



Background Checks: Policy for Employees and Certain District and Local Church Volunteers of the Great Lakes Region of The Wesleyan Church.

Background:

Presently, the Great Lakes Region seeks to give value to the leadership of pastors and leaders within the district through providing regular opportunities for training. The district also has the responsibility to help mitigate risks from potential acts of moral turpitude among the pastoral staff and volunteers. These acts may be a lack of integrity, sexual impropriety, abuse, and financial mismanagement both in their personal lives and within the church, to name a few. Mitigation involves requiring all credentialed pastors to submit to a criminal background check and a credit check at the point of being considered for employment, or applying for ordination by the Church.

Additionally, credentialed students and pastors are provided an additional level of oversight through required annual reporting that asks questions related to the issues listed above. These potential threats are not only posed to the local church, but liability subsequently passes up through the District and to the Denomination by virtue of the connectional system that involves each church holding its assets in trust to the District and Denomination. So far this system has served the Church well.

In light of the increasing use of clergy with credentials provided by other churches and denominations, lay persons employed in positions and ministries for which credentialed persons usually have served in the past, and the increasing use of volunteers in various leadership and ministry positions throughout the Church, the risk of great harm can come to the local churches, the District, and the denomination unless there is due diligence in helping mitigate these risks. Some of the sensitive positions that pose a risk

are those which deal with finances or handling money directly, and interacting directly with our children.

Policy:

Therefore, the Great Lakes Region of the Wesleyan Church has developed as policy the following guidelines for all personnel in leadership positions, ministry positions, or other sensitive positions in the Church.

- 1. All employees of the Great Lakes Region and its local churches would be required to submit to a criminal background check prior to employment.*
- 2. All persons who are potential credentialed ministers within the district would be required to submit to a criminal background check and a financial background check at the point of engagement with the credentialing process, or consideration of appointment to a place of service within the district.*
- 3. All persons who are to be employed in a position that would be responsible for handling financial matters within the District or a local church within the District would be required to submit to a credit background check in addition to the criminal background check prior to employment.*
- 4. All volunteers in a local church within the Great Lakes Region who work directly with children would be required to submit to a criminal background check prior to serving in the ministry.*
- 5. All persons serving in positions for which one might be appointed as a credentialed minister within the Wesleyan church, whether they are serving in a credentialed or lay capacity, shall be encouraged to participate in training events and have access to leadership and training resources that are provided now for pastors within the District.*
- 6. All persons serving in positions for which one might be appointed as a credentialed minister within the Wesleyan Church, whether they are serving in a credentialed or lay capacity, are required to submit an annual report to the District. This would provide accountability for behaviors that may be contrary to the standards of The Wesleyan Church as it would relate to issues of integrity, sexual misconduct, abuse, and financial mismanagement.*

Record of Background Checks:

Background Checks may be completed through the Great Lakes Region or the local church. The records may be retained by either the District or the local church. The local church would be required to submit to the District a signed statement that the required checks have been performed on the named person and that the named person did not have issues identified in the background checks which would potentially be considered “questionable” according to the guidelines provided by the District. The statement would also include the name of the person and the ministry served.

Application for a Background Check

The applicant must fill out a required application form and sign a statement authorizing the performance of a background check or financial check. Confidentiality must be ensured by the church or the District performing the background checks. Questionable returns on a background check will be reviewed in confidentiality by the local church and a representative designated by the District Superintendent in consultation with the person for whom the background check was completed.

Burden of Cost:

Both criminal background checks and credit history checks together can be performed for as little as \$15.00 or less per person, depending on the agency used. An established church would have the responsibility to bear the cost of the required checks. A developing church, church plant, or satellite church may have the required checks paid for by the parent church. The Great Lakes Region may share the burden of cost if so requested by the local church in writing with the reason for assistance provided.

Annual Reporting:

The present reporting system for pastors and credentialed ministers will remain the same. The reporting requirements for lay persons and volunteers serving in positions as mentioned in Policy Item #6 would be on an abbreviated form to lessen the burden of reporting. Reporting may be done on forms provided by the District that can be submitted through their local church. A system of online reporting may be offered.