

## **ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY**

This policy paper is designed to assist church leaders in recruiting a core of volunteers while providing, to the greatest extent possible, for the safety of children, youth and developmentally disabled adults who are served by these volunteers.

### **SECTION ONE: RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES**

All names of potential volunteers will be brought to the pastoral staff before they are individually approached regarding a ministry assignment.

In any instance where the pastoral staff knows of reasons why a person would not be suitable for a volunteer position, further investigation will take place and a final approval, or denial, of the name will be made.

All volunteers working with children or disabled adults must complete a COTRH Primary Screening Form.

All volunteers should be equipped with training regarding child safety and child abuse prevention. This would be the responsibility of the church to provide in conjunction with outside resources if necessary (i.e. Social Services).

The Primary Screening Form is critical in protecting the church from legal action if a case of child abuse occurs in which a church volunteer is involved. To be immune from liability in child abuse cases, the church must show evidence that it has taken reasonable action in checking out the volunteers it uses in working with children, youth or developmentally disabled adults. The courts will look for a process by which a church screens volunteers before engaging them in service. A court can find a church legally liable if the church is less than systematic and therefore negligent in screening volunteers. By having every volunteer fill out a "Primary Screening Form" and keeping these forms on file, the church greatly reduces its liability in child abuse cases.

### **SECTION TWO: PERSONAL SAFETY PROCEDURES**

Our church is concerned for the safety of the children and families we serve. At the same time we are concerned about the safety and reputation of the adults and teens that volunteer to make this ministry possible.

#### **CLASSROOM RATIO**

Our desire is to provide a safe, loving classroom where the child feels comfortable and learning can take place. Therefore, the following ratios shall be standard:

1. There will be a minimum of 2 approved supervisors in any room with children, except in the event of an emergency situation. This standard not only assists in providing a safe and loving classroom, it also provides volunteers with more encouragement, creativity and flexibility, as well as providing a gift-mix in each classroom that makes for a richer teaching environment.
2. When it is necessary that only one adult teacher be in a closed room with children, the door of that room will remain slightly open or be a window door that will allow the Sunday School Superintendent or Secretary to look in occasionally without interrupting

the teaching process (i.e. Worker leaves room to take children to bathroom).

3. Ideally, there will be a minimum of 1 adult worker for every 6-8 pre-school children and 1 adult for every 10 – 12 children in Grades 1 – 6.

### **PRESCHOOL CLASSES**

All preschool rooms should be staffed with at least one female adult worker to better facilitate observance of the washroom guidelines.

### **SUPERVISORY STAFF**

The supervisory staff should make regular visits to the classroom to make sure the class is properly staffed and supervised.

### **FAMILY PROTECTION**

Family ministry teams work well together and should be encouraged as a method of staffing. However, for the protection of this family unit, we recommend the presence of a least one other volunteer not related to the family.

### **RECORD KEEPING**

The names and addresses of parents and children shall be carefully maintained.

An accurate sign-in procedure will be maintained for each nursery/toddler child, recording the child's name, parent's name, and any special needs of their children. Workers must not release a child to a teenager or adult without complete certainty that the parent or parent's representative is receiving the child.

Preschool aged children should never be dropped off in a classroom without a teacher present. If only one teacher is present, the door must be left open.

### **DIAPER CHANGING**

Diaper changing should always take place in such a way that another nursery worker can easily see the child that is being changed as well as the other children and workers in the room.

Children under the age of 14 who are assisting in the nursery should not change diapers.

### **REST ROOMS**

This is an area in which we need to be very sensitive to the possibility of problems.

One adult will not be allowed into a rest room alone with a child or children. A second adult will need to accompany them or be within visual contact. One adult may take a child or children to the restroom if he (she) stands in the open doorway only.

A child should not be sent to the washroom by himself. They should be accompanied by a supervising adult (as above) or, in the case of older children, with another child.

Never be alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom and never go into a washroom cubicle with a child and shut the door.

Children in the nursery/toddler area should use the washroom in the nursery/toddler wing.

If preschool children need assistance in the washroom, an adult may enter the washroom cubicle to assist only under the following guidelines:

1. A second adult must be within visual contact. If this is not possible, Inform another adult when taking a child to the washroom and when returning.
2. In light of the fact that most abusers are male, and for the protection of our male volunteers, it would be wise for men to avoid assisting boys and girls of any age in the washrooms. We suggest that only women assist girls or boys in the washrooms.
3. The outside washroom door must be propped open if only one adult is present. The adult must stand in the open cubicle doorway.

### **NURSERY FACILITIES**

Nursery change tables should be in full view.

Nursery sleeping rooms should have a window in the door.

### **ILLNESS**

A child who is not feeling well should not be received into the classroom, exposing other children and workers to illness. Some signs of illness are unusual fatigue or irritability, coughing, sneezing, runny nose, eyes, fever, vomiting, diarrhea, inflamed mouth and throat. (Any child with known communicable disease should not be received into a classroom.)

Workers need to be conscious of the health of children in their care. If a worker has health concerns including communicable diseases such as chicken pox, Rubella mumps, tetanus, diphtheria, polio, pertusis, hepatitis B, HIV, etc., They should withdraw from contact with children or with preparing and serving food.

### **PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH CUTS OR INJURIES INVOLVING BLOOD**

Separate the injured child from the other children. Isolate the area where any blood may have dropped on carpet, toys. Etc. Send someone to locate the parents at this time.

Check to ensure that no other children had contact with any of the blood from the cut or injury.

Put on the latex gloves (available in first aid kit) and bandage the injury, avoiding contact with mouth, ears and eyes.

Carefully wipe up all blood and bloody bandages and remove to a secure, inaccessible waste removal receptacle.

Remove and properly dispose of latex gloves. Wash carefully with sterilizing soap (available in first aid kit.)

### **WORKER BEHAVIOR**

When it is necessary that one adult supervisor be in a closed room with a child or youth, the door of that room will remain slightly open.

Workers should always conduct themselves in a godly manner, being an example of obedience, respect and honesty to those in their care.

## **SECTION THREE: PROPER DISPLAY OF AFFECTION TOWARD MINORS**

### **PHYSICAL TOUCH**

Touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives. Volunteers need to be aware of, and sensitive to, differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, individual personalities, and special needs. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. We recommend the following guidelines as pure, genuine, and positive displays of God's love.

### **APPROPRIATE TOUCH**

Love and caring can be expressed in the following appropriate ways:

1. Bending down to the child's eye level and speaking kindly; listening to him or her carefully.
2. Taking a child's hand and leading him or her to an activity.
3. Putting an arm around the shoulder of a child who needs comforting or quieting.
4. Taking both of the child's hands as you say, "You did such a good job." (or "I'm so glad to see you. We've missed you!" etc.)
5. Patting a child on the head, hand, shoulder, or back to affirm him or her.
6. Holding a child by the shoulders or hand to keep his or her attention while you redirect the child's behavior.
7. Gently holding a child's chin to help him or her focus on what you are saying to him or her (important for children with Attention Deficit Disorder).
8. Holding a preschool child who is crying.

### **INAPPROPRIATE TOUCH**

Workers must avoid:

1. Kissing a child, coaxing a child to kiss you, extended hugging, and tickling.
2. Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (except when assisting a child with toileting as outlined previously).
3. Carrying older children or having them sit on your lap.
4. Being alone with a child.

### **EMERGENCIES**

Workers are not to give or apply any medication. If a child needs medication, the parent must give it. No medication will be left in the classroom or with a worker or child. In extreme cases (i.e. Peanut allergies, ventilators, etc.) arrangements should be made with written instructions and the permission of the child's parent.

Procedures should be reviewed semiannually for fire emergencies. These procedures are to be posted in a visible place in each classroom, stating the planned route of escape to the nearest fire exit.

A first aid box must be kept on hand and all workers are to review the location and contents regularly.

### **FIELD TRIPS AND SPECIAL EVENTS**

Leaders are encouraged to have special class activities in their homes, plan social activities and involve their children/youth in field trips and service projects. The following precautions need to

be taken with these activities.

Special activities should be pre-approved by the church leadership. Parents should be notified at least one week prior to the outing.

An Emergency Medical Release Form is required for each child participating in field trips and special events.

If possible, all trips and outings should be supervised by a minimum of two approved, unrelated adult leaders.

When the transporting of children is involved in an activity, all drivers must have a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance. The number of persons per car should not exceed the number of seat belts.

### **OVERNIGHT EVENTS**

Church sponsored overnight activities may be permitted as long as the following guidelines are met:

All overnight activities must be pre-approved by the church leadership.

An Emergency Medical Release Form is required for each child participating in overnight events.

All overnight activities should have a minimum ratio of two leaders for every ten children. Each leader should have an assigned group of children/youth for whom they will be responsible during the overnight event.

All supervising adults must be approved volunteers.

Perusal of the church insurance policy is needed to be sure that liability coverage includes the off-premise activity.

### **SUGGESTED BUILDING REQUIREMENTS**

It is wise to have windows in all classrooms so that all classes/groups can be visible.

All rooms should be supplied with an "emergency exit" plan, both in directions and instructions. (Workers need to be advised of, and aware of, such plans in case of emergency exit.)

## **SECTION FOUR: CHILD ABUSE PROTECTIONS AND PROCEDURES**

### **SCRIPTURE**

*1 Thessalonians 5:22* – "Avoid every kind of evil"

*Ephesians 5:3* – "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality...because these are improper for God's holy people".

*Matthew 18:6* – "But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea".

*Matthew 18:15-17* – “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector”.

## **DEFINITIONS**

Child abuse is defined as a non-accidental physical or mental injury or mistreatment caused by the acts or omissions of the child’s parents or caretakers. Child abuse includes the following:

Abuse means physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

Physical abuse means any physical force or action, which results in or may potentially result in a non-accidental injury to a child and which exceeds that which could be considered reasonable discipline.

Sexual abuse means any sexual exploitation of a child whether consensual or not. It includes touching of a sexual nature and sexual intercourse, and may include any behavior of a sexual nature toward a child. In determining whether behavior is of a sexual nature, one should ask whether a reasonable observer, looking at the behavior in its context, would conclude that it is. This would exclude normal affectionate behavior towards children and normal health or hygiene care.

Sexual activity between children may constitute sexual abuse if the difference in age or power between the children is so significant that the older or more powerful child is clearly taking sexual advantage of the younger or less powerful child. This would exclude consensual, developmentally appropriate sexual activity between children where there is no significant difference in age or power between the children.

Emotional abuse means acts or omissions of those responsible for the care of a child which are likely to produce long term and serious emotional disorder. This might include effects such as non-organic failure to thrive; developmental retardation; serious anxiety, depression or withdrawal; or serious behavioral disturbances.

Neglect means the failure of those responsible for the care of the child to meet the physical, emotional or medical needs of a child to an extent that the child’s health development or safety is endangered.

Child sexual abuse is, “Exposure of the child to sexual stimulation inappropriate for his age and role – the sexual exploitation of a child who is not developed mentally, capable of understanding or resisting the contact; or a child or adolescent who may be psychologically or socially dependent upon the perpetrator. Some of these sexual offenses include:

- Sexual interference,
- Invitation to sexual touching
- Sexual exploitation of a young person,
- Exposing genitals to a child,
- Corrupting children
- Indecent acts
- Sexual assault.

## **SECTION FIVE: REPORTING PROCEDURES**

### **OBLIGATION TO REPORT**

If you have any concerns regarding the safety of a child, you should report to your ministry head and a Pastor. They will then work with you in contacting the Department of Social Services. At this point in time, it may be advisable to contact a lawyer.

Any person who has reasonable grounds to believe that a child (or children) is in need of protection is legally required to report the matter to a social worker in the local office of the Department of Social Services. A person who knowingly fails to report in these circumstances is in violation of the law and may be found to have committed an offense.

### **WHAT TO REPORT**

All volunteers and paid staff who are involved in ministry to children (0-18 years) should immediately report to the ministry head and a Pastor any items of obvious concern relating to child abuse or neglect of which they have knowledge or have observed within the scope of their duties. It is not the responsibility of the reporting person nor the paid staff to substantiate any allegations or suspicions. Signs of abuse to watch for are as follows:

1. has an unexplained injury – a patch of hair missing, a burn, a limp, or bruises,
2. have an inordinate number of “explained” injuries such as bruises on his/her arms and legs over a period of time,
3. gives verbal testimony,
4. makes drawing in conjunction with verbal testimony,
5. alludes to incidents in writing or through prayer requests, etc,
6. exhibits an injury that is not adequately explained,
7. complains about numerous beatings,
8. complains about others “doing things to them when others are not at home”,
9. is consistently dirty and smells or has bad teeth or hair falling out,
10. is regularly inadequately dressed for inclement weather, or,
11. wears long sleeved tops during the summer to cover bruises on the arms.

Abuse or neglect need not have occurred already for a child to be in need of protection; it is not necessary to wait until a child has been harmed to intervene. When abuse or neglect can be reasonably anticipated, there are reasonable grounds to believe a child is in need of protection, and the legal obligation to report applies.

Historical abuse or neglect, that is abuse or neglect which occurred in the not very recent past, must be reported wherever there are reasonable grounds to believe that a child or children may be in need of protection. If the alleged offender is in regular contact with a child or children, irrespective of whether it is the same child or children abused in the past, there may well be grounds to believe that the child or children are at risk based on the offender’s past behavior. It is particularly vital to report these cases where the alleged abuser is in position of trust respecting children, such as a teaching position.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

In these matters it is important to keep information confidential at all times. Therefore all suspicions of abuse should be directed only to the ministry head or a Pastor. It is the responsibility of the pastoral staff to contact the local office of the Department of Social Services.

The only claim of confidentiality which overrides the legal duty to report is solicitor-client privilege. Thus physicians, clergymen and others who consider their professional relationships confidential for certain purposes are not exempt from the duty to report child abuse or neglect.

### **RESPONDING TO THE CHILD**

When the child first comes to you, be sure to take his or her word seriously. Don't deny the problem, but stay calm and listen to the child. Give emotional support, reminding the child that he or she is not at fault and that the child was right in telling you about the problem. Do not promise the child you will not tell anyone.

### **REPORT FORM**

Use a Suspected Child Abuse Report Form. These forms may be obtained from your ministry head or a Pastor. Fill out the report form and submit it to a member of the pastoral staff.

### **SUMMARY OF STEPS**

1. Gently affirm the child.
2. Immediately report any suspected abuse to the appropriate ministry head and one of the Pastors. Complete the Suspected Child Abuse Report Form.
3. It is the responsibility of the pastoral staff to report to the local office of the Department of Social Services by telephone, letter, or person. Absolute confidentiality is maintained by the Department of Social Services.

### **PROTECTION FROM LIABILITY**

Church personnel are required to immediately report to the Department of Social Services any suspected case of child abuse. It is not a breach of confidence between church personnel and the child involved. No person is personally liable for anything done or omitted in good faith in the exercise of this responsibility. As church leaders, we are accountable to God to protect His little ones. Although it is our desire to protect the parents as much as legally possible from undue interference by outside authorities into their family, the protection of children from abuse is even more important. We want to follow the principles of submitting to governing authorities (Romans 13:1ff) while at the same time helping parents to exercise child discipline that is consistent with the Scripture, and in the best interest of the children.

### **WHO MUST REPORT**

Any person who has reasonable grounds to believe that a child (or children) is in need of protection is legally required to report the matter to a social worker in the local office of the Department of Social Services. A person who knowingly fails to report in these circumstances is in violation of the law and may be found to have committed an offense.

A child is in need of protection under the Family and Child Service Act if he or she is:

1. abused or neglected so that his or her safety or well-being is endangered,
2. abandoned,
3. deprived of necessary medical attention,
4. absent from his or her home in circumstances that endanger his or her safety or well-being.

Social workers designated to receive reports are trained to investigate and assess the need for intervention. Other professionals must not assume this function. A professional who does so and fails to report commits an offense. The act protects an individual when a report is made. No

action would be taken against a person making a report unless it is made maliciously or without reasonable grounds for the belief.

### **REPORT FOLLOW- UP**

For reasons of liability and integrity, all Church on the Rock Homer personnel, paid and volunteer, are required to immediately report any instance of child abuse they have grounds to believe occurred. Procedures to maintain strict confidentiality will be followed.

A confidential written Suspected Child Abuse Follow – Up Report with conclusions and action taken should always be made by the Senior Pastor, Children’s Pastor or Youth Pastor following a child abuse report. These reports shall be kept in a confidential personnel file.

### **CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

If it is proven that a member of the Church on the Rock Homer has committed child abuse, the church will practice discipline according to Matthew 18:15-17. The church must avoid any undue interference when a report of child abuse has been filed with the Department of Social Services. The church should ask the Department of Social Services if it can assist in helping and supporting the hurting child and his or her family. The church should maintain frequent communication and supportive relationships with those suspected or guilty of child abuse as long as these persons exhibit a willingness to listen, change, and look to Christ for help. This does not exclude the need for hurting individuals to receive professional counseling.

### **MEDIA SPOKESPERSON**

One person in leadership should be designated as the only spokesperson for any allegation. Everyone involved in any part of the ministry of the church should know who this person is, and make no comment but refer all inquiries to the appointed spokesperson.