

Policies & Procedures
For the Prevention of
Child Abuse

Church of the
Nazarene
Bryan, Texas

GOAL

It is the goal of the members and staff of Church of the Nazarene, Bryan, Texas (Church) to provide a safe and secure environment for children entrusted to our care. We do this to encourage those preschoolers, children, and youth and their families to grow in their relationship with God and one another. The following policy and procedures are for the protection of our children, employees, volunteers and our entire church family at Church of the Nazarene, Bryan, Texas.

SCOPE

This policy shall apply to all current and future workers, compensated and/or volunteer, who will have involvement in our ministries to children.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy the following definitions shall apply:

1. "Child," or "children" shall be defined as any individual *under* the age of eighteen (18) .
2. "Adult" shall be defined as any individual at least eighteen (18) years of age.
3. "Worker" shall be defined as any adult who serves as a volunteer and/or paid person given the responsibility of working with or caring for children.
4. "Teenage Worker" shall be defined as any worker at least fourteen (14) years old or older, but under the age of eighteen (18) enlisted to assist with the care of children.
5. "Child Abuse" shall be defined as verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of a child.
6. "Criminal Background Check" (CBC) is the procedure used by a qualified agency to check the background of adult worker for criminal activity.

WHAT IS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?

Child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent. All child sexual abuse is an exploitation of a child's vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the action.

Child sexual abuse is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially, and developmentally ready.

Child sexual abuse includes behaviors that involve touching and non-touching aspects.

WORKER ENLISTMENT

1. All workers of the Church will be required to complete an application. This will include a nationwide Criminal Background Check.
2. After an application is received; references will be checked from prior employment / volunteer services.
3. Any prospective worker that has prior incidents of sexual misconduct or child abuse should not be allowed to serve in any capacity where they would have contact with children.
4. Criminal background checks will be performed on each applicant after the applicant has signed the authorization/waiver/indemnity form, and prior to being enlisted as a worker. Criminal background checks will be performed on workers, randomly or as deemed necessary. (Only persons authorized by the board will have access to the criminal background check report. Recommendations will be given by this individual(s) to the Nominating Committee as to the qualification of applicants.)
5. At the discretion of the Nominating Committee, personal interviews with volunteer applicants may be held.
6. No volunteer will be allowed to work with children until they have been in regular attendance at the Church for a minimum of six (6) months.
7. At the applicant's request, the Church shall allow the applicant to review his/her criminal history record transcript at the church, but in no event shall the church allow the applicant to retain and/or copy his/her transcript.
8. The Nomination Committee shall immediately notify the Board if an internal grievance (applicant dispute) is filed by an applicant because of incorrect information or other reasons related to criminal histories provided by the agency.

WORKER TRAINING

Each worker will receive training regarding child abuse including the importance of reporting child abuse. This will help workers identify child abuse in the future if they see signs of it.

DISQUALIFICATION OF WORKERS

Whether disclosed voluntarily or by result of the security background check, the following items will automatically disqualify a volunteer from participating in the leadership, sponsorship or supervising of any activities or programs with children:

Any conviction for:

- Sexual abuse;
- Sexual assault (rape);
- Aggravated sexual assault;
- Injury to a child;
- Incest;
- Indecency with a child;
- Inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance of a child;
- Possession or promotion of child pornography;
- The sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a minor;
- Employment harmful to children;
- Abandonment or endangerment of a child;
- Kidnapping or unlawful restraint;
- Public lewdness or indecent exposure;
- Enticing a child.

Whether disclosed voluntarily or by the result of the security background check, any charges of the above crimes leveled against the applicant as well as charges/convictions of the following items will require special approval by the church board for that worker to participate in the leadership, sponsorship or supervising of any activities or programs with children.

- Criminal homicide;
- Aggravated assault;
- Crimes related to the possession, use or sale of drugs or controlled substances
- Alcohol –related offenses
- Failure to disclose criminal history
- Probation
- Pending Charges
- Felony Theft
- Robbery or felony where a weapon was used
- Any type of assault
- Any crime going against the mission of Bryan Church of the Nazarene

All charges for these crimes or charges or convictions for any other crimes not listed above will be reviewed by the Nominating Committee and referred to the church board for possible approval.

UNACCEPTABLE ACTS AND OMISSIONS

The following acts or omissions are unacceptable violations during any activity or program and are to be immediately reported to the appropriate person after the safety of the child(ren) involved has been assured.

- Any direct observations or evidence of sexual activity in the presence of or in association with a child.
- Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct towards a child.
- Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any person and a child.
- Infliction of physically abusive behavior to a child.
- Failure to provide adequate supervision to a child in relation to the activities of the church.
- Mental or emotional injury to a child.
- The presence or possession of obscene or pornographic materials at any church function.
- The presence, possession, or being under the influence of any illegal or illicit drugs or alcohol.
- Reckless operation of a motor vehicle while children are in the vehicle or in close proximity.

WORKER SUPERVISION

1. The church requires a reasonable ratio of adult workers to be maintained in each situation involving the supervision of children. Preferably, an adult will not be left alone with only one child without written permission from a Parent or legal guardian. Childcare provided by the church must include an adult at all times.
2. Church staff or volunteer directors will supervise on an ongoing basis and make unannounced visits into classes or other program sites from time to time.
3. An identification system shall be adopted to insure that a young child that is dropped off will be picked up by the proper person. This will apply to the Nursery/Preschool department.
4. In counseling sessions with children, it is preferable that parental permission be obtained prior to a minister meeting privately with a child.
5. Lists of workers that meet church approval to work with children will be available to any person. These lists are to be updated periodically.
6. Teenagers under eighteen (18) wanting to serve as teen workers in any capacity with activities, studies, or programs for preschoolers or children will need to fill in a Teen Volunteer Information Form and go through the training. The only step in the process they are exempt from is the criminal background check.
7. Those who only volunteer occasionally must go through the entire volunteer screening process if their involvement consists of overnight activities or any one on one interaction.
8. Preferably, parental permission should be obtained in advance for involvement in church sponsored programs, activities or whenever an adult might be spending time alone with a child in an unsupervised situation.
9. Classroom doors without windows should remain open at all times.
10. A list of possible violations and proper reporting procedures will be available from any paid workers and/or church office.

REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE INCIDENTS

Any person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect shall report the person's belief in accordance with this procedure. Non-accusatory reports (reports that identify the victim of abuse or neglect whether or not the person responsible for the abuse or neglect is known) shall be made to the proper local or state authorities.

- 1) Follow any reporting procedures of any applicable agency(ies).
- 2) The church should also immediately contact the insurance company to report the occurrence, and should contact its attorney.
- 3) In instances where child abuse is suspected and a member of the ministerial staff is the perpetrator, the immediate supervisor should be contacted and advised.
- 4) This procedure is not only required as a condition of your job or volunteer position, but is also required by law.
- 5) Upon the first suspicion of an instance of child abuse, the following steps should be taken immediately:
 - a) Do not treat the suspicion as frivolous.
 - b) Commence the investigation immediately, and conclude it as soon as possible.
 - i) If a sponsor or volunteer of children suspects a case of child abuse, he or she is required by law to report his/her suspicions within 24 hours to The Texas Department of Human Services, Protective Services Branch at 1-800-252-5400. It is the policy of the church that it also be reported immediately to one of the paid staff ministers of the church.
 - ii) The minister receiving the initial report will be responsible for confirming the facts reported and the condition of the child, within 24 hours of when the first report was made. Use the "Reducing the Risk Application Checklist" to complete the church/staff responsibilities involved with the occurrence.
 - iii) Data concerning the child, name, address and other pertinent information will be obtained through discussions with the initial reporter and other staff members. The name and address of the person responsible for the care of the child, if available, will be obtained.
 - iv) After the information is secured, the minister will contact The Texas Department of Human Services, Protective Services Branch at 1-800-252-5400.

- v) Within 24 hours of when the case is first reported verbally to The Texas Department of Human Services, Protective Services Branch, the report will be documented on a Child Abuse Report Form. A copy of this form must be sent within five (5) days to The Texas Department of Human Services, Protective Services Branch.
 - c) Maintain confidentiality of the investigation as much as possible. Emphasize confidentiality of the victim and any accused.
 - d) Cooperate fully with law enforcement officials.
 - e) Suspend any accused from the performance of duties involving children until the investigation has been completed.
 - f) Keep the victim and victim's family informed.
 - g) In instances where child abuse is confirmed, the church should immediately dismiss the worker from that position. Official church membership termination should be considered, as appropriate in the circumstances.
 - h) In instances where the evidence is inconclusive, the church may need to take some action depending on the strength of the evidence available and after consideration of the victim's family's request.
 - i) Keep the congregation informed of the investigation with respect to matters which are not confidential, so that the congregation will hear about the investigation from within the church rather than from the news media.
- 6) Promptly take steps to plan for a response to the media and attempt to speak to the media only through one contact person so that the church can emphasize through the media to the public the church's position on child abuse, its concern for the victim, and the extensive steps the church is taking to address the present occurrence and to reduce the risk and provide a safe environment for other children.

INSURANCE

The church shall obtain a sufficient level of liability insurance coverage that would cover child abuse and sexual misconduct claims. If available, the church should have the levels of coverage which are required for limited immunity.

Approved by Church Board in Fall 2006

