

POLICY FOR REDUCING THE RISK OF CHILD ABUSE

(Adult Applicant)

1. Purpose

Recognizing God's tender love and concern for children (see Luke 18:16), we believe it is our responsibility to do all that is reasonably possible to protect the children of this church from being physically or sexually abused while they are under our care. It is also our responsibility to guard our workers from being suspected or falsely accused of wrongful behavior toward a child. Therefore, we have adopted the following guidelines for screening and supervising all of our workers.

2. Screening of workers

- a. "Workers" are individuals who regularly supervise or have custody of minors, whether through pastoral ministries, the nursery, Sunday School, Free Kids, Vacation Bible School, camps, or other child activities.

"Applicants" are individuals who are applying to become a worker with children.

"Staff member" is an individual in a paid ministry position that has oversight over the particular area the applicant is applying for.

- b. All applicants for work with children will complete the following screening process to be approved for work with children. Please note that no applicant will be approved for work with children until he/she has been attending this church for a period of six months (unless the Board of Elders otherwise recommends approval).

Application form: All applicants must complete a "Worker Application" and "Worker Application Security Supplement"; minors should have a parent or a guardian witness these forms.

Personal references: Applicants must also obtain satisfactory references from at least three people who are not relatives or employers. References will preferably be interviewed in person or by telephone with the staff member completing a "Record of Personal Contact" form.

Personal interview: Finally, a staff member, or individual appointed by the appropriate staff member, will personally interview each applicant.

- c. The Staff member will conduct a background investigation on all applicants for paid staff positions, and, at the discretion of the pastor, may be conducted for any other applicant. This investigation may include: 1) contacting churches or other organizations where the applicant has served; 2) contacting employers for whom the applicant worked within the past five years 3) contacting listed references 4) a criminal background check.

- d. The Staff member will treat all information found during the screening process as confidential and will not be shown to others unless the appropriate staff member deems that limited disclosure is necessary to protect a child from possible harm.
- e. The staff member, after reviewing the necessary information, will make final approval for the applicant to work with children. The staff member will contact the applicant as to whether the applicant has been approved to work with children at our church.

3. Procedures for maintaining a safe environment

- a. **All** workers should pray regularly for the children in our church, thanking God for the privilege of ministering to them and asking Him to protect them from any kind of harm; workers should also pray that God would give them wisdom and discernment so that they will be sensitive to ways to help and protect the children.
- b. All workers must read this policy statement, especially the sections describing signs of abuse and workers' responsibility to report inappropriate behavior. In the event that a worker must spend time with a child alone, the worker must fill out the appropriate "Permit for One-On-One" form and obtain the child's parent's signature.
- c. Restroom Procedures
 - Workers may never take a child alone to the restroom. They must be accompanied by another adult or other children.
 - It is recommended when taking children to the restroom that they should only take children of the same gender.
 - Children in grades 4-6 may be sent in pairs to the restroom without supervision of an adult. Teachers should monitor this situation closely.
 - Children should have as much privacy as possible. Enter a bathroom stall only when absolutely necessary to assist a child and keep the door open. Diapers are only to be changed in designated areas and in the presence of other workers.
- d. Classroom Procedures
 - 1 Physical contact with children should be minimal and only in the presence of other adults. Appropriate touching should be limited to "high five's" brief hugs, or a brief touch on the shoulder.
 - 2 At least two workers should be present whenever possible. No child should be alone with a worker. If a child arrives before other members of your teaching team arrive, prop open the door of your classroom.
 - 3 Window blinds are to be kept open at all times unless it is necessary to darken the room for proper showing of videos or projected audio/visual equipment.

4. Responsibility of workers to admonish or report inappropriate behavior

- a. Workers should watch for two problems:
 - 1) Behavior by anyone in this church, especially a worker, that indicates that he or she may be inclined to abuse, molest, or otherwise harm any child, especially one under the care of this church.
 - 2) Indications that a child under the care of this church is being abused, molested, neglected, or otherwise harmed, whether by someone in this church or outside this church.
- b. Admonishing and reporting inappropriate behavior by a worker
 - 1) If you observe a worker (or another member of the church) talking or acting in a manner that seems innocent but might appear to others to be inappropriate, you should privately admonish that person and encourage him or her to exercise greater care in words and actions (see Matt. 18:15).
 - 2) If you observe a worker (or another member of the church) talking or acting in a way that leads to a reasonable suspicion of improper involvement with a child, or of the potential for improper involvement with a child, you should promptly report your concern to the pastor or to an elder, who will look into the matter and take appropriate corrective measures.
 - 3) Behaviors to watch for in adults working with children:
 - a) Inappropriate comments about sexual matters, especially about or in the presence of children.
 - b) Use of pornography, including inclination toward sexually explicit television shows, movies, books, or magazines.
 - c) Excessive and inappropriate attention to a particular child, especially if it involves an effort to be alone with the child.
- c) Reporting actual or suspected abuse or neglect of a child
 - 1) State law does not require volunteer workers in a church to report actual or suspected child abuse or neglect. Should a worker voluntarily make a report to civil authorities, however, the law provides that he or she will be immune to civil or criminal liability, provided the report was made in good faith and without malicious purpose (cite state statute).
 - 2) No single indicator of abuse or neglect is necessarily cause for alarm, but it may be cause to observe a given person or situation more closely. When

multiple indicators appear together, however, it is appropriate to discuss the situation with someone else in the church or, in urgent cases, to make an actual report to the authorities.

- 3) Indications of physical abuse; child reports injury by others; unexplained bruises, welts, lacerations, burns, fractures, abdominal injuries, or human bites; child is unusually wary of physical contact with adults, demonstrates extremes in behavior, or seems frightened of parents or caretaker.
- 4) Indications of sexual abuse; child reports abuse by others; has difficulty walking or sitting; torn, stained, or bloody underclothing; complaints of pain or itching in genital area; bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal or anal area; unusual interest in or knowledge of sexual matters; or other unusual and excessive behaviors inappropriate for a child of that age.
- 5) Reporting abuse can precipitate severe consequences to a family, so it should never be done casually or thoughtlessly, and certainly not for malicious purposes. At the same time, failing to report abuse can have severe consequences to a child at risk. Therefore, if you have reasonable cause to suspect abuse, you should talk with an appropriate person to see what steps could and should be taken to protect the child and help the family. When time and circumstances permit, talk first with the appropriate staff member or an elder, who will help you to decide what steps are appropriate and, if necessary, who else to contact. At that time a "Suspected Incident of Child Abuse Report Form" must be filled out both by the worker and the elder/staff member.

WORKER APPLICATION

This form is to be completed by all applicants for any position involving the supervision or custody of minors.

Full legal name _____ Date _____

Address _____

1. List other cities you have lived in during the past five years:
2. Marital status: Single Married (only volunteers are obligated to answer this question)
3. Please provide the following information for all of the churches you have regularly attended during the past five years.

Church Name	Pastor's Name	City/State	Dates attended
Church Name	Pastor's Name	City/State	Dates attended
Church Name	Pastor's Name	City/State	Dates attended
Church Name	Pastor's Name	City/State	Dates attended

4. Please describe all previous work, paid or volunteer, in this church or elsewhere, involving children. Give dates, names of churches or organizations, types of work, names of supervisors; use additional paper if necessary).
5. Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? If so, when and indicate on what basis you believe you will go to heaven.
6. Describe any gifts, training, education, or other factors that qualify you to work with Children's Ministry.
7. In what type of Children's Ministry work would you like to be involved? (Use additional paper if necessary).
8. When would you be available to start work?
9. Minimum length of commitment:

10. Please provide the following information for all employers from the past five years. (If you have not been employed in the past five years, please check here - and go to the next section.)

Company Name	Supervisor's Name	Telephone	Dates worked
Company Name	Supervisor's Name	Telephone	Dates worked
Company Name	Supervisor's Name	Telephone	Dates worked
Company Name	Supervisor's Name	Telephone	Dates worked

11. Please arrange for at least three people (not employers or relatives, and preferably the people listed in answer to question number 3 above) to provide personal references on your behalf.

Name	Address	Telephone	Period Known
Name	Address	Telephone	Period Known
Name	Address	Telephone	Period Known

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I have read the church's Policy for Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse. Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by this church's Constitution, Bylaws, and Policy for Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse. I also agree to refrain from any unscriptural conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church.

Signature Date

Witness (Parent or guardian if a minor) Date

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Member, attending six months	Yes No	Former church record satisfactory	Yes No
Application & Release satisfactory	Yes No	Employment record satisfactory	Yes No
Personal References (3) satisfactory	Yes No	Criminal record satisfactory	Yes No
Personal interview satisfactory	Yes No		

Approved for Children's work on _____, 20____ by _____