

*Date Approved/Revised:*

*Approved By:*

## **PREVENTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH ABUSE**

### **Statement of Policy:**

Members of <Church Name> come from a variety of experiences, backgrounds and needs. Many of <Church Name> ministries have young married and single adults who have children in our preschool, children and youth areas. Church leadership is committed to providing an environment which is as safe as possible for children and youth who attend the church or any sponsored programs or activities, and to take the necessary precautions to protect church leaders from accusations or suspicions.

Church leadership recognizes the need to have formal, written policies and guidelines to help prevent the opportunity for, or the appearance of, abuse to a minor. The following procedures are not based on a lack of trust in a particular worker but instead are needed to protect our preschoolers, children, youth, employees, volunteers and the entire church body.

*"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them." Mark 10:14, 16*

*"Now it is required that those who have been given trust must prove faithful."  
1 Corinthians 4:2*

### **Procedures:**

#### **1.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

.01 By fostering awareness of appropriate, as well as inappropriate behaviors in the presence of minors, <Church Name>, as part of the body of Christ, will demonstrate Christian love and respect for one another.

.02 Leadership recognizes that certain people have exceptional talents for teaching and supporting the growth and development of <Church Name>'s children and youth, and we wish to encourage them to use their spiritual gifts. At the same time however, we have set certain criteria on those adults who choose to serve in this capacity so as to protect the well-being of our preschoolers, children and youth.

.03 Our intent is not to be judgmental, for we are all accountable to God. We rely on God's wisdom in developing, implementing and carrying out His will through these guidelines. Compassion and truth will be the guiding forces for any investigation, reporting or follow-up action that results from the procedures as outlined in this policy.

.04 Congregational support is critical for adherence to this policy. The limited nature of our resources, and our desire to devote as much as possible to the work of the Lord dictate that this policy be fully understood by every member of our congregation and extended family. This will enable staff and leadership to do what is within their power to preserve the church resources for the work of the Lord.

## **2.0 PROHIBITED BEHAVIOR**

.01 The following behaviors are prohibited for all paid employees and volunteers:

- Threatening or inflicting physical injury upon a child and youth, other than by accidental means.
- Committing any sexual offense against a child or youth, or engaging in any sexual contact with a child or youth.
- Making any kind of sexual advance, request for sexual favors, or engaging in other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

## **3.0 WORKER ENLISTMENT AND SCREENING**

.01 Individuals considered for a position in the preschool, children and youth areas of ministry must be members in good standing of <Church Name> for a minimum of three months before serving in these areas.

.02 All paid workers and volunteers working with preschool, children and youth will complete the Screening Form for Those Working With Preschoolers, Children or Youth. Volunteers will also need to complete the Volunteer Ministry Application. All paid workers must also complete the Criminal Records Check Authorization as outlined in the personnel Section of this Policies and Procedures Manual.

.03 Names of all potential workers will be submitted to the ministerial staff as an additional screening procedure. A minister or ministry leader responsible for that particular ministry area will interview all preschool, children and youth volunteer workers. They will use the Volunteer Ministry Application form to perform these evaluations. Additional information concerning the applicant may be required in the review process.

.04 All workers, volunteer or paid, will be asked to provide personal references on the above mentioned Screening Form. At least two of these references will be checked.

.05 The steps listed above will need to be completed prior to the person being allowed to serve in the preschool, children or youth ministries. Church leadership cannot assume that a person's prior behaviors are proper without first verifying their past.

.06 Individuals who have been arrested for, charged with, under probation for, or convicted of either sexual or physical abuse cannot be used to serve nor will they be employed for any church sponsored activity or program for preschool, children or youth.

.07 Adult survivors of child abuse will be asked to meet with a staff member prior to working in the preschool, children or youth areas.

.08 A Criminal Records Check Authorization will be ran on applicants whose reference checks raise doubt concerning morals or past volunteer experience.

#### **4.0 GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS OF CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS**

##### **4.1 Volunteer Conduct**

.01 Under no circumstances shall a volunteer be alone with a child behind a closed door. Two adults must always be present in each room where children are present.

.02 Whenever possible the door to classrooms should be kept open or, in the case of rooms with Dutch doors, the top half of the door should be kept open.

.03 Classes shall remain in the assigned spaces. If there is to be a change, the ministry Director must be informed and approve the change.

.04 Special care should be taken by volunteers to ensure young children are not left in their classroom unattended.

.05 Classroom doors must never be locked while occupied.

.06 Volunteers shall always wear their assigned name tags while on duty.

.07 Two adult volunteers must be in all preschool rooms at drop-off and pick-up times. If one of the volunteers has not arrived, a parent must be asked to stay in the room until the second volunteer arrives.

.08 With pre-school and kindergarten children, only a parent or other person specifically designated by the parent and known to the volunteer may pick up children. Parents will be requested to provide the Director with any special information regarding a possible child custody dispute where leadership should pay particular attention to who picks up the child. First and second grade children may be released without being picked up by a parent or other designated person if the parent provides written permission to do so. Third grade and older children will be released at the end of class unless the parents provide special instructions to the contrary. When the parents must pick up a child, the parents should do so immediately after the service and before going to coffee hour or other activities.

.09 Volunteers will be able to reach the Director on church grounds by the use of a church assigned mobile radio which is kept in her possession at all times.

.10 Younger children should wear a nametag to allow easy identification.

.11 Touching to comfort or affirm a child in an age-appropriate manner is permitted. Children in first grade or order should not sit in the lap of volunteers. Volunteers shall not touch children in genital areas except as necessary to change a diaper or to assist a child in the bathroom as noted below.

.12 A volunteer will change a child's diaper after each session.

.13 The Director shall prescribe, and communicate to the volunteers, precautionary measures for dealing with dirty diapers, blood, vomit and the like, such as the use of protective gloves. Any items needed for the precautionary measures will be provided by the church. These rules will be updated as new knowledge becomes available.

.14 Either men or women may change diapers if it is done in the open and not behind closed doors.

.15 Only adult female volunteers may assist children in the bathroom and only where necessary in the case of handicapped individuals and small children. Special arrangements, which may include a male volunteer assisting an older handicapped boy in the bathroom, may be made with the consent of the parents and the Director. When a

child is taken to a bathroom outside the room, someone must check the bathroom before the child is permitted to enter to ensure it is safe.

## **4.2 Discipline of Children**

.01 Physical discipline, such as spanking, is never permitted. Using physical restraint to prevent a child from doing something disruptive or dangerous is permitted and may, in some instances, be necessary. Affirmation and encouragement is always appropriate.

.02 The Director shall advise volunteers on the best age-appropriate discipline methods.

.03 The behavior of a child who is a constant disruption to a class should be discussed with his or her parents and the Director. In appropriate circumstances, the parents can be asked to attend class to observe or control the problem behavior. If the behavior persists, the child may be removed from the class. A child who is a danger to other children shall be removed immediately.

## **4.3 Continuing Training for Volunteers**

.01 The Director shall encourage volunteers to take advantage of ongoing continuing education opportunities. Some classes may be mandatory.

.02 The Director shall communicate the substance of these guidelines to all volunteers, all of whom must agree to comply with them.

.03 Mandatory training shall be provided on an annual basis for fire and building safety, the statutory requirements for the mandatory reporting of child abuse, the definition of abuse and other operational guidelines. Volunteers who do not attend this training will be relieved of their volunteer service.

.04 Fire drills shall be conducted for every classroom at least once each year.

## **4.4 Communication with Parents**

.01 Volunteers should attempt to keep open lines of communication with parents.

.02 All children who attend more than three times must be registered with the children's education program. Immediate registration is encouraged. The registration form will include information on special needs, disabilities, continuing medications and will be updated annually.

.03 Parents shall always be permitted to observe in a classroom although the volunteer may tell the parent that his or her presence may be disruptive to the child.

.04 Parents should be given a summary of the guidelines which have an impact on them.

.05 Parents shall be clearly advised as to where to report suspected abuse or other concern regarding a classroom situation and be assured that they will not be retaliated against for making a report.

.06 Parents shall be advised that they must pick up their children no later than ten (10) minutes after the service is over unless special arrangements are made, with consent of the volunteers concerned.

.07 Parents shall be encouraged to change diapers and take children to the bathroom before class and between services to avoid problems during class.

.08 Parents shall not leave a child if the child has a fever or other severe illness within the past 24 hours. Parents must advise the volunteers if the child is on medication.

.09 Information concerning the sleeping accommodations for children at any overnight event shall be made available to parents.

#### **4.5 Staffing of the Children's Program**

.01 There shall be a minimum of two (2) adult qualified volunteers assigned to each class, and a minimum of one (1) assigned to each "break-out group" which is part of a larger class. The volunteers assigned to a class may not all be in the same family. In Kindergarten and pre-school rooms, at least one (1) of the volunteers must be female.

.02 The ratio of volunteers to children should never be less than 1:7 for pre-school classrooms and 1:9 for school age classrooms.

.03 There shall always be a Coordinator on duty while class is in session who will make roving checks of all classrooms. The checks shall be on an irregular basis so that the time of the visit cannot be predicted from week to week.

.04 The Director shall make provision for last-minute replacements of a volunteer who cannot be present on a given day. If the required number of volunteers cannot be obtained, the class must be cancelled or combined with another class.

.05 Parents may be requested to work in children's rooms to fill in or substitute for other volunteers.

.06 To ensure that there shall be sufficient substitutes available when the regular volunteer cannot attend, the Children's Ministry Team, in conjunction with the Director, shall develop a program to encourage parents to undergo the volunteer screening process and to screen, on a preliminary basis, parent substitutes.

## **5.0 GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS OF YOUTH PROGRAMS**

### **5.1 Physical Contact**

.01 Back rubs, neck rubs, massages, kissing, or similar contact are not allowed. Side-by-side hugs are to be used instead of full body contact, especially when working with teenagers. Touching need not be completely avoided, but staff and volunteers must be aware of how it looks and how the person being touched may interpret the contact.

### **5.2 Staffing Considerations for Planned Activities**

.01 A minimum of two (2) adults who have completed the required screening and training should be present for all activities. A specific ratio of leaders to youth is not suggested; instead, the ratio should be appropriate for the activity being undertaken. The youth's parent or guardian must grant any exceptions to the two-adult rule and the Minister of Youth should be contacted in advance and advised that permission has been obtained.

.02 Any one-on-one meeting involving a youth must be conducted with the door open. Planned one-on-one lunches with members of the opposite sex must be held in public places and may only occur if (1) proper approval has been given by the parent or guardian, (2) the designated church official has been notified, and (3) separate

transportation is used. At no time shall a youth worker pursue a dating relationship with a student.

### **5.3 Unplanned Meetings Between Director and Youth.**

.01 Unplanned contacts between a youth and the Director or youth volunteers shall, insofar as possible, be conducted under the same rules as are planned activities. It shall not be a violation of this policy, however, for the Director to talk with a youth in the Director's office with the door closed, when the youth has requested the closed meeting, providing; (1) the door is closed for a relatively brief time, (2) the Director informs the Associate Minister or his designate at the beginning of the meeting, (3) the Director informs the Associate Minister of his designate at the end of the meeting, (4) the Associate Minister of his designate keeps a confidential record of the meeting, its duration and the identity of the youth involved, and (5) such meetings are infrequent.

### **5.4. Driving Rules**

.01 Only leaders or other qualified, screened individuals may drive. All drivers must have, if requested to, show to the person in charge of an event, a valid driver's license and proof of insurance. When one vehicle is used for an event, the two-adult rule still applies unless parental permission is obtained prior to the trip. When several vehicles are taken for an event, keeping the other vehicles in sight is an acceptable substitute for the two-adult rule. The number of persons per vehicle must not exceed the number of seatbelts, and seatbelts must be worn by all occupants.

.02 Leaders and volunteers who drive a church owned vehicle on a consistent basis must be additionally screened by completing an Application For Inclusion On the Approved Drivers List. The information on this form will be used to screen the potential driver through the church's insurance company and the State's Department of Motor Vehicles for the purpose of determining if the requested drivers' driving records indicate that he or she is a safe driver.

.03 If the event requires the use of a church owned vehicle, please refer to the Use of Church Vehicle policy as documented in the Facilities Section of the church's Policies and Procedures Manual.

### **5.5 Overnight and Trip Rules**



.01 Written Permission and Medical Consent forms must be completed prior to the trip. Two-deep adult leadership must be followed throughout the trip, with any exceptions clearly stated and approved in advance by the parent or guardian. The total number of adults on each trip will be adjusted according to the requirement of the planned activities.

.02 Parent chaperons must complete a Screening Form for Those Working With Preschoolers, Children or Youth before supervising an event sponsored by <Church Name> located off church premises.

## **6.0 REPORTING AND INVESTIGATIONS**

### **6.1 Reporting Requirements**

.01 All volunteers and employed children or youth workers shall immediately report and document any incident of abuse or violation of the two-adult or open door policy of which they have knowledge or which they have observed. Any person making such a report shall keep the information strictly confidential.

### **6.2 Incident of Abuse Defined**

.01 An "incident of abuse" means any occurrence in which any person:

- Has threatened or inflicted physical injury upon a child, youth or vulnerable adult, other than by accidental means, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.
- Commits or allows to be committed any sexual offense against a child, youth or vulnerable adult, or engages in any sexual contact with a child, youth or vulnerable adult, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.
- With respect to if a child, youth, or vulnerable adult makes any kind of sexual advance, or makes a request for sexual favors, or engages in sexually motivated physical contact, or engages in other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.

### **6.3 Reporting Procedure**

.01 The person reporting an incident of abuse shall contact:

- The Minister of Children if an incident of abuse involves a child (or in his/her absence an Associate Minister)
- The Minister of Youth if an incident of abuse involves a youth (or in his/her absence an Associate Minister)
- The Associate Minister if an incident of abuse involves a vulnerable adult (or in his/her absence the Executive Minister)
- The Executive Minister in all cases where the Associate Minister is absent and a report is required to be made to him

.02 The reporter shall inform him or her of all relevant facts with respect to the incident of abuse. Upon receiving a report of an incident of abuse, the person receiving the report, together with the reporter, shall complete the written Suspicion of Child Abuse Report. However, in all cases where the alleged wrongdoer is the person to whom a report should be made, he or she shall be considered absent for purposes of this reporting procedure.

#### **6.4 Imminent Threat**

.01 In all cases where an imminent threat of continued or additional abuse exists, any witness shall immediately contact a church Security Guard on call at <Church Name> and request that the guard take immediate steps to ensure the safety of the alleged victim. After the safety of the alleged victim has been secured, the personal witnessing the incident of abuse shall complete a written Suspicion of Child Abuse Report.

#### **6.5 Obligation to Report to the Child Abuse Investigators**

.01 In all cases where any child or youth worker has reasonable cause to believe that a child or youth, known to the child or youth worker in an official or professional capacity, may be abused or neglected, the worker shall make a report to the local law enforcement agency's child abuse investigators. If the child or youth worker is in doubt regarding whether a report should be made, he or she shall telephone the agency anonymously and discuss the situation with the counselor to determine whether a report should be made. The child or youth worker shall make a written record of the name and title of the counselor with whom he or she spoke and the recommendation made by the counselor.

## **6.6 Responding to the Report**

.01 When someone receives a report of an incident of abuse, he or she shall immediately take all steps necessary to ensure the safety of the alleged victim. After the safety of the alleged victim has been secured, and after the report has been appropriately documented, the person receiving the report shall:

- Immediately contact parents or guardian of the alleged victim to inform each one of them of the incident and shall ensure each parent or guardian has been notified. If one parent or guardian is the alleged wrongdoer, the person receiving the report shall contact the other parent or guardian and inform him or her of the incident individually.
  - Immediately contact <Church Name> legal counsel, who shall within 72 hours of the report conduct an investigation (with the assistance of the Executive Minister and either the Minister of Children or Youth if the attorney requires such assistance) and determine whether there is reasonable cause to believe that the abuse may have occurred.
  - Take all reasonable steps necessary to ensure that the alleged wrongdoer has no contact with the alleged victim pending investigation.
  - Take all steps necessary to ensure that the alleged wrongdoer is barred from further work with children, youth or vulnerable adults pending the investigation.

## **6.7 Investigation**

.01 Upon learning of a reported incident of abuse, the attorney shall conduct the investigation under the supervision of a "Supervising Committee," which shall consist of the Executive Minister, Associate Minister, Minister of Children, Minister of Youth, and attorney.

.02 The Supervising Committee shall ensure:

- That the investigation is kept strictly confidential and that all evidentiary privileges are maintained.
- That the investigation is thoroughly documented and that a confidential file is maintained.

- That all relevant witnesses are contacted and interviewed.
- That the interests of the alleged victim and alleged wrongdoer are protected during the investigative phase.
- That the attorney, within 72 hours of the report and in consultation with the Supervising Committee, reaches a conclusion whether there is reasonable cause to believe abuse may have occurred.

## **6.8 Conclusion of No Abuse**

.01 If the attorney concludes that there is not reasonable cause to believe the abuse may have occurred, the attorney shall provide a written report to the Executive Council of <Church Name>.

.02 The written report shall:

- Preserve the anonymity of the victim and the witnesses.
- Summarize the allegations and the steps taken to investigate them. Set forth the conclusion and the reasons supporting the conclusion.
- Set forth the temporary actions taken by the Supervising Committee and also set forth a recommendation of additional action to be taken by the Executive Council in response to the reported incident of abuse.

.03 Upon the request of any member of the Executive Council, the attorney shall meet with the Executive Council to discuss the written report. The Executive Council shall have the right of access to the investigative file and the power to direct further investigation if advisable. The Executive Council shall also have the power to take all reasonable action it deems appropriate in response to the reported incident of abuse, upon consultation with the Deacon Body if such consultation is required.

## **6.9 Conclusion of Abuse**

.01 If the attorney concludes that there is reasonable cause to believe abuse may have occurred, the attorney shall provide a written report to the Executive Council and shall meet with the Executive Council to discuss the report.

.02 The written report shall:

- Identify the alleged victim, the alleged wrongdoer, and all witnesses identified and contacted.
  - Set forth the allegations and the steps taken to investigate the allegations.
  - Set forth the facts revealed by each significant witness.
  - Set forth the conclusion and the reasons supporting the conclusion; and
  - Set forth the temporary actions taken by the Supervising Committee and also set forth a recommendation of additional actions to be taken by the Executive Council.

.03 The Executive Council shall have the power to take all reasonable action it deems appropriate in response to the reported incident of abuse, upon consultation with the Deacon Body if such consultation is required.

.04 In addition, the attorney shall:

- Report the incident to the appropriate local law enforcement agency's child abuse investigators.
- Report the incident to all other appropriate governmental authorities.
- Send notice of a claim or potential claim to <Church Name> general liability insurance carrier and, if appropriate, the sexual misconduct liability insurance carrier, as soon as possible, but in no event later than thirty (30) days after receiving the report of the incident or such shorter period of time as set forth in any applicable policy of insurance. The attorney shall also provide the carrier with all other information and cooperation such carrier shall lawfully require.
- Cause the crisis response plan to be implemented.
- If the incident of abuse involves a member of the clergy, report the incident to the appropriate denomination office.
- Conduct all further investigations as directed by the Executive Council.

## **6.10 Violations of the Two-Adult or Open-Door Policy**

.01 Upon receiving information indicating a violation of the two-adult or open-door policy, the person receiving the report shall document the alleged violation by completing the Violation of Child Abuse Policy Report and discuss the violation with the person violating the policy.

.02 If any person refuses to comply with the policy or continues to violate the policy, such person shall be barred from further youth or children's work.

## **7.0 CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN**

### **7.1 General Guidelines**

.01 Select a spokesperson (Senior Pastor) to handle dissemination of information to staff, media and congregation. In his absence, the Executive Minister will be the spokesperson.

.02 Have ready for release, a clear position statement stating <Church Name>'s policy regarding sexual abuse of minors and established safeguards.

.03 Select an attorney who will be present with the spokesperson while answering any investigative questions from the police or social service agencies.

.04 Use text or prepared public statement to answer press and inform congregation. At all times, the privacy and confidentiality of all those involved must be strictly maintained.

.05 Church spokesperson should keep in mind that information given to or obtained by news media may have a bearing on the church's liability, so careful judgment should be exercised.

.06 Anticipate media questions.

.07 If the spokesperson does not know the answer to a question, he should simply state, "I don't know, but I'll find out for you."

### **7.2 Guidelines for Spokesperson**

.01 Be prepared.

.02 Define strategy.

.03 Be candid and honest.

.04 Never say "no comment".

.05 Be clear, concise and in context. Do not answer more than what is asked. Do not volunteer information.

.06 Take notes.

.07 Do not ask for quote review.

.08 Always respond to all calls and questions as quickly as possible.