
Protection Policy for Children, Students, Special Needs

I. Background Statement

We live in an age where abuse of children and other vulnerable members of our society is a reality. The church must deal with this issue as a "good shepherd" by taking steps to protect our children, teenagers (students) and individuals with special needs. Aversboro Road Baptist Church has implemented this policy to safeguard our children, students and special needs while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. We pray for God's blessings and protection for these persons, parents and for those who work to minister to them through the ministries of our church.

Protecting our Children, Students, Special Needs

The greatest priority of Aversboro Road Baptist Church children's, students and special needs programs is to minister through the Gospel and ministry of Jesus Christ. As ambassadors of Jesus Christ, we must strive to be worthy of a very high standard of trust. It is obvious that any sexual exploitation, abuse, or endangerment directly contradicts this priority and the values of Aversboro Road Baptist Church. For this reason, every worker at Aversboro Road Baptist Church must avoid even the appearance of inappropriate behavior. All workers must diligently avoid any conduct that appears wrong to a reasonable observer, even if no actual misconduct takes place. Employees, parents, volunteers and workers in children, student and special needs ministries are expected to observe these policies and guidelines, as well as other Christian standards of moral behavior found in the Scriptures and adopted by the church membership.

Document History

This policy was developed using sample policies and forms from *The Good Shepherd Program* by Nexus Solutions. During the process, feedback was solicited and incorporated into the present document from our Student Leadership Team, Parents of Students, Children's Ministry Council, Parents of Children, Minister to Children, Minister to Students, Special Needs Ministry, Policy, Procedure and Bylaws Committee and others.

II. Purpose and Policy Statement

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matthew 19:14)

Purpose

As a church, we believe that the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of children and other vulnerable members is vital. This policy is intended to ensure that church activities involving children, students and special needs are consistent with the teachings and example of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the Christian tradition of nurturing vulnerable persons. The primary purpose of this policy is to promote the safety and well-being of preschoolers, children, students, special needs and the adults who serve by providing clear standards to guide our ministries. The leaders of Aversboro Road Baptist Church sincerely request the cooperation of the adults, parents, students, children and special needs in our church who must abide by the guidelines of this policy.

This policy also serves to establish guidelines, practices and procedures for the prevention of child predatory practices in our preschool, children, student and special needs ministry programs. The establishment of proactive screening and monitoring practices contained herein is to ensure that no approved volunteer, staff member or church worker, while acting within the scope of their duties, is placed in a position where the abuse of a person under their care can be carried out.

Policy Statement

It is the goal of Aversboro Road Baptist Church to provide for the spiritual growth of our members, visitors and guests in a manner that will foster an atmosphere which proactively addresses personal safety issues related to preschool, children, student and special needs ministries. Therefore, we establish these policies and guidelines to guide our efforts

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to recognize and prevent predatory practices and conditions within our ministries. If in the course of screening an applicant, information gives evidence that an individual has mistreated children, been convicted of a criminal offense, or otherwise indicates a risk to the welfare of children or the ministry of the church, that individual will not be authorized to serve in our ministries to preschoolers, children, students, or special needs.

Activities Covered by This Policy

The scope of this policy shall apply to all current as well as future ministry programs and activities that involve preschoolers, children, students and special needs as directed by Aversboro Road Baptist Church. Ministries included in this policy: Preschool Ministry, The Growing Place, Extended Session, Children's Ministry, Student Ministry, Music Ministry, Sunday School and Special Needs Ministry of Aversboro Road Baptist Church.

III. A Glossary of Frequently Used Terms

Abused or neglected child - a child whose mental or physical health is endangered or threatened by the actions or failure to act by people responsible for the child's care.

Boundaries -Property boundaries are the limits or dividing lines between pieces of real estate. Likewise, people have boundaries that guide our physical and emotional relations. Personal boundaries are like fences, separating appropriate behavior from inappropriate behavior. The lines change according to the child's age and the relationship between the child and the adult. In a physical sense, boundaries govern appropriate behavior. For example, it is acceptable for a four year old to sit on the lap of her Sunday School teacher, but not for her 14-year-old sister to sit on the lap of her student ministry sponsor. Any child with weak boundaries is more vulnerable to sexual molestation. Healthy boundaries enable a child to recognize and reject inappropriate behavior.

Child molester - a person who has sexually violated children.

Child sexual abuse - includes but is not limited to any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for sexual stimulation of the adult person or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced whether or not consent is given by the child or student or whether initiated by the child or student.

Children and/or student - generally anyone less than 18 years of age. This category may also include persons over 18 years of age who are not able to fully protect themselves from exploitation or give consent for sexual activity (due to age, intellectual or physical impairments, or other incapacities).

Further interpretation of these policies is guided by these specific definitions:

Preschool/Preschooler/Preschool Ministry - newborn through age five (kindergarten)

Children/Children's Ministry – Children in Grades 1-5

Student/Student Ministry –A student in Grades 6-12

Special Needs Ministry– regardless of gender, or age an individual that has been identified or has identified themselves as having a special need and as such may not be able to fully protect themselves from exploitation or give consent for sexual activity (due to age, intellectual or physical impairments, or other incapacities.)

Staff Minister (Pastoral Staff)– Minister for these policies will refer to any full-time, part-time, or ministry intern position (paid or volunteer) who has ministry responsibilities as defined by the Personnel Policies, Constitution and By-laws.

Ministry Leader – Ministry Leader for these policies will refer to any volunteer leadership position as defined by the Constitution and By-laws.

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Minor – anyone under the age of 18, whether member or visitor

Workers by classification-

Primary workers - All paid staff and those volunteers in roles with greater responsibility and contact hours or risk shall be classified as primary workers and shall meet the primary screening standards. (examples include: Sunday School Teacher, GA/RA Leader, Student Worker, Special Needs Worker)

Secondary workers - Secondary workers are people who occasionally interact with minors and do so in less risky circumstances. For example, a volunteer who sees children only in a ministry setting, on church premises, and with a ministry leader present may be classified as a secondary worker. This category includes parents of participants who supervise activities while under the supervision of Primary Workers. (Examples Include: Extended Session Worker, VBS Worker)

IV. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND PROCEDURES

To ensure effective administration of this policy the following practices and procedures are included herein.

Responsible Parties for Implementation, Administration and Supervision

Under the supervision of the Senior Pastor, the staff ministers shall assist with the implementation, administration and supervision of the Protection Policy for Children, Students, Special Needs.

Applicability

Policies, procedures, guidelines and practices herein are applicable to and shall govern all church programs, ministries and activities in which preschoolers, children, students less than eighteen years of age and individuals that are a part of the special needs ministry are involved.

Records Checks for Staff Ministers

The Personnel Committee shall be responsible for completing criminal records checks for the Staff Ministers prior to their selection and recommendation to the church.

Annual Review of Protection Policy for Children, Students, Special Needs

On an annual basis, each staff minister will review their area of responsibility for compliance with these policies and assess for any potential risks, and provide a brief written report of their assessment to the Senior Pastor and the Diaconate by December 31.

The compliance review will include:

- A review of any newly proposed programs or program changes and the additional risks these changes may incur.
- A brief summary of policy violations (real and alleged) and the program leader's response to these violations while maintaining confidentiality.

Waiver of Specific Procedure

The goal of Aversboro Road Baptist Church is to promote safety while maintaining practical flexibility in children's, student and special needs ministry. Specific procedures may be waived for special circumstances, such as the six-month rule for summer/semester interns, college students assisting in leading a weekend retreat, or other special situations. All waivers will be of a limited nature and must be authorized in advance by the Minister to Students and at least one of the following: The Minister to Children; The Senior Pastor; and in situations involving special needs - The Associate

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Pastor for Adults.

Modification of the Policy

Changes in this policy should be evaluated and recommended by the Children’s Ministry Council and/or Student Leadership Team, and/or the Special Needs Ministry and will follow the process for policy review and acceptance as noted in the church Policies and Procedures Manual.

V. Policies on Leadership Selection, Screening, and Supervision

General Qualifications

Every volunteer and staff person who works with preschoolers, children, students and special needs shall:

1. Confess Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord
2. Affirm the Articles of Faith of our Church
3. Be a member in good standing for at least six months
4. Be approved in accordance with these policies
5. Evidence the skills, attitude and Christian maturity appropriate to the ministry with preschoolers, children, students or special needs
6. Agree to adhere to the church’s ministry philosophies, policies and guidelines for work with children, students and special needs.
7. Have no history of being an abuser or have a criminal record inconsistent with the ministry responsibility

Minimum Age

All primary workers must be 18 years of age or older.

Secondary workers in the preschool, children and special needs area must be at least 13 years of age. Secondary workers ages 13 to 18 must have successfully completed an approved babysitting/child-care training (i.e., Safe Kids, American Red Cross, American Heart Association, National Safety Council).

Application Requirements

Applicants must complete and sign an application with the related forms granting permission to check references and background information, including, but not limited to a Criminal Record Check and a Motor Vehicle Records Check. Failure to sign all forms will automatically disqualify an applicant.

Church Membership/Attendance Requirement

All primary workers must be a member in good standing for at least six months prior to applying for a volunteer position. This time of interaction between ministry leaders and the applicant allows leaders to better evaluate the suitability of an applicant. In some situations this rule is not feasible and may be waived. If the six month rule is waived, it must be approved by the Minister to Students and at least one of the following: The Minister to Children, The Senior Pastor or for special needs, the Associate Pastor for Adults. The reasons for the exception must be documented and filed with the application. All other steps in the screening process must be followed.

Interviews

All applicants must be interviewed for suitability for the work they desire to perform. Interviews will be conducted by the staff minister, or designee, of the program in which the applicant will work. Church policy and guidelines shall be shared with applicants during the interview.

Reference Checks

An application form, complete with references, must be submitted by all individuals who wish to work with

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preschoolers/children/students/or in our special needs ministry – both volunteer and paid. The respective Ministry leader will check at least three references for each worker. Reference checks may be completed by phone, mail, or in person. References should include: one person who has known the applicant well for a minimum of one year, a current or former supervisor or teacher, and a member of the applicant's immediate family (other than a spouse).

Criminal Record Check

A Criminal Record Check is required for all applicants. The Criminal Record Check will cover a minimum of the preceding five (5) years of the applicant's residence. An online check of the State Sex Offender Registry for the applicant's state of residency for the ten years prior to hiring shall be accessed and searched. In addition, all volunteers and staff are subject to random Criminal Records Checks to ensure the safety of our children, students, special needs

Applicants discovered to have had documented or known incidents of sexual misconduct, or who have a criminal background which may have a negative impact on our ministry, may not be a Ministry Leader (volunteer or employee) or serve in any capacity of the Preschool/Children/Student/Special Needs Ministry at **AVERSBORO ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH**.

Confidentiality of Information

The church will keep confidential all information received in the applicant selection process. Application information will be marked as such and stored with limited access afforded only to the Staff Ministers. The details discovered during the screening process will remain confidential; only an approval will be communicated to ministry leaders. Information that is a matter of public record is not considered confidential under these guidelines.

Note: An outside contractor may be used to assist in the screening process.

Delay in Receiving Information

The application, screening, and background checks must be completed on each volunteer or employee before they begin to serve in our ministries. Every effort will be made to complete the process in a timely manner.

Survivors of Child Abuse

Any applicant who is a survivor of childhood sexual or physical abuse needs the love and acceptance of the Aversboro Road Baptist Church family. A person's experience with abuse and their recovery process may be pertinent to their suitability as ministry workers. Applicants who are survivors of abuse should discuss this in confidence with the Staff Minister who conducts the confidential interview. When evaluating candidates, the following factors will be considered if an applicant is a survivor of child abuse:

- the extent of professional counseling the applicant has received
- the opinion of references, especially professional counselors who have served the applicant
- the opinion of leaders in other churches or student organizations in which the applicant has been involved
- the extent to which the church is able to supervise and monitor the position

Approval Authority

The Minister to Students or staff minister designee shall verify that all screening procedures have been completed and shall communicate an applicant's formal approval to the appropriate program leaders.

VI. General Guidelines for our Ministries

These guidelines are provided to reduce the risk of child abuse, to assure the parents of children and students of a safe environment, and to protect workers from false allegations or unwarranted suspicions.

Supervision

Church staff members, children's workers and volunteers who supervise students and/or children and/or special needs

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are charged with the diligent enforcement of these policies. Program leaders and all student/children's/special needs workers who suspect any unhealthy or abusive activity must promptly discuss their suspicion with the appropriate staff minister and the Senior Pastor. Violation of these policies is considered grounds for immediate dismissal from work in the children and/or student and/or special needs ministries.

Vehicle Safety

All Ministry Leaders who will be driving children or students, whether using a church vehicle or their person vehicle, must be an approved driver as outlined in the church Transportation and Vehicle Policy as well as an approved worker. See The Transportation and Vehicle Policy in the Policies and Procedures Manual.

Overnight Activities

At least two adults who have been approved under this policy will supervise overnight activities. If the participants are male and female, then male and female chaperones must be present. If these conditions cannot be met, then the event shall be postponed. It is never appropriate for an adult chaperone to share a bed with a student. (Exception: Family members of the same gender may share a bed in situations where there is a need to do so due to a lack of space.) Males and females attending events should not share the same sleeping quarters and should have separate restroom facilities. In the absence of separate facilities, restrooms shall not be accessed by members of the opposite gender at the same time (i.e., rotate usage). Experienced adult workers should be included with adults who are newcomers to ministry when planning overnight activities.

Corporal Punishment

Hitting, spanking and other forms of punishment involving physical pain are never appropriate in Aversboro Road Baptist Church activities. This rule holds true even if parents have suggested, or given permission for, corporal punishment. Workers must consult a program leader or other church leader or staff if they need help with discipline techniques.

Informal Contact (Independent of Church Activities)

Informal contact refers to phone calls, email, Facebook/MySpace, letters, or face-to-face contact between an adult worker and a child/student/special needs that is not connected to official church activities. The church recognizes that informal contact between workers and children/students/special needs will frequently occur. For example, workers may hire teens as baby sitters for their own children, or workers may see children/students/special needs during social events with the child/student's/special needs family. This interaction is certainly legitimate and beneficial. Workers should seek permission of, or inform the parent(s) before having informal contact with their child/student/special needs. The worker should clearly let the parent know the nature of the contact and that it is not part of church activity. Parents are encouraged to monitor informal contacts of their children with adults.

Transportation To and From Meetings

Transportation to and from meetings is not part of church or Student Ministry activities. Parents are responsible for providing or arranging for this transportation. Parents are discouraged from asking leaders to transport children. However, if a leader does transport a child at the parent's request, this is recognized as informal contact (not a part of church activities), and the guidelines for informal contact should be followed (see paragraph above). *Note: This practice is discouraged because it frequently leads to problems.*

Touching Guidelines

This policy includes guidelines on touching that will safeguard our children/students/special needs while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. The guidelines below are to be carefully followed by anyone

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working with children, students, special needs.

1. Hugging and other forms of appropriate physical affection between workers and children/students/special needs are important for wholesome development and are generally suitable in our church setting.
2. Physical affection shall be appropriate to the age of the child or student or special needs. (For example, it is generally appropriate for a four year old to sit in a preschool worker's lap, but it is not appropriate for a teenager and student leader to behave this way.)
3. Touching should be initiated as a response to the child/students/special needs person's need for comforting and encouragement. It should not be based upon the adult's emotional need.
4. Touching and affection should be given when in the presence of other children's ministry, student or special needs workers. It is much less likely that a touch will be inappropriate or misconstrued as such when two adult workers are present and the touching is open to observation.
5. Touching behavior should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. As ministry workers our behavior must foster trust at all times; it should be above reproach.
6. A child/students/special needs preference not to be touched shall be respected.
7. All workers are responsible for protecting children/students/special needs under their supervision from inappropriate touching by others.
8. All workers must promptly discuss inappropriate touching or other questionable behavior by other workers with ministry leaders.

Specific Guidelines for our Ministries to Preschoolers and Children

(These guidelines refer to ministries with newborns through fifth grade)

Two Adult Rule

Two approved workers shall be present in all programs and activities involving preschoolers and children – preferably not from the same immediate family. This shall apply to classes, transportation, and other activities. In the absence of two workers, the classes shall be combined, or meet in a common larger room, or cancelled.

Preschool Release

Workers should release preschoolers only when presented with the proper pager/ID tag - which are issued as preschoolers are dropped off for a program/event.

Specific Guidelines for Student Ministry Leader's

(These guidelines refer to ministries with Students in Grades 6-12))

Team Leadership

As a general rule, most student events will be under care of two approved workers. This team leadership portion of the policy has three purposes: it provides for more than one adult to help ensure appropriate levels of supervision, it protects adults from unfounded allegations, and it lessens the possibility of emotional codependency between an adult leader and student.

Individual Counseling

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Team counseling is preferable whenever possible. When team counseling sessions are not feasible, notify another adult of the location and with whom you are meeting. Counseling should be done in a public place where private conversations are possible but occur in full view of others. Guard carefully to avoid seclusion. If possible, have a female counsel a female student and a male counsel a male student. A male/female team is generally appropriate for counseling either gender. Any exception must have prior approval of the Minister to Students

High Adventure Activities

Special precautions must be taken on high adventure activities, such as rock climbing, hiking, camping, rafting trips, snow skiing, swimming, water sports, water skiing, boating or the like. Both physical safety and safety from abuse are at risk in high adventure situations. A ratio of one adult to five students is required (1:5 for males and 1:5 for females). Guides for high adventure activities should be licensed by a nationally recognized or state certified sports governing body or government entity. *High adventure camping often raises unique circumstances involving individual privacy, sleeping arrangements, restroom facilities, and so on. Student Ministry Leaders must be vigilant to avoid suspicious or misinterpreted behavior in these circumstances.*

Confidentiality

Student Ministry Leaders must report to the Minister to Students and/or the Senior Pastor any time a minor discusses harming himself or others, committing a crime, or being abused. There are limits to confidentiality when working with students. Questions about such cases or other issues of confidentiality should be discussed promptly with the Minister to Students and/or the Senior Pastor. Any serious issues discussed in confidence shall be reviewed with one of the ministers, who will also protect the confidential nature of the discussion to the best of their ability. Conferring with a minister, medical or mental health professional on sensitive issues is not considered breaking a confidence.

Dating or Sexual Involvement

No adult Student Ministry Leader (volunteer or employee) is to date a student or be romantically or sexually involved with any student. There are **no** exceptions to this policy.

VII. Health and Safety

First Aid Training

Church employees who supervise young people should maintain current certification in basic first aid and basic CPR (or their equivalent if offered in the church's locality). Cost for this training will be paid by the church or The Growing Place. New employees must get this certification within 90 days of the start of their employment. Preschool workers and others serving young children will also need training in infant and toddler CPR. Other workers/volunteers are encouraged, to get training if they frequently accompany children or students on adventure activities, such as water sports, camping, home-building mission trips, etc. At least one person trained in CPR & First Aid shall accompany our students on adventure activities. Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) training will be provided on the use of AEDs located in the church building. This training may be part of a CPR class or through a staff member trained on the use of the specific AED.

VIII. Training and Reporting Strategies for Prevention of Abuse

Aversboro Road Baptist Church will provide resources for age-appropriate training for children, students and their parents for the purpose of prevention of abuse. The objectives of training are to enable children, students, and parents to:

- recognize abuse,

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- resist abuse,
- report abuse or attempted abuse, and
- reduce any shame, stigma, and confusion with open discussion, clear information, and unconditional support for children.

Training for Children's, Student, Special Needs Ministry Workers

Aversboro Road Baptist Church will train workers to keep young people safe. This training is mandatory for primary workers and recommended for secondary workers selected to work in preschool, children, student, special needs ministries.

The training will include the following information.

1. the nature of the problem, especially child sexual abuse
2. recognition of abuse indicators in children and in adults who may be abusers
3. explanation verbally and in writing of policies and rules that apply to each category of worker
4. discussion of expectations
 - avoiding the appearance of misconduct
 - monitoring coworkers' behavior
 - accountability for violation of rules
5. recognizing inappropriate behavior and situations open to problems or misunderstandings
6. reporting requirements (*Civil and Criminal*)
7. how to respond to an incident or an emergency
 - what to do when you believe a child is the victim of inappropriate conduct by a church worker
 - what to do when you believe a child in your program is a victim of abuse by family members or others
 - what to do when you believe that two children in your program are involved in inappropriate sexual activities
 - what to do when two adult church workers are engaged in an inappropriate sexual relationship
8. the church's touching policy
9. appropriate discipline techniques
10. who to turn to for advice or help

We will practice the following steps toward preventing sexual abuse:

1. Selection and screening

- Church membership requirement
- Completing the interview, screening, and background check process

2. Supervision

- New volunteers are paired with veterans for 30 days of orientation
- New volunteers are specifically evaluated at 30, 60, and 90 days
- Ministry Leaders will provide ongoing supervision of all workers

3. Specific reporting process

Basic steps to be followed in possible abuse cases:

- All efforts to handle the incident will be well documented immediately
- The incident will immediately be reported to ministry supervisors and, very likely, an attorney

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- We will contact the proper authorities—they, not our ministry, will handle the investigation
- We will notify the parents
- We will take allegations seriously; reach out to the victim and his or her family; and treat the accused with dignity and support
- If the accused is a church worker, that person will be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is completed.
- The Senior Pastor and/or Chair of The Deaconate, utilizing the services of the Community Relations Committee, will use the text of a prepared public statement to answer the press and convey news to the congregation. Safeguarding the privacy and confidentiality of all involved will be our priority.

4. The following are reporting procedures for volunteer staff:

- If a child, student, special needs person is observed to have signs of physical abuse (bruises caused by hitting, unexplainable injuries, etc.), volunteer staff should call these things to the attention of the Minister to Children, Minister to Students and/or Senior Pastor or for special needs the Associate Pastor for Adults immediately. State law requires individuals to make a report to the proper authorities. (Report pursuant to 7B-301 “any person..who has cause to suspect...”)
- If a child, student, special needs verbally accuses a family member or other person of abusing them in some way, the volunteer staff member should call these things to the attention of the Minister to Children, Minister to Students and/or Senior Pastor immediately or for special needs the Associate Pastor for Adults. State law requires individuals to make a report to the proper authorities. (Report pursuant to 7B-301 “any person..who has cause to suspect...”)
- Whether clearly true or questionable in the estimation of the volunteer staff member, the allegations or observations should put in writing on the day of the incident, including a verbatim/exact account of the observation and/or accusation. Every detail of the events—including date, time of day, names of persons involved, etc.—should be included in this report. The person making the report should keep one copy, and one copy should be given to the Staff Minister who oversees that area of ministry, and a copy given to the Senior Pastor. These reports must be kept safe and confidential. The Staff Minister will be responsible for following church policy.

5. Defining Sexual Abuse

A. Inappropriate Touching

1. Fondling—touching the body on private parts
2. Inappropriate kissing
3. Intercourse (consensual or non-consensual)
4. Oral or anal intercourse

B. Non-touching

1. Sexual remarks
2. Showing pornography
3. Watching any sexual activity
4. Exhibitionism

6. Detecting sexual abuse

- Most cases of sexual abuse go undetected. In addition, there may be no apparent physical signs.
- The cases that *are* reported are generally reported by abused children to their parents, siblings, or other caretakers—often in the form of casual remarks that lead the listener to query further.
- Most children say nothing. They may not realize that what was done to them was wrong, or they may be too embarrassed or frightened to speak up. They may not want to get the offender in trouble—especially if a

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friendship has developed between offender and victim.

- In some cases, telltale physical or emotional signs may arouse your suspicion. In its publication *The Educator's Role in the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect*, the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect outlines certain indicators of sexual abuse.

Physical indicators

Difficulty in walking or sitting
 Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
 Pain or itching in the genital area
 Bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal or anal area
 Venereal disease, especially in preteens
 Pregnancy

Behavioral indicators

Unwilling to change for gym or participate in physical education class
 Withdrawal, fantasy or infantile behavior
 Bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual behavior or knowledge
 Poor peer relationships
 Delinquency or running away
 Reports sexual assault by caretaker

These signs can be indicative of other problems and are not exclusively tied to sexual abuse. But the repeated occurrence of an indicator, or the presence of several indicators, warrants further investigation.

Response Procedures for Allegations of Abuse

A Team of the Church Leadership will be convened by the Senior Pastor to respond to alleged abuse. The team is to determine the appropriate action and guide the church in responding appropriately. Team shall consist of: The Senior Pastor, Minister to Children, Minister to Students, Associate Pastor for Adults if special needs is involved, Chair of Deacons, and the Chair of the Personnel Committee. In addition, the team may include any other person/s that the team feels is needed to help them respond quickly and appropriately.

Duties shall include

1. Clarify and evaluate the report with the person(s) who heard the initial report and with the victim as appropriate.
2. Ensure that reports to the appropriate authorities are made in accordance with state law.
3. Consult with an attorney as necessary.
4. Report the allegation to the church's insurance carrier.
5. Minister to the needs of both the accused and the accuser
6. Take appropriate actions on behalf of the church to protect the accused, the accuser, and the church and its ministries.
7. The Senior Pastor and/or Chair of Deacons shall serve as the spokesperson/s.

General Principles

When responding to allegations of abuse, the church and its representatives will keep several key principles in mind:

1. Reports shall be taken seriously.

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2. Allegations should be handled with sensitivity for people's privacy and confidentiality.
3. During a criminal investigation the church shall cooperate with law enforcement and social services as directed by its legal counsel. *(An attorney will be retained to guide the church in this area.)*
4. The alleged victim/accuser/accused will not be blamed.
5. The church should seek to provide support as appropriate for alleged victims, alleged offenders, and their families during this period of great stress.
6. The insurance carrier shall be contacted as soon as possible.

Reports of questionable behavior must be taken seriously.

They should not be ignored or allowed to circulate without concern for the integrity and reputation of the accuser, the accused, and the church.

Allegations may occur in a variety of ways.

Since the church cannot control how a report will surface, it is important that officers, employees, and volunteers follow the steps described below. These steps will ensure that the allegation is channeled to the appropriate person and that the problem is not compounded by an improper response.

Non-church related allegations must be taken seriously.

Young people frequently choose to confide in both children and student workers about abuse happening outside of the church. It is important that reports of this type are also handled sensitively and appropriately. The church's policies also apply to reported allegations not related to church activities or workers. These policies are appropriate for allegations involving church activities **and** non-church related reports of abuse.

When Someone Reports Abuse

State law requires individuals to make a report to the proper authorities.

(Report pursuant to 7B-301 "any person..who has cause to suspect...")

- **Listen supportively.**
- **Let the individual talk openly**-- do not minimize or discount the allegation.
- **Do not judge** the allegation negatively or positively.
- Ask basic questions to clarify facts if needed, but do not try to investigate or verify the allegations of the report.
- Note the pertinent details in writing as soon as possible after hearing the details provided by the individual(s). Taking notes while interviewing witnesses is acceptable. However, do not take notes when the alleged victim is giving their account to you.
- Contact the Minister to Children, Minister to Students, Associate Pastor for Adults if special needs is involved, and the Senior Pastor immediately. They will help decide on the next step, consult with legal counsel, and make the report to law enforcement if necessary.
- If the Senior Pastor is being accused, the person receiving the initial report shall contact the Chair of Deacons.
- If a staff member is being accused, the person receiving the initial report should contact the Senior Pastor.
- Do not discuss the allegation with anyone except those who have a need to know and are helping to respond.
- If the safety of the child is an issue, the worker must use his or her own judgment to decide the best way to proceed. Student workers may contact law enforcement directly if timing is critical and church leaders are unavailable for consultation.

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES IN WAKE COUNTY – 919-212-7000

AFTER BUSINESS HOURS 919-829-1911

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POLICE/ SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - CALL 911

Effective Date of this Policy

The **Protection Policy for Children, Students, Special Needs** shall be fully effective on and after January 1, 2010. Preparation, training, random sampling records checks for existing workers, contracting, budgeting, etc. shall begin upon policy adoption by the church in conference.

Forms

(subject to revision as needed/required when using an outside consultant for background checks)

1. Document Checklist
2. Application for Workers with Preschoolers, Children, Students, and Special Needs Ministries
3. Personal Reference Forms
4. Prior Service Reference Form
5. Authorization and Release of Liability
6. Personal Interview Form
7. Background Check Forms (as provided by outside consultant)