (1) That is revealing. Examples include: exposed undergarments, see-through or fishnet fabrics, halter tops, off-the-shoulder or low-cut tops, bare midriffs, and skirts or shorts shorter than mid-thigh. Two-piece bathing suits must be covered with a colored t-shirt.
 - (2) That has inappropriate content. Examples include: swearing, cursing, sexually suggestive, advertising drugs/alcohol/tobacco products, and prejudicial statements.
 - (3) That presents a health or safety hazard. Example: wearing inappropriate footwear for athletic activities.
- r) Any participant driving any vehicle during the event or camp activities (e.g. ATVs, golf carts, etc.)

VII. Event and Camp Supervision

A. Supervision of Transportation During an Event or Camp

1. Safety is the paramount consideration in all activities. For transportation to and from the event or camp, see V.C.
2. A copy of medical information forms shall be carried during excursions, along with rescue medications.
3. Participants should be assigned to a specific vehicle for the entire excursion. Personnel shall be responsible for checking the presence of participants during the excursion.
4. Participants who drive their own personal vehicles to the event or camp may not operate their vehicles again until they leave to drive home. This requirement may be waived during extraordinary/emergency circumstances. Participants might be required to give their keys to YPC Staff during their time at the event or camp.

B. Supervision of Participants by Personnel

1. **Participants may not go off on their own. Two Personnel must be present wherever Participants are present. A Personnel member may never be alone with a Participant in private for any reason. A Personnel member may never speak to an individual Participant in private. Classroom doors must be kept open.**

2. Personnel should always be available and supervising. Proper supervision of Participants is vitally important to ensure their safety, and should be taken very seriously. Counselors should never let their guard down. It only takes a few seconds of complacency for an incident or accident to occur.
3. Personnel should be quick to praise Participants for godly behavior, and also quick to address improper behavior.
4. Personnel should seek to get to know the Participants, call them by name, interact with them as much as possible, stay active most of the day, and provide help when they need it.
5. Personnel should seek to sit with Participants during meals. Counselors sitting together at a Counselors' table is ineffective supervision.

C. Supervision of Activities on the Event or Camp Premises

1. Event and Camp activities shall be monitored at all times with a minimum ratio of one Personnel per 8 Participants, but no less than two Personnel supervising any one group of Participants.
2. Personnel shall spread out at activities to supervise everything taking place. All Participants must remain within the line of sight of Personnel at all times.
3. Any activity that requires specialized safety equipment shall be professionally managed and supervised by the Host Camp Staff in accordance with applicable Texas law. All such equipment must be inspected by the Host Camp Staff for condition and function before being used. All Participants who engage in such activities must wear/use all required equipment.
4. Participants who request to engage in an activity that requires specialized equipment must receive instruction before participating, regardless of claims of previous experience.
5. There shall be no firearm or archery activities at the Event or Camp, unless it is provided for by the Host Camp Staff, and professionally managed and supervised by their staff in accordance with applicable Texas law.
6. Personnel shall always pay close attention during water activities. They shall be in or near the water, within line of sight of the participants. Participants must obey all rules, and may not swim without a certified lifeguard present.
7. When going on a hike, Personnel shall walk on the side or back of the line to be able to see all Participants, with a Personnel leading.

D. Supervision of Sleeping Arrangements

1. All Participants are required to be present at all activities and events, including staying in the sleeping area during sleep time, unless medically excused. It is a serious offense for anyone to leave the group and go off without supervision.
2. Personnel and Participants must wear modest sleeping attire, be in their own sleeping bag and own bed, and stay in their bed at night, except to use the restroom.
3. At least two Personnel must be in the sleeping area during the night.
4. Two male Personnel will be assigned each night to periodically monitor each male sleeping area, and two female Personnel will be assigned each night to periodically monitor each female sleeping area, by conducting visual bed checks to ensure all Participants remain in their designated sleeping area. No one shall search a cabin without their counterpart. During bed checks, Personnel are not to touch the sleepers.

E. Proper Physical Interaction

1. The following must be observed by all Personnel and Participants:
 - a) Physical contact in any form must be above reproach, for the benefit of all individuals, and never based upon the emotional needs of Personnel.
 - b) Physical contact should never give the appearance of wrongdoing.
 - c) The personal behavior of all Personnel must foster trust at all times.
 - d) Side hugs, pats on the back, and other forms of appropriate physical affection between Personnel and Participants are important for child development and are generally suitable in the Event or Camp setting.
2. The following is always prohibited:
 - a) Touching a sensitive area (breasts, buttocks, genitals), even if an individual has been injured in one of these areas. Never allow casual contact in these areas, under or over clothing.
 - b) Sitting on someone's lap.
 - c) Holding hands, unless part of a worship/prayer service or a group game.
 - d) Touching anyone in anger or disgust.
 - e) Touching anyone in a manner that may be construed as sexually suggestive.
 - f) Touching anyone between the navel and the knees.
 - g) Carrying anyone piggy-back or on your shoulders.
 - h) Placing a hands beneath a Participant's clothing to play, rub or comfort.

- i) Tickling, participating in ‘horse-play,’ or wrestling with anyone.
 - j) Being on or in another individual’s bed.
3. Never force physical contact, touch, or affection on a reluctant individual. An individual’s preference not to be touched must be respected.
 4. Physical affection should occur only in observable locations or when in the presence of other Participants or Personnel. It is much less likely that touch will be misinterpreted when more than two individuals are present and the touch is open to observation.
 5. Personnel are responsible for protecting Participants under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others, including other Participants.
 6. Inappropriate touching and displays of affection are forbidden.
 7. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by Personnel or Participants must be reported immediately to a Counselor and the Director.

F. Reporting of Suspected or Actual Grooming, Abuse, or Neglect

1. Texas law, per [*Texas Administrative Code, Title 25, Part 1, Chapter 265, Subchapter B, Rule §265.15\(d\)*](#) and [*Texas Family Code Section 261.103*](#), requires that any person who suspects that a child has been subject to “abuse” or “neglect” must immediately report it to one of the following:
 - a) law enforcement, or
 - b) online at the [*Texas Abuse Hotline*](#), or,
 - c) by calling the DFPS Texas Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400.
2. If there is a current, active threat:
 - a) call 9-1-1 first! and then,
 - b) call the DFPS Texas Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400.
3. The legal definitions for “abuse” and “neglect” are found in the [*Texas Family Code §261.001*](#)
4. The [*Texas Family Code §261.101, "Persons Required to Report; Time to Report."*](#) requires “professionals” (i.e. paid staff of a camp, or others certified/licensed by the state to work with children) to make the report directly. It forbids them to delegate or rely on another person to make the report. The law requires this report to be made within 24 hours after first suspecting a child has been abused or neglected or is a victim of an offense, under Section 21.11, Penal Code.
5. Reporting by Non-Professionals:

- a) The [*Texas Family Code §261.101, "Persons Required to Report; Time to Report."*](#) also instructs any person who suspects “abuse” or “neglect” to immediately make a report.
 - b) Regardless of professional or volunteer status, it is important to make the report as soon as possible. The more time that passes between the incident and the report, the more difficult it is for DFPS to conduct an appropriate and thorough investigation and to gather the information needed to protect the child. Over time, bruises can heal, physical evidence may disappear or be obscured, memories may fade, and children, parents and other individuals may change their minds about what to say to DFPS.
 - c) In some situations, you may be aware of a family’s ongoing problems over a period of time before you begin to suspect that the situation has worsened into abuse or neglect. DFPS encourages you to report if you think that a child has been abused or neglected. You are not expected to prove that abuse or neglect has definitely occurred. Delaying your report to check the situation or to gather more information can result in more serious harm to the child.
6. Personnel must report any suspected grooming behaviors, policy violations, or suspicious activities to a Counselor and the Director. The Director is also responsible for reporting these incidents to the Host Camp Staff. Any incident, questions, or concerns regarding inappropriate or suspicious behavior should be directed to a Counselor and the Director.
 7. Any Personnel accused of harming a child will immediately be suspended from serving as Personnel. This suspension will continue during any investigation by YPC Staff, law enforcement, and/or Child Protective agencies.
 8. Any person found to have endangered a child may be barred from future participation as Personnel.

G. Medical Matters

1. Any prescription medication taken by a participant shall be provided to the YPC Staff (or Camp Health Officer) in the original container with the prescription label. At no time shall the participant be allowed to self-administer the medication without adult supervision.
2. Medications needed for immediate use for life-threatening conditions may be carried by the Participant or Personnel.
3. A first aid area will be designated to handle health and emergency cases.

VIII. Policies and Procedures Manual Review

A. Review and Approval

1. This manual will be reviewed, at least annually, by the YPC.

2. The review(s) shall include, but not be limited to, checking/confirming the latest civil laws, updating document links, discussion of any incidents that have occurred previously and their impact upon the PPM's contents, proposed changes to the PPM, and any other topics deemed pertinent by the YPC.
3. Once approved by the YPC, any changes to the PPM shall be submitted for review and approval by the PSW at its Winter stated meeting.

B. Electronic Access

1. After the PSW grants approval, the document shall be revised accordingly and made available on the PSW shared drive.