

Oakland Presbyterian Church

FAQs About Background Checks

You may have heard that starting this Fall, Oakland will require a training session and a background check for all volunteers serving kids and youth. This comes with a new Child Protection Policy & Guidelines implemented by the Elders to insure our children are safe as they learn and grow. The Policy covers everything from applying to teach, to supervising bathroom visits for children, to transporting children to and from offsite activities. For some of you, this is a no-brainer, an obvious and necessary step for any church or organization serving children in a time of church child-abuse scandals and unwarranted accusations. Others at Oakland might be thinking, “Do we really need that?” Either way there are lots of possible questions, so here is a brief FAQ.

1.) Has anything specific happened that prompted these changes?

No. To the best of our knowledge there have been no children harmed at Oakland Presbyterian Church. This is not a reactive measure, but a proactive protection, to liberate us to minister better; and it is now required by the Presbyterian Church (USA).

2.) Why do we need a Child Protection Policy with Background Checks, etc.?

The short answer is, “Yes.” Jesus loved children and welcomed them into his presence even while teaching. Jesus further instructed his church to never “despise one of these little ones,” or to “cause one little one to stumble.” We want our kids to know Jesus and to know his immense love for them, and so we must protect them from possible harm. Background checks minimize the chance that people with a history of harming or manipulating children serve children at Oakland. At the same time, we want to protect our volunteers from all false accusations. These new guidelines almost entirely prevent the possibility of a false accusation.

You may be thinking, are there really people who hurt kids or accuse falsely in the church. The answer is yes. The church is full of sinners and no one else. Sometimes these people have intentionally infiltrated an organization looking for targets, but more often, normal people like you and me succumb to temptations they never thought possible. These guidelines remove most of those possible temptations.

3.) Who exactly must be background checked?

All Staff are background checked, and volunteers working with children or youth must be background checked as well. This includes all Children and Youth Sunday School Teachers, PYC Volunteers, Acorn/Sprouts Volunteers, Children Church Hosts, Nursery Helpers, and Vacation Bible School helpers. These checks will remain on file for 3 years.

4.) Who sees these Background Checks?

Only Pastor Andrew will see the background checks. If there is a reason someone should not serve with children, it will be addressed privately with that individual. No one will be embarrassed by their past, but we will not cover up abuses or failures by our volunteers.

5.) What if I have a bad past that shows up on a Background Check?

Every Christian has a past full of sins, they're not proud of, but we are not defined by them. Rather that person has died with Christ and been made brand new. We do not hold people's past against them, so no matter where you've been or what you've done you're welcome here. Still, we do use wisdom when helping people figure out how to best serve God's church, and we feel it is wisest for people with past failures involving children to serve in other ways than Children and Youth ministry. Pastor Andrew will gladly help you find a way to be a blessing and be blessed.

6.) Where can I obtain a full copy of the Child Protection Policy and Guidelines?

The complete document is available online at www.oaklandpresbyterianchurch.org or in print from the church office. All questions regarding the policy should be directed to Pastor Andrew, 919-934-5476 or Andrew@oaklandpresbyterianchurch.org