

Preschool/Child Protection and Ministry Policies

1.00 General Policy and Commitment

2.00 Preschool/Children and/or Youth Ministry Committee (Team)

The church shall establish and elect a preschool/children/ youth committee (team) charged with oversight over all the preschool, children, and youth ministries of the church. (Separate committees can be established for each age group, if the church approves.) They shall be responsible for assuring the quality and integrity of such ministries, implementing the policies of the church designed to assure ministries which are faithful to the church's beliefs and vision, are staffed by persons of highest vision, integrity and commitment to children and teens, and assure that all aspects of such ministries are administered and staffed to assure the safety of, and care for, our children and youth. They shall regularly review the programs and policies in these areas, assure their observance and recommend additional policies, procedures and programs.

2.01 Protection Task Force Subcommittee.

A specific Protection Task Force that is a subcommittee of the larger committee (team) will be established to develop and implement protection policies for the church. These protection policies will be presented by the larger committee (team) to the congregation for approval. (Again, the church may decide to have more than one committee.)

2.02 Relationship with Church Leadership and Parents

The Preschool/Children and/or Youth Ministry Committee (Team) and Protection Task Force shall in all respects work closely with the ministerial staff and volunteer leadership, as well as parents, in furthering this vital area of ministry to our church and community.

3.00 Policies on Leadership Selection, Screening, Hiring, Training and Supervising

Recognizing the highest priority that must be given to assuring that those who work with children and youth be carefully chosen and effectively trained and supervised, the church shall assure a thorough process of screening, training and supervising all who work in these ministries.

3.01 Screening Assurance

Careful and systematic screening of volunteers or paid staff who work with preschool, children and youth will assure all parents/guardians that the church is committed to enduring the safety of those in our care and the quality of our leadership.

3.02 Screening Steps

The specific screening process shall be established by the Protection Task Force Subcommittee.

3.03 General Qualifications for All Leadership

Every volunteer and staff person who works with preschoolers, children, and/or youth shall:

- 1) Confess Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior
- 2) Adhere to the affirmations of faith of the church
- 3) Be a member in good standing for one year
- 4) Be hired or approved in accord with the policies and procedures of the church
- 5) Evidence the skills, attitude and Christian maturity appropriate to the ministry
- 6) Agree to adhere to the church's ministry and preschool, children and youth protection policies
- 7) Have no history of being an abuser or criminal record inconsistent with the ministry task

3.04 Application process for volunteer leadership positions with preschool, children and youth.

A. Volunteer in Ministry Form

All persons being considered for, or seeking, positions working with preschool, children and youth shall complete the "Volunteer in Ministry" form as developed by the Preschool/Children and/or Youth Ministry Committee (Team), providing personal information, references, signed releases authorizing the securing of reference and background checks, and information regarding criminal records.

B. Criminal Records Statement

A declaration of criminal record, orders of civil courts, and other conduct statement, approved by the Preschool/Children and/or Youth Ministry Committee (Team) shall be completed and signed by all candidates.

3.05 Background Checks

Those responsible for screening shall assure thorough background checks are completed and written records maintained of the specific steps taken and information received. These records shall be confidential personnel records and retained. Outside agencies may be employed for these background checks. Candidates will be provided an opportunity to respond to any alleged misconduct which might surface in any background check.

3.06 Reference Checks

References shall be contacted, preferably by phone as well as written communications. Records of communications received and notes from phone or personal conversations shall be maintained. These records shall be confidential personnel records and retained. A checklist of questions shall be developed by the Preschool/Children and/or Youth Ministry Committee (Team) for use in interviews with references. References shall be asked to identify others who may have relevant personal information.

3.07 Interviews

Thorough interviews will be conducted with any candidates by a team of not less than two persons. The Preschool/Children and/or Youth Ministry Committee (Team) shall establish specific objectives, issues and questions to be covered in such interviews. The interview process shall include a thorough discussion of the church's child-safety policies and provide the candidates with copies of church policies and procedures regarding safety and protection matters. Interviewing teams shall provide a written summary of the interview including their observations and recommendations and areas for any further inquiry. The interview report shall be retained as a confidential file item.

3.08 Final Hiring Approval

The church and Preschool/Children and/or Youth Ministry Committee (Team) shall assure a process for the final and formal approval of all persons, paid or volunteer, who work with in this ministry, and maintain the list of approved persons.

3.09 Occasional Workers

The Preschool/Children and/or Youth Ministry Committee (Team) may establish a more limited process for the approval of occasional workers with preschool, children and youth where such persons are not paid employees and not regular workers in this ministry area. However, they must work directly alongside persons who are fully approved. This more limited process shall include an interview, thorough provisions for informing the workers of the safety policies and procedures, and a signed Declaration of Criminal Record, Orders of Civil Courts, and other conduct statements.

3.10 Outside Groups Working with the Church's Preschoolers, Children and Youth

The Preschool/Children and/or Youth Ministry Committee (Team) or Protection Task Force Subcommittee shall assure that any outside organization or persons working with the church's preschoolers, children and youth have employed appropriate screening procedures and have appropriate safety policies and procedures which will be in force in the work with this church.

3.11 Training

The Preschool/Children and/or Youth Ministry Committee (Team) shall assure the development of an comprehensive training program for all workers, paid and volunteer, in this area of ministry.

3.12 Specific Training Programs

A. Mandatory Training

1. Training sessions shall be held not less than annually. Sessions shall be held for all volunteers who work with preschoolers, children and teens to educate them on the policies and procedures for insuring safety and reducing the risk of abuse. Specific training shall be provided by

supervisors, staff or volunteer, in regard to specific policies in the volunteer's area of ministry.

2. Annual training for all paid church staff members shall review the policies and procedures for insuring safety and reducing the risk of abuse.
3. New staff and volunteers must participate in the training program upon beginning their ministry assignments.
4. Records of attendance and program content shall be retained.

B. Training content shall include all the following:

1. Church policies and procedures
2. General "abuse" matters
 - What is abuse?
 - Signs of abuse: physical, emotional, sexual
 - What conduct is inappropriate?
 - Reporting duties to state and church
 - Staff and volunteer screening procedures and purpose of these measures
 - Hearing preschool/children/teen "reports"
 - Legal (civil and criminal) consequences of misconduct
 - Where to get help

3.13 Training Records

The committee shall retain records of training sessions including leadership, program components, and attendees.

3.14 Supervision

The Preschool/Children and/or Youth Ministry Committee (Team) shall assure that effective supervision is provided in all areas within their ministry, and that systems are in place to monitor and measure the competence and performance of all workers. Such supervision would typically include structured sessions of observing leaders and formal times of performance review. More informal and occasional times of encouragement and friendly admonition should be planned.

4.00 General Safety and Health Issues

The Preschool/Children and/or Youth Ministry Committee (Team) and the Protection Task Force Subcommittee shall review all aspects of the church's ministry, giving special care to issues of safety and health, providing periodic reports, assessments and recommendations for appropriate actions by the church and its personnel.

4.01 Recreational Facilities (playgrounds, play areas etc.)

A. Responsibilities

The Preschool/Children and/or Youth Ministry Committee (Team) shall assure that there are assigned responsibilities for oversight and implementation of procedures and operations involving all recreational facilities, and set forth the duties of those responsible in regard to inspections, supervision, records, and incident reports of injuries and accidents.

B. Prohibited Activities

The Preschool/Children and/or Youth Ministry Committee (Team) and Protection Task Force Subcommittee shall expressly prohibit certain activities such as skateboarding in areas where such would pose a risk to others using the property. Such policies shall be enforced, and publicized to the church and, where feasible, in public notices. Other activities may be restricted to certain areas. Behavioral rules for users of such facilities shall also be established.

C. Safety Standards for Facilities and Equipment

Policies shall be developed, publicized and implemented to assure the general safety and good repair of equipment on such playgrounds, and to see that the equipment and surfaces conform to accepted standards. Adequate adult supervision should be required whenever such facilities are being used for church activities. Rules and policies regarding the maximum number as well as ages of children using certain facilities such as preschool and children's play area shall be addressed. In considering appropriate safety standards in such recreational areas, the committee responsible shall consult guidelines and standards published by state agencies, insurance companies and others. They shall develop checklists and routine inspection procedures. Reports of periodic inspections and repairs shall be maintained. Maintenance schedules shall also be established and written records made and retained.

D. Supervision

Policies shall be developed and applied that assure that adequate adult supervision is provided in the use of recreational facilities and equipment.

4.02 Appropriate Space for Preschool and Children

Policies shall assure that appropriate space standards for preschoolers and children are followed including space per child and maximum numbers of children in a class. These policies are intended to assure effective teaching and supervision.

4.03 Staffing Levels

To assure both effective teaching, care and safety, the policy of this church is to seek to meet the following standards:

4.04 General Prohibited or Restricted Activities

A. Prohibited

To minimize undue risks in children and youth activities under church sponsorship, the Preschool/Children and/or Youth Ministry Committee (Team) and Protection Task Force Subcommittee shall establish policies which prohibit certain activities as part of church-sponsored programs whether on church facilities or otherwise. Among such prohibited activities would be bungee jumping, parasailing, high-diving boards, scuba diving, fireworks displays, any vehicle racing or speed contests

B. Restricted

The committee may also establish guidelines for other activities which, while not prohibited, are of such a nature as to require special care or expertise. The guidelines for such activities may include special policies regarding church approval, skilled supervision, training, age limits, and parental approval.

4.05 Food Preparation

The Preschool/Children and/or Youth Ministry Committee (Team) shall establish guidelines and policies regarding food safety. The Protecting Our Church and Children resource provides a “Food Safety Checklist” as a general guide. (See the supplement provided with this manual.)

4.06 General Safety and Health Policy

- A. Phone Access: There shall be access to a telephone on the premises and a cell phone available off the premises when minors are on a trip or at a playground. Important phone numbers needed in a medical emergency shall be posted prominently.
- B. First Aid: A first-aid kit shall be available in any location used by minors. It should be checked monthly to assure that it is fully supplied. Those who work with children shall be trained in first aid and other emergency skills such as CPR and dealing with choking.
- C. Accident Log: A logbook shall be kept in an official place to record all accidents.
- D. Fire Safety: All adults working with preschool, children and youth shall be trained in fire safety, including exit routes and alternatives. Fire extinguishers should be available and regularly checked. Smoke detectors should be installed and batteries regularly checked. Regular fire drills should be held.
- E. Emergency Preparedness: All adults shall be trained in procedures to follow in case of a tornado, hurricane, earthquake, terrorist threats or other emergency situations.
- F. Infectious Diseases: Children or staff with infectious diseases shall not participate in the group until medical personnel clear them.

- G. Allergies and Sensitivities: A policy and procedure shall be established that assures that adult workers are aware of any special limitations or allergies a child may have, especially to foods such as peanuts and special sensitivities such as to bee stings.

4.07 Premises Control – Access, Departure, Etc.

- A. Premises Control: Preschoolers and children shall not be allowed to leave the premises unsupervised. They shall not be allowed to wander around the church facility or be alone especially when going to the bathroom.
- B. Departure of Children: Arrangements shall be made for children and teens to return to their homes after the activity is over. Children shall not be permitted to go home alone. Children shall not be permitted to leave the premises without their parents' permission.
- C. Drop-Off of Preschoolers and Children: Preschoolers and children are never to be left in a classroom unless two unrelated adults are present. If there are not two adults present, parents may wait with their child or take the child to another room or office where two or more adults are present.
- D. Pick-up of Preschoolers and Children: For all preschool children, unless special provision is made otherwise, a parent must come to the room and pick up their child/children from the classroom. Authorization for independent release may be given by signing a release for children in first and second grades. Third and fourth graders may be released independently after class.
- E. All teachers and workers who release children MUST visually check the parent ID with the child's ID before releasing the child.

4.08 Off-Site Events

- A. Any off-site events with preschoolers and/or children must be approved by the Preschool/Children and/or Youth Ministry Committee (Team), based on a detailed submission of the plans, supervision, travel arrangements and parental involvement/approval process.
- B. One-day, but not overnight, off-site events by the youth group, but within the county or adjacent county must be approved by the youth ministry leadership. They shall provide for sufficient supervision, adult transportation, and otherwise comply with church policies. Off-site youth events involving travel beyond adjacent counties or involving overnight stays must be approved by the Preschool/Children and/or Youth Ministry Committee (Team) which shall assure adequate supervision, appropriate facilities and chaperones, adult transportation and use of consent forms.
- C. Consent Forms: Parents must sign a consent form when children or young people are taken on trips or activities off the premises (not in the church or regular meeting place). Consent forms shall note the nature of the activity, type of

transportation provided, contact numbers for the supervisors and sites of activities. Parents shall also be asked to authorize emergency medical treatment, provide information on special medical or dietary needs, provide telephone numbers where a parent or others may be contacted in an emergency, and other information appropriate to the activity.

4.09 Medical and Emergency Policies and Procedures

A. First Aid

First-aid supplies and equipment should be available in each classroom. (See Protecting Our Church and Children for suggestions on specific items.)

B. Incident Reports

An incident/accident report form should be completed each time an accident or health issue occurs. This form shall be completed by the person in charge who is present and turned in to the office immediately. Extremely minor injuries requiring only emotional comfort or a simple Band-Aid need not be written up but shall be communicated to the parent or guardian.

C. Medicines

Staff, paid or volunteer, shall never administer any medicine, including over-the-counter medicines, without the written consent of the parent! In special circumstances where church workers must administer medications, it must be only where there is written authorization with specific instructions on the medications, timing and dosage. Staff shall record in a log any medications given, noting child, medicine, dosage, time and person administering. (Protecting Our Church and Children resource, included in this manual, gives additional recommendations about children medications.)

D. Bodily Fluids

Caution must be exercised when dealing with bodily fluids. Due to the increased risk of the spread of disease, bodily fluids must be promptly and safely disposed of and the area properly cleaned. Leaders must wear protective gloves. Leaders must adequately wash after contact with body fluid of any kind. This should be done routinely, even when no health risk is perceived. Disposable materials soiled by blood must be placed in a plastic bag. Soiled clothing will be returned to the parents in a plastic bag. If a child has come in contact with the body fluids of another child, the parents of that child should be notified.

E. Medical Issues and Emergencies

1. Consent/Information Forms

The parent or legal guardian shall be encouraged annually to fill out a parental consent certification and medical authorization form for each child who will be participating in the ministries of the church. A copy of

the forms should accompany any activity that takes place outside the church facilities.

2. Guidelines in Case of Serious Medical Injuries/Emergencies

In case of a serious emergency involving broken bones, convulsions, fainting, loss of consciousness or other serious injury, the following guidelines shall be observed:

- Keep calm and keep children and the injured as calm as possible.
- Do not move the injured child.
- Speak calmly, reassuring the child.
- Send a fellow teacher for help. Never leave the injured child.
- The person in charge shall call 911 after assessing the situation and give the information and directions as needed.
- As soon as the leadership is notified, the co-worker should return to help in removing other children in the area from the scene of the accident.
- The person in charge (staff member) will locate the parents and advise them of the condition of the child and procedure suggested by medical personnel.
- Leaders will refer to the child's parents for details of preference of hospital and doctor.
- In case the child is transported to the hospital, a leader will accompany the child, especially if the parents cannot be located in a timely fashion.
- As soon as possible, the teacher needs to return to his/her group to see that the other children remain calm and reassured.
- An incident/accident form should be written as soon as possible with specifics of medical personnel recommendations and name of hospital to which the child was taken.

F. Wellness Policy

The Preschool/Children and/or Youth Ministry Committee (Team) shall develop and communicate to parents and workers a policy regarding under what circumstances children with symptoms or illnesses should not participate in classes or activities. A “wellness policy” set forth in Protecting Our Church and Children notes the following: “Signs of communicable illness that would be reason to exclude the child from participation include”:

- A fever (100 degrees or more in the armpit, 101 degrees orally, or 102 degrees rectally)
- Diarrhea
- Severe coughing
- Two or more episodes of vomiting within the past twelve (12) hours
- Red eye with white or yellow eye discharge, until twenty-four (24) hours after treatment
- Yellow or green nasal discharge
- Scabies or lice
- Chicken pox or a rash suggestive of chicken pox
- Other undiagnosed rashes

- Open skin lesions
- Tuberculosis, until a physician states the child is not infectious
- Strep throat, until twenty-four (24) hours after treatment begins
- Pertussis, until five (5) days after antibiotic treatment
- Hepatitis A, until one week after onset of illness or jaundice
- Impetigo, until twenty-four (24) hours after treatment

Any child on antibiotics should have been on the drug for at least twenty-four (24) hours before coming to an activity.

4.10 Special Emergencies – Fire, Weather Emergencies

A. Emergency Checklist

The Protection Task Force Subcommittee shall assure that emergency checklist such as that suggested by Protecting Our Church and Children, are developed and utilized by the Preschool/Children and/or Youth Ministry Committee (Team) and workers to be effectively prepared for dealing with special emergencies.

Checklist from Protecting Our Church and Children

- Are building diagrams with emergency evacuation procedures and routes posted by the doors in each room?
- Do diagrams show the location of fire extinguishers and alarms?
- Are leaders trained in the proper use of fire extinguishers?
- Are fire extinguishers inspected routinely?
- Are all exits clear of furniture or other obstructions?
- Is a telephone easily accessible to leaders, with numbers for the fire department, law enforcement, emergency medical service and poison-control center posted?
- Is there a designated evacuation crib for babies (equipped with evacuation wheels), and does it fit through all exit doorways?
- Is there a designated meeting place in the event of an evacuation and are parents aware of this location?
- Are leaders trained in first aid, adult and infant/child CPR, security, and procedures for fires, tornadoes, or other emergencies?
(For an example, see <http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dcd/emerg.pdf>.) Is there a readily available list of these leaders and other trained church members?
- Are periodic evacuation/emergency drills conducted?
- Are first-aid supplies kept in an easily accessible location?
- Are first-aid supplies routinely checked to ensure sufficient quantities and adherence to expiration dates?

B. Leader Guidelines in Case of Fire or Fire/Smoke Alarm

In the event of fire or fire/smoke alarm, take the following immediate action. Do not wait for confirmation of a fire.

- Line up students by the door and take a head count.
- Close windows and doors as you leave and if possible take your class attendance or sign-in sheet with you.

- Know your exit route as posted in the classroom and quietly and calmly lead students out by proper exit.
- Proceed to a grassy area away from the building and off any roads. Once you are clear of the building, take a head count and/or attendance.
- Return to the building only after the “All Clear” has been sounded.
- Do not dismiss any students from outside.
- For the safety of the children, parents may NOT get their child/children before the class has left the building. Parents must show their ID to claim their child and sign out on the sheet.

C. Leader Guidelines in Case of Tornado Immediate Threat

In the event of a warning that there is immediate risk of a tornado, take the following steps immediately:

- Assemble all the children and then lead them to an inside wall on the lowest floor.
- Guide the children to crouch on the floor facing the wall, bent over with hands on the back of their heads.
- Keep away from glass doors and windows.
- Do not return to the classroom until advised by other church staff or leaders that the risk has passed.

5.00 Child Abuse Policies, Procedures and Commitments

5.01 Basic Church Perspective and Policy

1. Introduction

Child abuse affects the lives of thousands of children every year in the United States. Churches too often have been negligent in the screening, education and training of their children and youth workers. The result has been tragic either because of false accusation, or the failure to protect a child in need. We recognize a high responsibility for our ministry programs for children and youth, and for the actions of all those who work with them. Court decisions are holding churches liable when they failed to properly screen their volunteers, educate their workers, or provide adequate supervision. Yet our accountability to law is almost nothing compared to our spiritual accountability to God and our community for the children entrusted to our love, nurture and care.

2. Our Response

It is our commitment to make every effort to make our facilities and programming a safe and nurturing place for all our children, youth and workers. Our commitment to our children and youth, and their parents, is to assure that specific procedures and policies are implemented to screen, train and supervise children’s and youth workers. Through increased awareness and supervision, we hope to prevent any incidents from occurring, and hence support effective, caring ministries that continue to further the cause of Christ and lead individuals to a personal relationship with Him.

3. Statement of Purpose

The main purpose of our Preschool/Child/Teen Protection Policies is to protect our children and youth. This purpose is accomplished in part by educating and training child care workers, both members and friends, on issues which may contribute to dangerous and unsafe conditions affecting children and youth. These issues include how best to avoid neglect and abuse. Individual members and friends of the church are encouraged to act responsibly not only in caring for children and youth, but also in caring for each other (Matt. 19:13-14; John 15:9-17).

We continue to develop guidelines and procedures to address concerns and/or allegations concerning safety, wellness and abuse. The governing board of the church will assume responsibility for evaluating the conditions under which the church ministries are carried out and for investigating charges and reporting misconduct. The Preschool/Children and/or Youth Ministry Committee(Team) and its Protection Task Force Subcommittee is specifically charged with implementing and reviewing all our policies, and developing effective responses to any concerns.

5.02 Specific Child-Abuse Prevention and False-Allegation Protection Policies

The Protection Task Force Subcommittee shall develop specific policies and procedures designed to reduce the risk of child abuse, assure the children and parents of the church of the safe environment for their children, and protect workers from false allegations or suspicions. The policies shall include at least the following principles:

A. Two-Adult Rule:

Two adults shall be present in all programs and activities involving preschoolers and children (and perhaps youth) – preferably not from the same immediate family, and include both men and women. This shall apply to classes, transportation, bathroom visits, counseling and other activities. In the absence of two adults, classes or activities shall be combined, or meet in a common larger room, or be cancelled.

B. Adults-Only Rule:

Non-adults may not satisfy the two-adult rule, nor may minors take a leadership role in any preschool or children's program or activity. While minors may assist adults in some activities, minors shall never be in charge of a ministry for minors. Any youth assistants should be under the direct and immediate supervision of an adult.

- In no event shall minors be left alone with a preschooler or child or leave the room with them.
- Minors shall not handle or provide immediate care for infants even if adults are present.
- Minors shall never discipline a preschooler or child.
- Minors shall never take a preschooler or child alone to the bathroom.

- Minors shall never bathe or undress a preschooler or child.

C. Open-Door Policy

Parents of minors served, the clergy, and administrative and professional staff of the church have the right to visit and observe the preschool, children's and youth programs at any time unannounced.

D. "Public" – Visible Activities

All preschool, children and teen activities shall be "public" in the sense of visible, transparent to others. The activities shall not normally be conducted in isolated, remote or unobserved locations. This policy shall normally have the following implications:

- 1) All activities for minors shall be held in a visible locations where other groups or adults are present.
- 2) Activities shall not take place in private rooms, offices or isolated parts of a building. Remote areas, such as closets and unoccupied rooms, shall remain locked.
- 3) Classrooms and teaching areas should never be locked while in use, with the exception of outside entrances to the preschool and or children's areas. These outside entrances should be locked to outsiders, but of course not locked for persons needing to exit in an emergency. Putting alarms on the exit doors to provide notice if any person, such as a child, does open the door is advisable. Lights should remain on.
- 4) Each door of a classroom shall have a large window. If there is no window, the door should be left open. Sight lines through each window should remain unobstructed at all times.

E. Respect Privacy of Children and Youth

F. Identify Workers

Program staff, leaders and workers with children should be clearly identified with name tags or other indicators they are appropriate persons to be working with the children.

G. Specific Policy Areas

The Protection Task Force Subcommittee shall also assure specific policies are developed in certain specified sensitive contexts including bathroom procedures, infant care, release of children to parents and others.

H. Discipline

The church is committed to a nurturing, safe and respectful environment for children entrusted to its care. The staff and all those who minister to our children are committed to such care, and to abiding by the following child-discipline policy.

1. The church recognizes that appropriate discipline is not only essential in our ministry to children, but is also an aspect of the loving care of children as they mature and learn to respect themselves and others.
2. No physical punishment or verbal abuse, such as ridicule or threats, is to be used at any time.
3. Adult expectations of children/youths' behavior and appropriate discipline must reflect their age and level of comprehension.
4. Children are to be reminded of the kind of behavior that is acceptable for the setting.
5. Appropriate forms of disciplining a child/youth are: Distracting the child/youth with another activity, helping the child/youth focus on another more acceptable behavior, and separating the child/youth from others if another volunteer/staff is available to assist.
6. Parents will be informed and involved whenever a child/youth misbehaves beyond minor correction or a pattern of misbehavior increases. If separating the child within the classroom or removal of the child from the room becomes necessary, the situation must be discussed with the child's parents or guardian as soon as possible.
7. Concerns about a child's behavior or the appropriate response to a child's behavior should be reported to the program leadership.
8. Appropriate forms of discipline are to be reviewed with the volunteers/staff as part of staff/volunteer regular training.