

Child Abuse Prevention Program

Purpose

The Child Abuse Prevention Program exists to safeguard the emotional, sexual, physical, and spiritual well-being of children involved in the activities of the church.

Definitions

For the purpose of this program:

- “employee” means any person paid.
- “volunteer” means any non-paid person involved in activities involving children.
- “worker” means a screened person involved in activities involving children.
- “supervisor” means a volunteer appointed by the Discipleship Ministries Board as a leader of volunteers
- “ministry leader” means the person (employee or volunteer) appointed by the Discipleship Ministries Board as the manager of all ministry to children.
- “child” means any person under the age of 18.
- “emotional abuse” means threats, critical words, demeaning terms or names, depriving a child of any sign of affection, or other similar spoken or unspoken emotional cruelty. It conveys a message that the child is worthless and undeserving of love and care.
- “sexual abuse” means sexual contact between a child and an adult (or older, more powerful child). A sexually abused child also may be physically and or psychologically dependent upon the abuser.
- “physical abuse” means intentional, deliberate behavior that causes bodily harm to a child. It can take several forms, including assault, shaking, kicking, choking, bone fractures – non-accidental injuries, in general.

Mandatory Screening

All employees and volunteers must be screened to the satisfaction of the Discipleship Ministries Board, following the mandatory procedure outlined below:

- 1) Prior to consideration, applicant will complete and return an initial ministry application (see Appendix 1). Any volunteer applicant must be actively involved in the ongoing ministries for at least six months prior to initial application.
- 2) The ministry leader will carefully review the application, ensuring that the candidate is an appropriate match for the ministry position. The ministry leader will store all application materials in a locked file cabinet or other secure location.

- 3) If the applicant appears to be an appropriate candidate for the ministry position, the ministry leader will check at least two references to confirm the information that the applicant provided on the ministry application.
- 4) A National Criminal Record File for the applicant will be processed through LexisNexis.
- 5) All applicants will be interviewed in person by the ministry leader prior to serving in a ministry position.
- 6) When indicated by our screening activities, applicants who pose a threat to others, or have a prior history of physical or sexual abuse directed against another person, will be removed immediately from consideration for ministry positions anywhere within our organization.
- 7) Every worker will be rescreened at least every three years using methods 4 and 5.

Ongoing Training

- Employees and volunteers will be trained prior to initial service and then annually with the Reducing the Risk DVD curriculum from Christianity Today.
- All supervisors will be trained annually to know and comply with state and federal laws related to child abuse.

Supervision

- Any ministry that involves working with children will be conducted with at least two workers present. This applies whether on or off the church premises, no matter the type of location (outdoors, room, vehicle, etc.).
- Workers should arrive at least 10 minutes before a scheduled activity. They must remain at their assigned post until all children in their care have been picked up by an authorized person. No child should be released to find their parents or wait unattended for transportation.

Counseling

- When workers meet with children for counseling, we encourage team counseling by two workers. If only one worker conducts the counseling session, it should be conducted in view of another screened worker through a window or an open door.
- All counseling sessions should be limited to three occasions for no more than 30 minutes at a time. If more counseling is required, a professional counselor will be recommended.
- Secure prior written permission from parent/guardian and the ministry leader.

Restrictions

- For children age 6 or older, at least one adult female should take girls to the restroom, and one adult male should take boys to the restroom. The adult should check to make sure the facility is safe and then wait outside the restroom for the children.
- For children age 5 or younger, an adult female should assist as needed in the restroom.
- It is never acceptable to touch a person's private areas unless absolutely necessary (i.e., changing a diaper).
- Workers should avoid the appearance of impropriety – such as sitting older children on their lap, kissing, or embracing others, etc.
- Workers are to release children in their care only to parents, guardians, or persons specifically authorized to pick up the child.

Discipline

- Workers are never to spank, hit, grab, shake, or otherwise physically discipline anyone. Physical restraint should only be used in a situation where it is reasonably necessary to prevent an individual from physically harming himself or another individual.
- Disciplinary problems should be reported to the ministry activity coordinator or supervisor or to a parent/guardian.

Injuries or Illness

- Persons who are ill (with a fever, or a communicable disease that can be transmitted by cough or by touch) will not be permitted to participate in any ministry activity.
- A worker must be used to take the place of a worker who is ill.
- Participants should be returned to their parent or guardian as soon as illness is discovered. If immediate return is not possible, then the person who is ill should be isolated in a manner that allows an adult worker to monitor the participant until he/she can be returned to a parent or guardian.
- Take reasonable steps to avoid contact with blood, saliva, or other bodily fluids.
- Supervisors who become aware of an injury to a worker or participant will take steps to ensure that proper medical attention is given to the injured person and provide for continued monitoring of the remaining activity participants.
- Persons who have received an injury that is obviously minor should be given first aid as needed at the time of injury. The individual's parents or guardians should be notified of the injury when they pick up the injured person.
- Any injury that may require medical treatment beyond simple first aid should be given immediate attention. The parents or guardians of the injured person should be notified immediately, along with the ministry worker's supervisor. If warranted by the injury, emergency medical personnel should be called.

Recordkeeping

- All ministry functions involving children will maintain an attendance list for every function. Record the date of the function, along with the names of all participants, workers, and supervisors.
- Workers will prepare a written Notice of Injury report whenever an injury occurs during a ministry function (see Appendix 2). Promptly forward the incident report to the supervisor.

Notice of Injury, Abuse, or Molestation

- Workers who become aware of any injury, abuse, or molestation occurring within any ministry activity must immediately inform their supervisor or the ministry leader.
- Supervisors who become aware of any injury, abuse, or molestation connected with a ministry activity must immediately inform the ministry leader about it. The ministry leader should then complete a Notice of Injury form.
- If the ministry leader becomes aware of possible abuse or molestation of a participant must ensure that the participant's parent or guardian is immediately informed that possible abuse or molestation has occurred. The ministry leader also will ensure that an attorney is immediately contacted to provide a written opinion as to whether the organization should report the abuse or molestation to law enforcement authorities. The written opinion should be obtained within 24 hours after the ministry leader first becomes aware of the situation. The attorney's advice should be acted upon immediately, including reporting the incident to the authorities. An attorney also should be contacted immediately if the ministry leader becomes aware of possible abuse or molestation of a participant by a parent or guardian.
- Ministry leaders must promptly notify Brotherhood Mutual upon notice of abuse or molestation.

Violation of Policy or Procedures

- Workers must promptly notify their supervisor when they or others violate the procedures mandated by this policy.
- Supervisors and the ministry leaders who become aware of a violation of the procedures set by this policy are required to take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance with them. In the process of ensuring compliance with this policy, it may become necessary to remove workers from their positions.

Internal Investigation

- This ministry organization considers any allegation of abuse or molestation a serious matter. Each situation will be fully investigated by ministry leaders, always with the assistance of legal counsel and civil authorities.
- Employees who are the subject of an investigation will be removed from their position, with pay, pending completion of the investigation. Employees who admit to the abuse or molestation will be terminated consistent with the established employment practices of this ministry.
- Volunteer subjects of any investigation will be removed from their positions pending completion of the investigation.

- This ministry will permanently remove any employees or volunteers from their ministerial duties within the organization if they are found guilty of abuse or molestation. Whenever termination of employment is a factor, we also will consult with legal counsel.

Dealing with Law Enforcement, News Media

- All workers, supervisors, and ministry leaders of this ministry will cooperate fully with law enforcement or governmental agencies investigating allegations of injury, abuse, or molestation.
- The Discipleship Ministries Board will seek legal counsel as soon as possible after we receive notice of possible abuse or molestation within the organization. Advice from legal counsel will be the basis for our response to the allegations.
- The Discipleship Ministries Board will appoint one designated spokesperson to handle all inquiries from the news media. Our spokesperson will be the only person to convey information concerning the situation, doing so in a prudent manner to avoid compromising an ongoing investigation and to maintain the privacy of the individuals involved.

Annual Review

- Each year, we will conduct a review meeting. At that time, the procedures mandated by this policy will be reviewed with all volunteers, employees, supervisors, the ministry leader, and the leadership of the organization.
- Paid ministry employees and all volunteers working in any capacity with children, youth, or disabled adults will complete a brief renewal application every two years (see Appendix 3).
- Should the renewal application indicate that any workers become unsuitable for working with children, youth, or disabled adults, they will be removed immediately from their current position. They will not be considered for positions involving work with other similar groups.

Revision of Policy and Procedures

The leadership of this ministry, with the assistance of legal counsel, will regularly review this policy and the procedures established within it. If necessary, the policies and procedures will be modified in accordance with the bylaws of the organization. When changes are made, the ministry leader will communicate them to all workers affected by the policy changes.

Approved October 21, 2010

Revised February 21, 2011