

# Safe Sanctuaries

A Policy for Reducing the  
Risk of Sexual Abuse of  
Children and Adults

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# Child Abuse Prevention Policy

## **Purpose**

Our purpose for establishing this Child Abuse Prevention Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth.

## **Statement of Covenant**

Therefore, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth as well as all of the children and youth workers. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers. We will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events. We will educate all of our children and youth workers regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods. We will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law. We will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

## **Conclusion**

In all of our ministries with children and youth, the congregation of Pennsville Baptist is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ to each child.

## Employee and Volunteer Worker Screening Procedures

***\*In this document, the use of the word "Supervisor" refers to Associate Pastor, Youth Pastor or Children's Director.***

All clergy, all full-time or part-time employees, all volunteers, and all children and youth workers must complete the following screening procedures before they are permitted to work in the children and youth programs of the church

1. Complete and return to the Associate Pastor/Children's Director either the Employment Application or the Volunteer Application, depending upon the circumstances of your work with the children and/or youth. Also, complete the necessary Act 33 and Act 34 clearance reports and give copies to the church.
2. The application and clearance reports will then be carefully reviewed by the Associate Pastor/Children's Director to make certain that the candidate will be appropriate, based on the information provided, for the ministry position.
3. If the candidate appears to be appropriate for the ministry work, then at least two of the references will be checked to confirm the information provided on the application.
4. A personal interview of the candidate may be conducted by the Senior Pastor/Associate Pastor/Youth Pastor/Children's Director.
5. Any information indicating that the candidate poses a threat to others or has any prior history of physical or sexual abuse directed against another person will result in the immediate removal of the candidate from consideration for a ministry position with this organization.

## **Waiting Period**

No volunteer-worker candidate will be considered for any ministry position involving contact with children or youth until the candidate has been regularly involved in our congregations for six months or more and working toward becoming a member.

## **Supervision**

1. At least two adults (at least one over 21 years of age [23 years of age for youth workers]) should be present at every function and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area, during every child and youth ministry program. (For large groups of children, the number of adult volunteer workers will be increased in accordance with state student/teacher ratio requirements.) Ages listed above may have exceptions upon the discretion of the supervisor.
2. During services/events, at least two adults (who have been approved as volunteer workers through the above screening process) will be appointed to supervise activity on the premises outside of the room where the service/event is held.
3. Workers should arrive at least 15 minutes before a scheduled activity and should keep watch over those in their care until all have been picked up by an authorized person who has the computerized security tag that matches the child. Do not send children out to find their parents and do not release any child or youth to await transportation.
4. Each room set aside for children and youth should have a door with a window in it or a half door. If this is not possible, then the door to the room must be left open at all times. During any counseling session with children or youth, the room should also remain open. Ideally, the session will be conducted when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance.

## **Advance Notice to Parents**

Parents of children and youth will always receive advance notice and full information regarding the event(s) in which their children will be participating. Parents will also be advised when a worker will be alone with a child. Before the event, parents must give written permission for their child's participation. The written permission slip proves that the parents were informed of the event, warned of the situation, and given the chance to prevent their child from being alone with a worker.

## **Participation Covenant for All Participants and Leaders**

A written covenant of participation will be provided to all leaders and participants in child and youth ministries. The covenant is a statement in which the participants and leaders agree to

- Take part in the ministry
- Give their best efforts to the ministry
- Respect the other participants
- Treat the others as well as they would wish to be treated

## **Work Restrictions**

1. For children over the age of five, it is preferred that 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 until the children come out.
2. Children five years of age or younger (boys and girls) should be assisted as needed in the restroom by an adult female.

3. Never touch a person's private areas except when necessary, as in the case of changing a diaper.
4. Workers should avoid the appearance of impropriety, such as sitting older children on their lap, kissing or embracing others, etc.
5. Workers are to release children in their care only to parents, guardians, or persons specifically authorized to pick up the person.

## Discipline

1. Workers are never to spank, hit, grab, shake, or otherwise physically discipline anyone.
2. Disciplinary problems should be reported to the worker's supervisor or to a parent or guardian.

## Record Keeping

1. An attendance list will be kept for all of the ministry's functions involving children and youth. The date of the function, along with the names of all participants will be recorded. Attendance is kept through the ACS Computerized Check-in System.
2. A written incident/notice of injury report will be prepared by workers whenever an injury occurs during a ministry function. Promptly upon completion, the incident report will be forwarded to the worker's supervisor who will then forward it to the senior pastor or the associate pastor.

## Notice of Injury, Abuse, or Molestation

1. Workers who become aware of any injury, abuse, or molestation connected with any ministry activity will immediately inform their supervisor of such injury, abuse, or molestation.
2. Any supervisor who becomes aware of any injury, abuse, or molestation connected with any ministry activity will immediately inform the senior pastor or the associate pastor of such injury, abuse, or molestation and will have the worker complete a Notice of Injury form or Suspected Abuse form.
3. Any ministry leader who becomes aware of possible abuse or molestation of a participant will ensure that the participant's parent or guardian is immediately informed that possible abuse or molestation has occurred. The senior pastor or the associate pastor will also see that an attorney is promptly 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 of when the senior pastor or the associate pastor first becomes aware of the abuse or molestation, and the attorney's advice should be followed. If the attorney recommends that an incident be reported, the advice should be acted upon immediately.
4. Upon notice of abuse or molestation, the church's insurance carrier must be promptly notified.
5. Keep a written record of the steps taken by the church in response to the alleged abuse or molestation.
6. Prepare a brief and honest statement that can be made to the congregation **without giving unnecessary details, placing blame, interfering with the victim's privacy, or violating any confidentiality concerns.**
7. Be prepared to cooperate fully with the investigation conducted by law enforcement officials or child protective services.

## Violation of Policy or Procedures

1. Workers must promptly notify their supervisor of any activity undertaken by themselves or others which violates this policy or procedures.

2. Any supervisor or ministry leader who becomes aware of a violation of the policy or procedures will take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance with the policy and procedures by all workers and will remove workers from their position if such removal is warranted or if the worker poses a potential threat to others.

### **Internal Investigation**

1. Any allegation of abuse or molestation will be taken seriously and will be investigated by senior pastor or the associate pastor.
2. Any employee of the church who is the subject of an investigation will be removed from their position, with pay, pending completion of the investigation (unless the employee has admitted to the abuse or molestation, in which case they will be terminated in accordance with organizational employment practices).
3. Any volunteer worker who is the subject of an investigation will be removed from their position pending completion of the investigation.
4. Any person who is not found innocent of alleged abuse or molestation will be removed from work with children or youth within the church. The church will consult with legal counsel for advice if termination of employment is indicated.

### **Dealing with Law Enforcement/Media**

1. All ministry leaders, employees, and volunteers will cooperate fully with any law enforcement or governmental agency that may be investigating allegations of injury, abuse, or molestation in connection with the activities of the church.
2. Legal counsel will be contacted for advice and guidance as soon as possible after the church receives notice of possible abuse or molestation in connection with church activities. Decisions concerning the ministry's response to the allegations will be made in accordance with such advice.
3. A single organizational leader will be designated as spokesperson following notice of any abuse or molestation in connection with activities of the church. This spokesperson will be the only person to convey information concerning the situation and will convey only such information as is necessary under the circumstances. When dealing with the media, the spokesperson will defer all questions to the senior pastor or the associate pastor.

### **Annual Employee/Worker Review**

1. This policy and procedures will be made available for review annually to all workers, employees, coordinators, supervisors, and leaders to whom it applies.
2. All ministry employees will complete a brief Annual Renewal Application once each year. A renewal application will also be completed annually by all volunteer workers associated with the organization who will be working in a capacity with children or youth.
3. Should the renewal application show that any employee or volunteer worker has become unsuitable for working with children or youth, they will be immediately removed from their position and will not be considered for other positions involving work with children or youth.