

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY & PROCEDURES GUIDELINES

PURPOSE:

1. To help provide a caring and safe environment for children and youth in our congregation.
2. To help reduce congregational legal and liability exposure.

REDUCING THE RISK OF CHILD ABUSE

In an effort to create the safest possible environment within _____, several prevention measures will be used with volunteer workers who have a role working with children and youth, and all paid staff. These measures include completion of clearances as required by North Carolina law, provisions for regular training on Recognizing and Responding to Suspicions of Child Maltreatment (R+R), observance of the six-month rule, use of the two-adult rule, standards for appropriate classroom discipline and open classrooms.

1. Six-Month Rule

All volunteer workers with children or youth are required to be a member or regular attender of _____ for at least six (6) months. Volunteers who are not members or regular attenders of _____ may work as part of a "team ministry" such as Vacation Bible School, provided that they are regular attenders of another congregations and/or a volunteer in good standing of other children's and youth serving groups (i.e.; Boy Scouts, Girls Scouts, 4-H, etc.) and/or a school teacher or aide; and volunteer with the recommendation of an elected leader who has known them for at least six (6) months and approval of the appointed designee of _____.

2. Screening & Clearances

- The relevant hiring authorities will screen any potential employees of the church using procedures at least as comprehensive as the procedures applicable to volunteers.

"Faith-based and community organizations have tremendous ability to serve individuals, families, and communities through means that are different from those of government and with capacity that often exceeds that of government. These organizations lift people up, keep families strong, and solve problems at the local level."

**Executive Order
13831**

- An outside background check will be performed for all potential employees through a private provider of record check service or a state law enforcement agency.
- If the screening process reveals any information that causes concern that the applicant poses a threat of abuse to children, youth or others in the church, or has a history of abuse directed against another person, the hiring authority will remove the applicant from consideration for employment within the church.

3. Staff Training

All volunteer workers who have a role working with children and youth and all paid staff are required to read the _____ *“Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures”* and to sign a form indicating that they have read and understand the policy and agree to abide by it. Anyone failing to do so will not be permitted to serve until the policy has been read and the form signed. Volunteers are required to take [R+R Training](#) prior to direct contact with children and youth and periodically in future years as necessary to be updated on changes made by the _____ or North Carolina law.

4. Two-Adult Rule

Whenever possible, teachers will be assigned in teams of two or more per Sunday school hour to every class of children or youth. Concerted effort will be made to recruit sufficient numbers of volunteer teachers to permit such team teaching. Other church sponsored or community groups of children or youth who meet at the church should have two or more leaders present whenever possible. When the group includes both boys and girls, both male and female leaders should be present. If the group stays overnight at the church, or if a church sponsored group leaves the premises, two or more leaders must be present and must include at least one male and one female if the group is a mixed gender.

5. Supervision

- For activities that include transportation to a location/event that is a one-hour or more drive, two leaders are required for each vehicle that transports children or youth.
- The leaders become responsible when the scheduled activity begins. Until then, parents or guardians are responsible for their children. Leaders remain responsible until the children or youth have been picked up by a parent, guardian, or a person authorized by a parent or guardian to pick up the child or youth. Leaders should not send children out to find their parents, and they should not release any child or youth to await transportation without appropriate supervision.
- Parents are responsible for their children when at church and the children are not in a church-sponsored activity for children or youth.

- Classrooms, childcare rooms, and any area in which programs for children or youth are taking place may be visited without prior notice by staff, parents, or other volunteers. No windows may ever be totally blocked so as to prevent visual observation into the classroom.
- In the event that two leaders cannot be present in the room, such that one leader is alone in a room with one or more children or youth, a door from the room must be left open. The leader should not position himself or herself in the room such that other people passing in the hallway cannot see him or her.
- Furthermore, at any counseling session with children or youth, the door of the room used must remain open for the entire session. The session should be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance.
- Each classroom for children and youth should ideally have a door with an observation window. If it does not, and two leaders are not present in the room, then the door must remain open at all times.
- For children under age eleven, a leader or youth volunteer will accompany children to the restroom. They will ensure that the hallway to the restroom and the restroom are safe, and be responsible for children returning from the restroom. They may assist any child under six in the restroom. No leader may touch a person's private areas unless necessary to change a diaper or take any other therapeutic measure.
- All leaders will avoid any improper and unwelcomed touching of children or youth, and should be particularly sensitive to the age of the children or youth with whom they interact.

6. Open Classrooms

Classrooms or childcare rooms may be visited without prior notice by church staff, parents, or other volunteer church workers, e.g., Sunday School Superintendent. Brief observations of childcare rooms and classrooms of children or youth may be conducted during Sunday School hours.

7. Community Groups of Children and Youth

Leaders of community groups of children or youth who use the facilities are required to read the "Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures" and to sign a form indicating that they have read and understand the policy and agree to abide by it. If the groups are under the control of _____ (i.e.; Boy Scouts), they are required to provide copies of the clearances to _____, in addition to any requirements placed by their organization. If the groups are not under the control of _____ (i.e.; Girl Scouts), the organization must provide a letter verifying that they are complying with the requirements of North Carolina law. The facilities will not be made available to any organization not complying with this policy.

8. Discipline

- Leaders may not spank, hit, grab, shake, or otherwise physically discipline anyone.
- Any disciplinary problems by a leader should be brought to the attention of the staff in charge. Please see Section IX regarding the process of reporting.

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

The following procedures should be followed by individuals to report allegations concerning child abuse.

1. Mandated reporters (anyone who observes or becomes aware of any alleged incident of child abuse) must make an immediate and direct report of suspected child abuse to your local [Department of Social Services \(DSS\) or law enforcement](#).
2. If the allegations in any way concern a member of the clergy, report the alleged incident(s) immediately to your local DSS or law enforcement.
3. Parental Notification
If an incident has occurred on church property or during a church-sponsored event, the parents/guardians of any minor involved in any allegation of abuse shall be immediately notified by the staff member in charge of the program or the Minister.
4. Initial Response
Upon receipt of a Suspected Child Abuse Report, any individual accused of such conduct will be temporarily relieved of all duties and responsibilities involving youth or children pending an appropriate investigation.

THE CONGREGATION'S RESPONSE

- Treat any allegation of abuse seriously. Do not ignore the allegations in the hope they will go away.
- No one should confront the accused with the allegations.
- No one should be drawn into a discussion of the truth or falsity of the allegations.
- No one should assess blame.
- Everyone involved should observe confidentiality for both the victim and the accused.
- The accused should be immediately suspended from his or her duties.
- Always show care and comfort for the alleged victims, the accused, and their families.
- Communicate a sincere commitment to their spiritual and emotional well-being.
- The accused should be advised to seek legal or other counsel.

POLICY REVIEW

The "Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures" of _____
shall be reviewed periodically by _____.

Congregational Administrator:

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Staff/Volunteer Member:

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____