



# CHRIST CHURCH

## KIDS' MINISTRY SAFETY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- A. Christ Church is committed to protecting preschoolers, children, and youth from sexual, emotional, and physical abuse. Christ Church has a **Zero-Tolerance Policy** prohibiting any act of sexual, emotional, or physical abuse. The zero-tolerance policy requires all **Christ Church employees** and **“direct volunteers”** (see definition) who work with children to immediately report any occurrence or suspected occurrence of child abuse to a member of Christ Church’s Ministerial staff.
- B. Any paid employee or “direct volunteer” who works with children (age 17 or under) will be given the definition of child abuse in writing, specific policies for working in Kids Ministry and Student Ministry, as well as the policy on reporting child abuse.
- C. Christ Church adheres to the **“two adults” rule**, which mandates a reasonable number of adult workers to be present in each situation involving the supervision of children and youth, with a minimum of two workers at all times. A married couple or two family members would account for only “one” in the “two adults” rule.
- D. The Christ Church Ministerial Staff and Ministry Coordinators will supervise classes and events on an ongoing basis, making unannounced visits from time to time.
- E. All paid employees and “direct volunteers” should have an application on file that includes a legal release statement allowing Christ Church to conduct a criminal background check. The application may include questions pertaining to working with children and/or youth. The application may include personal interviews, current address information, former churches, references, and general experience working with children and/or youth.
- F. A criminal background check will be conducted on all paid employees and all “direct volunteers” who will be working directly with children and/or youth.
- G. An identification/security system will be utilized during Christ Church events and activities, ensuring that when adults drop off a child, they are the same adults or the adults' designees who pick up the child.
- H. Outside groups or organizations and/or individuals who utilize Christ Church facilities or attend Christ Church sponsored events for children and/or youth must certify that a child protective policy is in place and is being enforced.

### Definitions

***Disclaimer:** These definitions are not exhaustive. Please refer to the Protect My Ministry Training and O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5 for additional information.*

#### **A. Christ Church Volunteer Definitions**

- a. **Direct Volunteer:** one who is specially enlisted and serves in ministries supported by Christ Church.

- b. Indirect Volunteer: one who is enlisted by an outside group to work at an event using Christ Church facilities.

## **B. Defining Child Abuse**

Child abuse is any intentional act by an adult or by another child that harms or threatens to harm a child's physical, mental, or emotional health. Abuse by another child can be an older or stronger individual who exerts his or her position of power. Child abuse can include the following:

- a. Emotional Abuse:
  - i. occurs when a child's emotional and mental health needs are not being met or are being threatened.
  - ii. can occur when words or actions are used that cause extreme emotional pain, often with no visible injury.
- b. Neglect:
  - i. occurs when a caregiver fails to provide basic needs such as food, water, supervision, medical care, clothing, housing, or educational needs.
- c. Physical Abuse:
  - i. occurs when someone inflicts visible or invisible bodily harm.
  - ii. is the intentional use of physical force against a child that results in, or has the potential to result in, physical injury. This can include actions such as hitting, kicking, shaking, burning, biting, choking, or otherwise causing bodily harm
- d. Sexual Abuse:
  - i. Physical Contact: A sexual act or contact, in which the abuser physically touches the child, or forces the child to touch them or another person, in a sexual manner.
  - ii. Non-contact: Sexual abuse that does not involve physical contact with the child's body but still exploits, harasses, or exposes the child sexually

### **Identifying Physical and Behavioral Indicators of Abuse/Neglect**

Child care-givers should be on the alert for signs of child abuse. While one sign of abuse may actually be innocent and signify another challenging life event, such as the death of a family member or pet, or parents going through a divorce, multiple or severe signs should always be investigated.

***Disclaimer:** These indicators are not exhaustive and do not verify actual abuse; however, when observed, they may warrant further investigation. If these indicators are detected, see the reporting procedure. Please refer to the Protect My Ministry Training for more indicators.*

- a. Wary of others
- b. Clingy (clinging) to others
- c. Uncomfortable with emotions (crying)
- d. Emotionally detached
- e. Extreme changes in behavior when not around parents
- f. Manipulative or controlling/poor image of self
- g. Delinquent behavior
- h. Self-mutilation, drug or alcohol abuse
- i. Bruises, welts, burns, bite marks, bed wetting, fractures
- j. Questionable sexual behavior, knowledge beyond the particular developmental age
- k. Promiscuous
- l. Withdrawn, distant
- m. Self-conscious

- n. Obsessively clean
- o. Extreme compliance or defiant
- p. Anxious
- q. Fearful
- r. Pain or itching in the genital area

## **Reporting Protocol**

Christ Church is committed to providing a safe environment for children and youth. To protect children and to comply with Georgia law (O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5), all staff and volunteers are **mandated reporters** of child abuse and neglect. This protocol outlines the steps for reporting suspected abuse and ensures the church fulfills both its legal responsibilities and its moral duty to safeguard children.

### **A. Definitions**

- a. Child Abuse/Neglect: Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, or neglect of a child under 18, as defined by Georgia law.
- b. Reasonable Cause to Believe: A suspicion, based on observation, knowledge, or disclosure, that a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm. Proof is **not** required.

### **B. Mandated Reporting Requirement**

- a. All **clergy, staff, and volunteers** of Christ Church working with children are **mandated reporters**.
  - i. Any reasonable cause to believe that abuse and/or neglect of a child has occurred by a staff member, teacher, worker, family member, or any individual shall immediately and confidentially be reported. Do not treat any suspicion or accusation as frivolous.
  - ii. You are not required to verify or investigate the claim, only to report the suspicion.
- b. When abuse is suspected in the course of duties at the church, staff and volunteers shall notify the **Lead Pastor** (the “person in charge” or their designated delegate).
- c. Once the volunteer or staff member has made this internal report, they are deemed to have **fully complied with Georgia law**.

### **C. Internal Notification**

- a. Immediately and confidentially notify a Christ Church ministerial staff member.
  - i. All reports and related information must remain confidential.
  - ii. Only those directly involved in reporting and follow-up will be informed.
- b. All reports must also be shared with the Lead Pastor, who will internally document the report. Provide all known details: child’s name, age, injury/behavior observed, statements made, names of others involved.
- c. The **Lead Pastor (or designated delegate)** may seek immediate consultation with DFCS intake, legal counsel, or other professionals for guidance when a report of suspected child abuse is received. Such consultation must not delay making the required report. All reports must be made **immediately and no later than 24 hours** after reasonable cause is known. Any consultation and the rationale for actions taken must be documented.

### **D. External Reporting**

- a. The **Lead Pastor (or delegate)** is legally responsible for reporting to the **Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS)** or law enforcement.
  - i. Leadership may add additional relevant information to the report, but may not change, suppress, or filter the volunteer’s or staff member’s notification.
- b. Reports must be made **immediately, but no later than 24 hours** after the suspicion arises.

- c. If, at any point, you believe that a report is not being made through church leadership, you may submit the report yourself.
- d. How to report:
  - i. **DFCS 24-hour line:** 1-855-GA-CHILD (1-855-422-4453)
  - ii. If the child is in immediate danger: **Call 911**

#### **E. Follow-Up**

- a. The Lead Pastor will maintain confidential documentation of all reports and ensure compliance with legal obligations.
- b. Church leadership may coordinate pastoral care for the child and family but must not interfere with DFCS or law enforcement investigations.
- c. Any further assessment, support services, or parent/guardian communication will be conducted **after the report has been made**, consistent with guidance from DFCS or law enforcement.

#### **F. Media Communication**

- a. The Lead Pastor of Christ Church should handle all press communication related to any child abuse. All questions and inquiries should be referred to this individual.

### **Diaper Changing Procedures**

Please make sure that every child goes home with a dry and clean diaper. This communicates to parents our care for the welfare of their children. It is important to follow these procedures to eliminate the spread of infectious diseases. The health and safety of each child is our ultimate priority.

- A. There is one designated area for changing diapers. Do not change diapers anywhere except in this designated area. Diapers should be changed by female volunteers only.**
- B. Have all supplies assembled and ready before you start. Supplies will include diapers, wipes (from the child's bag), paper towels, disposable gloves, paper cover for changing surface, plastic bag for soiled diaper/soiled clothing, disinfectant wipes.
- C. Wash hands
- D. Put on gloves
- E. Use wipes to clean the child. If there are none in the child's bag, then use the wipes provided by the church.
- F. Place soiled diapers in an individual plastic bag or wrap them in a used glove and dispose of them in the proper receptacle. Place any soiled clothing in a plastic bag.
- G. Diaper and dress the child.
- H. After changing, wash the child's hands and return the child to the play area.
- I. Use disinfectant wipes to thoroughly clean the diaper changing area.
- J. Dry diaper changing area with a paper towel.
- K. Wash your hands.

### **Restroom Procedures**

For the protection of our children and volunteers, it is important to follow these procedures when taking older preschoolers to the restroom

- A. A volunteer is never allowed in a bathroom alone with a child.
- B. Assist children with their clothing in the open doorway before they go into the bathroom. Female children should never be assisted by a male volunteer. Male children may be assisted by a female volunteer in the presence of another adult volunteer.
- C. Encourage children to do as much of this for themselves as possible.

- D. Please stand with your foot in the doorway to monitor the child's needs.
- E. If you have an emergency situation where a child is sick or needs your assistance, please prop open the bathroom door and ask another volunteer to assist you.
- F. In situations where children need to use a shared bathroom space with adults, the volunteer should check if any adults are already inside. If another adult is using the restroom, they should be asked to leave promptly so the child can have privacy. If the child requires special assistance due to medical conditions, the two-adult rule still applies.

### **Policies for Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse and for Preventing Allegations of Abuse**

Staff and volunteers in preschool and children's programs are subject to the following policies.

- A. In all preschool/children's programs, a minimum of two adults (at least 18 years of age) will always be present. Caregivers should never be alone with a child of any age.
- B. Classes with male teachers will also be staffed with a female teacher. When the female teacher is absent, a female substitute is secured. If the female teacher must step out of the room for a "few" moments during the class time, the door to the classroom is to remain open until the female teacher returns to the classroom.
- C. Classes staffed with two adults who are a married couple or two adults who are family members must also be staffed with a third adult (at least 18 years of age).
- D. The following appropriate bathroom procedures will be observed:
  - a. **Infant, Toddler** – babies' diapers are to be changed on the changing table or in their beds in view of other caregivers working in the room. Refer to **Diaper Changing Procedures** for more detailed instructions.
  - b. **2, 3, & 4 Year Olds** – When children require the assistance of an adult, bathroom doors should remain open. Refer to **Restroom Procedures** for more detailed instructions.
  - c. **Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> Grade** – permission must be granted to use the restroom. The volunteer should check to see if any adults are already in the restroom. If another adult is using the restroom, they should be asked to leave as soon as possible so the child can use the restroom in private. If special help is required due to medical conditions, the two-adult rule applies.
- E. If a child is injured during a preschool/children's class, program, or special outing, and the child indicates that it is in an area of the body that is "private", the parent will be called immediately. If parents are not available, the child should be examined under the supervision of a ministry staff member.
- F. Volunteers should adhere to the following guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate physical touch:
  - a. **Appropriate Touch** – Non-demanding, gentle touch of shoulders, hands, arms, head & back. Sitting on one leg (appropriate only for babies to preschool age level).
  - b. **Inappropriate Touch** – Physical contact of kissing or demanding hugs. Touching the chest, genital region, upper legs, buttocks, waist, or stomach. Sitting a child in kindergarten and up on your lap or between your legs. Piggyback rides. Seductive or suggestive contact.
- G. Parental Permission Slips are required for all children who participate in church sponsored programs and activities that are held off the church campus, at which parents will not be present. All off-campus activities must be approved by the Ministerial Staff
- H. Staff and volunteers are to discuss suspicious behavior immediately with the Lead Pastor (or delegate), who will seek appropriate counsel regarding the reported behavior.
- I. Christ Church will report sexual abuse of minors to the appropriate legal authorities and will cooperate with the legal community in related matters.

## Anti-Bullying Policy

Christ Church does not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one individual by another individual in our programming or on our campus. Likewise, our church does not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, we will take steps needed to eliminate such behavior to the extent that such behavior is in relation to any church programming, employee, or volunteer. Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take on various forms, including:

- A. **Physical Bullying:** occurs when one person engages in physical force against another, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining them.
- B. **Verbal Bullying:** when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another a hurtful name.
- C. **Nonverbal or Relational Bullying:** when one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes social exclusion, friendship manipulation, or gossip. This type of bullying also includes intimidating another person by using threatening or intimidating gestures.
- D. **Cyberbullying:** the intentional and overt act of aggression toward another person by way of any technological tool, such as email, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs). Cyberbullying can involve:
  - a. Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images.
  - b. Posting sensitive, confidential information about another person.
  - c. Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad.
  - d. Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.
  - e. Hazing – an activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers that person, regardless of that person’s willingness to participate.
  - f. Sexualized bullying – when bullying involves behaviors that are sexual in nature. Examples of sexualized bullying behaviors include sexting, bullying that involves exposure of private body parts, and verbal bullying involving sexualized language or innuendos.

Anyone who sees an act of bullying and then encourages it is engaging in bullying. This policy applies to all participants, employees, and volunteers.

## Off-Site Contact

Christ Church strongly encourages employees and volunteers to avoid outside contact with children they do not have a pre-existing familial, organizational, or social connection with (for example, children who are friends at school, families who attend the same church, or members of organized sports groups). However, if interactions with children related to Christ Church activities outside of regularly scheduled programs are necessary or unavoidable, Christ Church provides the following guidelines and assistance:

- A. Christ Church will offer training in defining whether and to what extent certain types of outside contact with children are permissible/impermissible.
- B. If there is a pre-existing social or familial relationship, the employee or volunteer must maintain proper boundaries while in Church programming.
  - a. For transparency, we encourage texting or emailing an administrator when interactions, such as transportation and social outings, occur, which may potentially create a perception of the contact being improper.
  - b. If someone has a family or social connection with a child or plans to hire them for babysitting, housesitting, tutoring, or similar activities, the employee or volunteer must notify the parents or guardians in advance. If the employee or volunteer has concerns that the activity might lead to

accusations of misconduct, they should consider canceling it. At the very least, they should promptly inform the Church of any such concerns. This approach promotes transparency and helps protect the employee or volunteer.

- c. Only the child can initiate sustained communication or contact with employees after they leave or end their program participation, and preferably through approved means of communication (i.e., the employee's church email address or business phone line).
- d. Child and parent/guardian must understand that any such continued contact is not affiliated with or represented by the employee or volunteer's status as such with Christ Church.

### **Volunteer Liability Waiver and Policy Agreement**

I have read the *Christ Church – Kids' Ministry Safety Policy & Procedures* and agree to adhere to the policies and procedures.

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer Position \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_