

Background Check Policy and Process For  
Adult Advisors, Leaders, Volunteers  
Presbyterian Youth Triennium

**Presbyterian Youth Triennium Background Check Policy**

It is the policy of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, sponsors of the Presbyterian Youth Triennium (“PYT”) that all adults who attend the PYT must undergo and submit to a background check.

As a part of the application process to attend the PYT, adult advisors, adult leaders, and adult volunteers (hereafter collectively “Adult Volunteers”) must fill out and sign a form for a background check. Any adult refusing to cooperate in the process will be banned from attending the PYT. A background check will be performed on each Adult Volunteer within six (6) months of the PYT. The background check will be reviewed by PYT staff. If a background check is found unacceptable based upon criteria in the PYT Background Check Process, the Adult Volunteer will be banned from attending the PYT.

Any congregation or presbytery which is aware of an issue of concern in the background of an Adult Volunteer (ex. a prior conviction for violence, neglect or sexual abuse of a minor, finding of inappropriate conduct by a congregation or presbytery after an investigation under the provisions of the *Book of Order*) must report those concerns to the PYT National Registrar or other PYT national staff when the local registrar proposes the adult to attend the PYT as a chaperone/Adult Volunteer.

**Presbyterian Youth Triennium Background Check Process**

PYT staff will post this Policy and Process on the PYT website and will email it to local delegation registrars no later than December 31, 2015. Delegation registrars who sign up after that date will receive a copy by email and/or in hard copy as well as reminders through the private Facebook Registrar Group from January 1, 2016, until the start date of the PYT.

Consistent with this Policy and Process document, local registrars will link to the Background Screening Consent Release form as well as instructions for completing the consent process. Registrars will direct prospective Adult Volunteers to the Consent Release form and instruct them to fill it out and turn it in. The Adult Volunteer will need to fill out the form and provide an electronic signature and sent it digitally to Praesidium, Inc. (“Praesidium”), the contractor engaged to perform the background checks. Easy to follow and direct instructions will be provided to registrars and adults completing the consent release form.

The cost of the background check will be included in the registration fee/cost for adult participants. That fee will be paid to Praesidium in the year of the PYT and Praesidium will perform the background check within six (6) months of the PYT and send the results to the

PYT National Registrar. The process is fast; it takes approximately 5-15 minutes for the report on a background check to be issued.

Completed background checks will be placed by Praesidium into a confidential folder/database. Only the National Registrar and designated PYT staff will have access to that database. Background check reports will be reviewed by the National Registrar and the Triennium Administrator as well as the Triennium Administration Assistant. If a report contains a flag or any information of concern to the review team the report will be shared with the Associate for Risk Management of the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

The PYT National Registrar and PYT administrative staff will work with the sponsoring presbytery/church (delegation sponsors) and share the results of a completed background reports with the local registrar of the delegation.

If a background check shows an issue of concern, the local registrar will be notified and PYT staff will work with that delegation to determine whether or not the adult may attend the PYT.

Reports containing the following criminal convictions or inappropriate conduct will result in an adult applicant being barred from attending the PYT:

1. Arrest for a misdemeanor or felony, especially if the crime involved:
  - Murder, violence, the threat of violence, wanton endangerment or kidnapping involving an adult or minor;
  - Sexual misconduct, sexual violence, sexual assault or sexual abuse that involves an adult or a minor;
  - Any crime involving the abuse or neglect of a minor or endangering the welfare of a minor;
  - Creation, possession, transfer or any involvement with child pornography or other child sexual crimes;
  - Any use or misuse of technology that involved crimes against minors, including misuse of technology for sexual purposes;
  - Convictions involving the use of weapons, such as robbery, burglary using a weapon;
  - Arson;
  - Criminal damages to person or property;
  - Prostitution, solicitation, promoting prostitution or human trafficking;
  - Manufacture, trafficking or sale of illegal drugs;
  - Providing alcohol, tobacco or drugs to minors and any crime that involves endangering the welfare of a minor
2. Repeated offenses that indicate a pattern of poor judgment, such as two or more arrests for driving while intoxicated or driving under the influence.

3. A report from any reliable source that an adult has a serious criminal charge pending and unresolved, including those charges listed in paragraph 1, above. Such a report should be checked and confirmed, if possible.
4. A report from any reliable source that an adult engaged in an act, including acts that violate local, state or federal law or the *Book of Order*, that led a congregation or presbytery to investigate the adult and take action against the adult.

**The national PYT staff shall have final say on whether an Adult Volunteer may attend the PYT. If an Adult Volunteer has an issue in the Volunteer's background which is not on the above list, but which is of concern to national PYT staff, national PYT staff will notify the congregation and presbytery of that concern, but the PYT staff has the final authority to deny an Adult Volunteer the right to attend the PYT.**

The release signed by prospective Adult Volunteers will include a release that permits PYT staff to share the results of the background check with congregations and presbyteries. If a background check shows a result that prompts PYT national staff to refuse to allow an adult to attend the PYT, PYT staff should share the results of that background check with the adult's congregation and presbytery. If a background check shows a result that does not prompt PYT national staff to refuse to allow an adult to attend the PYT, but does show a criminal conviction for an offense for which staff believe a congregation and/or presbytery should be notified, staff shall make that notification. For example, if an adult applicant has several convictions for DUI and national PYT staff is concerned that the volunteer may drive youth to events in their home presbytery, they may report those multiple convictions to the adult's congregation and presbytery.

### **Background**

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, as sponsors of the PYT, and the staff who organize the PYT, always seek to provide a safe experience for youth who attend the PYT. The PYT national staff has historically expected that local delegations sponsors (congregations, presbyteries) who select Adult Volunteers will carefully vet the Adult Volunteers. Adult Volunteers should be people of high ethical and moral background with no history of serious criminal infractions or violations of provisions of the *Book of Order*, especially infractions that indicate that an Adult Volunteer might pose a danger to youth.

To this end the PYT administration has required delegation sponsors to run and provide copies of background checks of Adult Volunteers. PYT administration has also made it a practice and policy to require background checks on all adult leadership and volunteers it engages and provides abuse prevention policy training to them. In the ongoing effort to improve the consistency, quality and oversight of the background check process and to ensure that every effort has been made to screen the Adult Volunteers who provide such an important service to the youth who attend the PYT, and thus to the church –the PYT national administrative staff has implemented this Policy and Process.