

## Model Church Children and Youth Protection Policy

Created by  
WRF Member Dr. David Haburchak  
Professor of Medicine at the Medical College of Georgia

Date:

Policy: Children and Youth Protection Policy

*Let the children come to me, do not hinder them for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these.*  
Mark 10:14

Preamble: The Church, like the world, is comprised of sinners, who except for the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, redemption through the cross and resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ, and the providence of our Father are hopelessly blind and lost. The Church, saved by grace through faith in Jesus is, however, called to be both salt and light in a sinful world. Despite our Father's great love for children, much sin against the Father involves such little ones. With the express goal of loving, obeying, and glorifying the Father, we hope to advance His Kingdom through the following policy, possible only through the power provided by Him.

### I. Purpose

(Church Name)\_ Church is committed to provide a safe environment for all covenant children and all children participating in church activities and to protect them from any form of abuse, neglect, or harm. The purpose of this policy and attendant procedures is to prayerfully enhance providential means of prevention and grace-filled responses to sins or alleged sins regarding children under our care

### II. Terms and Definitions

**Abuse and neglect:** Abuse includes any non-accidental activities or statements, physical or non-physical, which could harm a child's spiritual, mental, physical, or sexual welfare or development.

Physical abuse-Any physical force applied by an adult or older youth in a position of authority to a child, youth, or vulnerable adult. Physical force (spanking, shaking, etc.) is not to be used as a means of discipline by leaders in church programs.

Sexual abuse and harassment- Any sexually related or other physical or communicative contact, intimation, simulation, exposure, statement, use of social media, sharing of pornography, or other action deemed inappropriate by any reasonable adult.

Emotional abuse-Inappropriate belittling, humiliating, or angry words and/or actions directed toward a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.

Spiritual abuse- Using religious references to shame or by guilt to motivate a child into a particular action or behavior.

**Child and Youth:** Children under age 18. Under state laws, children under 18 cannot give consent to any form of sexual activity, to include pornography exposure. Children often will not resist abuse or neglect by others because of innocence, ignorance, immaturity, or fear. Children under 18 are often perpetrators of abuse and harassment, however, and are accountable for behaviors, especially since behaviors may repeat and escalate.

Employee and Staff: Any person who works for salary or wages from the church or its ancillary ministries.

Volunteer: Any person not employed by the church who at any time teaches, supervises, or helps with children and youth activities, or is in the present of children or youth.

Leader: An adult designated by the church or any church sponsored organization to have responsibility for children and/or youth. The adult must be a minimum of 18 years of age. Leaders of overnight trips must be least 21 years of age.

Church Sponsored Activity: Any and all gatherings that arise from worship, educational, childcare, fellowship, administrative, pastoral, mission, or recreational events generated or organized by employee, staff, volunteer, or leaders of \_\_\_\_\_ Church, whether on or off campus.

### III. Policy Components and Structure

- A. Education- \_\_\_\_\_ Church will conduct annual education to the congregation on the threat of childhood abuse and neglect, to include current trends and counter-threat activities as well as outcomes from this policy. The Session will make any annual review and report of the activities and outcomes of this policy. At least one hour of special education will be required annually for all who have ministerial contact with children, to include employees, volunteers and leaders. All such persons will in writing annually attest to having reviewed this Policy and the annual report of the Session.
- B. Screening and selection of employees, volunteers, and leaders- All individuals will be initially screened before contact with children using procedures outlined below.
- C. Supervision and accountability- All individuals working with children will wear identification badges both on and off campus except when not physically practical (e.g. swimming), and abide, except in emergencies with the "two-adult" rule and ratio of workers to children appropriate to the scope and location of the activity.
- D. Risk minimization-All activities involving children will be in areas open to observation or visibility. No adults will be alone with any child in any room or area where they can not be seen. All children will be accountable by intake and release procedures using computerized accounting as available. No children will be released to care of unauthorized persons.
- E. Reporting suspected abuse and neglect- In order for this policy to be effective, any person with knowledge of an incident or reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect of any child **Must** according to state law be reported immediately to the Division of Family & Children Services ( 24 hour reporting phone\_\_\_\_\_ ). This includes alleged or suspected abuse involving employees, volunteers, and leaders as defined above and any church members. Immediately afterward, the person suspecting abuse should inform the church leadership, either a pastor, session member, or church administrator. All reports of suspected abuse will be held in strictest confidence and should include the name and address of the child, the person responsible for the care and welfare of the child, and all pertinent information regarding the alleged or suspected abuse or neglect.

Church members and their children who have been accused as perpetrators will be informed, and given pastoral and other appropriate support, advice, and duty limitations during the outside investigatory process and aftermath.

Complaints of inappropriate speech, electronic communication, behavior, actions, or attitudes of employees, volunteers or leaders that represent a proclivity or possible grooming to abuse or disregard of policy, but falling short of actual abuse, should be brought to the immediate attention of the supervisor of that person, pastor, or session member. The person informed will confidentially discuss the complaint with the involved person, and make a written report within 2 weeks to both the Session and the person making the complaint. The seriousness of the complaint or more than one complaint should trigger formal outside investigation and suspension of the accused.

The pastor will notify legal counsel and insurance agent of any abuse report involving church employees, volunteers, or leaders that has been filed with the appropriate local or state agency.

- F. Investigation- Investigation of suspected abuse and neglect is difficult and complex and should be undertaken by trained and experienced professionals. \_\_\_ Church will cooperate fully with outside investigators, and will not conduct interrogation of the child, accused person or a witness. The session will, however, attempt to obtain a reasonable amount of information to have cause to believe that the child has been abused or neglected, in order to conduct actions to safeguard the child, other church children and members, and the person accused. Interviews shall be conducted only by authorized officials of the agency to whom the suspected crime has been reported, or, when appropriate, by legal counsel or persons representing the church in a trained official capacity. All employees and volunteers of the church shall cooperate with the official investigation as requested.
- G. Suspension of church related duties- A person accused of abuse or neglect will be suspended immediately from all church related activities involving children. The Session will monitor the official outside investigation and receive confidential information concerning the incident as may be necessary to determine continuation of employment. The person accused should be suspended on "paid leave" until the investigation is completed. This removal of duty should occur in such a way that an innocent person is not immediately deemed guilty. If the allegation is determined to be unsubstantiated, the employee can be returned to their prior position.
- H. Preservation of records-All documents regarding alleged abuse and neglect will be kept for 10 years, filed by case, with appropriate review of trends and outcomes. They will be used in accordance with criminal and civil law as well as for full and accurate recommendations and disclosures for future employment.
- I. Ministerial care- The \_\_\_ Church will encourage comprehensive spiritual, medical, psychological, and family healing to all touched by abuse and neglect, past, and present. It will facilitate prompt and diligent use of medical and counseling resources within and outside of the church appropriate to needs of individuals and families. Many church members have suffered abuse and are not only in need of healing, but also at risk for

being perpetrators. As part of the overall church mission of healing, it will endeavor to bring about Gospel Redemption from the sins of abuse and neglect.

- J. Kingdom Outreach- because of the high prevalence of abuse and neglect in our community and around the world, the \_\_\_\_\_ Church will reach outside of the local church in projects and affiliations to enhance childhood Christian growth, the preservation of Biblical families, redemptive healing of those affected, full and prompt prosecution and justice for both perpetrators and victims, and the elimination of domestic and international exploitation.

#### Procedures: Youth Ministry Leaders

Purpose: To Glorify God and Enjoy Him Forever

Discipleship: Youth ministers are first and foremost disciples of Jesus Christ. They have not only accepted Him as their only Savior from personal sin unto everlasting life, but have committed themselves to know and follow Jesus. Jesus has called his disciples to make new disciples and teach them to obey and also follow the Lord. There is no greater calling in Youth Ministry.

Marks of a Youth Leader disciple of Christ:

- a. Is Walking and growing in the Lord: The disciple worships, prays, reads, knows, and conducts his life always *In Corem Deo*, in the sight of God and walking with God. The youth ministry leader is always representing God in all that he is, says, and does.
- b. Is a minister of God's church, subject to authority and discipline himself or herself.
- c. Is a self-less servant of the flock, who not only reacts to needs, but anticipates needs and exercises leadership to promote the spiritual growth, unity, and harmony of the church.
- d. Is a fellow pilgrim to youth, to encourage them, while at the same time promoting the authority of parents, teachers, and the church leadership.
- e. Participates in worship and discipleship activities with spirit-filled enthusiasm, and communicates not only enthusiasm but the specifics of information necessary to make the ministry predictable, transparent, and known to both parents and youth.

Screening, Training, Supervision and Conduct:

- a. Potential youth leaders be church members for at least 6 months and must meet screening criteria of nomination by parents (if under 18), or have appropriate references, interview, and criminal background check before approved to work with youth. Application will include faith testimony and reason/goals for participating in ministry.
- b. Approved youth leaders will complete training in child protection and discipleship and will sign statement that they have read and will abide with all appropriate policies and procedures.

- c. All approved youth leaders will be supervised and/or chaperoned at all times and will give written report of their ministry on a monthly basis, outlining the progress of their disciples and their own progress in spiritual growth.
- d. All approved youth leaders will conduct themselves ethically and morally according to the following do's and don'ts:

Do:

- a. Wear name tag at all times, introduce yourself to parents, respectfully seek their advice and abide their counsel.
- b. Communicate encouragement and concerns to both individual youth and their parents, be like Barnabas. Give praise and gratitude as much as possible to everyone.
- c. Be punctual and reliable, safe and faithfully responsible, and full of grace and virtue at all times everywhere
- d. Listen always, even when stressed by time, fatigue, and multiple tasks.
- e. Season all speech with grace and love.
- f. Imitate the sacrificial Love of Christ and aspire to the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit at all times.
- g. Exhibit appropriate physical affection: handshakes, fist bumps, high fives, sitting beside, holding hands in prayer, pats on shoulder or upper back, and brief side hugs.

Don't:

- a. Let yourself get into any place, position, or situation that might be at risk for sexual temptation or the appearance of sexual touching, talk, discussion, or use of internet or social media for purposes of sexual gratification either by yourself or others under your supervision. This includes being alone with students anywhere (such as cars, rooms, or outdoors) without direct observation by others, especially during disrobing or bathing. Don't be put in a position that could lead someone to accuse you their word against yours.
- b. Touch or allow touching of any youth or child in a location or manner that could be interpreted as sexual: kissing, massaging, tickling, holding on a lap, touching legs, patting on buttock or genitals, piggyback rides, touching underwear ("wedgies" and bra snapping), lengthy or front to front embracing.
- c. Speak or comment in a manner that could be taken as sexual harassment: compliments or statements about physical or bodily development or attractiveness.
- d. Bring students into dangerous situations or questionably immoral or immodest entertainment
- e. Drive or operate equipment while distracted, outside of the speed limit, or during unsafe conditions. Stay within you spot in caravans, and do not let students exit the car at any time until it is fully safe.

- f. Let youth escape the safety of your control, wander off, operate vehicles, or engage in immoral or illegal activities.
- g. Use of physical discipline or inappropriate verbal discipline such as anger, sarcasm, or any other word or action that might be construed as physical, verbal, or emotional abuse by members of the church. All disciplinary concerns or problems should be brought to immediate attention of Pastoral Staff, who will investigate and contact parents.
- h. Ignore need for spiritual, physical, emotional or moral discipline among the youth you are leading. These are opportunities to intervene to prevent worse and promote better thoughts and behaviors becoming a disciple of Jesus. Don't fail to immediately report any suspicion of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse by other leaders, youth, or anyone else to the Youth Ministry Staff Leader or Pastor, who will report it to the Session and civil authorities as required.