

CENTRAL BAPTIST
CHURCH

Child Protection Policy

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page</u>
Introduction	2
Purpose	2
Goal	2
Definition of Abuse: Physical, Verbal, Sexual	3
Definition of Minor	3
Procedures	3
I. Selection and Screening Process	4
II. Supervision of Workers	5
III. Work Restrictions	7
IV. Discipline	8
V. Reporting Procedures	8
VI. Crisis Response Plan	8
VII. Annual Employee/Worker Review	10
VIII. Revision of Policy/Procedures	11
IX. Training	11
X. Bullying	12
XI. Violation of Policy or Procedures	13
XII. Conclusion	14

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus said, “Whoever welcomes (a) child. . . welcomes me.” (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.

Jesus also said, “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones . . . , it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matthew 18:6). Our Christian faith calls us to ensure both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. Children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation, and abuse.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. Thus, Central Baptist Church adopts this policy for the protection of the children in our church.

PURPOSE:

It is the purpose and intent of Central Baptist Church to provide a safe, secure environment in which to teach and care for the children of our church and community.

GOAL:

Our goal is to protect children from any form of abuse by employees or volunteers in this church and to protect employees and volunteers from false accusations.

DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE: Physical, Verbal, Sexual

Physical and verbal abuse are defined by The National Domestic Violence website as any behavior or language that physically harms or that is intended to threaten, humiliate or insult.

The National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse defines child sexual abuse as “any sexual activity with a child, whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day-care situation in any organized ministry, whether at the main facility (church) or away, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent or another child.”

Child sexual abuse can be violent or non-violent. It is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behavior. Child sexual abuse can involve fondling, penetration of the oral, genital, and anal areas; intercourse and forcible rape and any exposure to pornographic materials, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, or allowing children to witness sexual activity.

DEFINITION OF A MINOR:

A minor is any individual under the age of 18 years.

PROCEDURES:

The procedures set forth below will apply to all people who give supervision to, have custody of or who have direct interaction with minors in church facilities or church-sponsored activities.

I. Selection and Screening Process

- A. Church Employee – anyone whose hours, terms and conditions of employment and the manner in which they perform their job duties are controlled by the church and who is paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis, whether or not they work directly with minors.

All Prospective Church employees will be required to complete a confidential application form and be interviewed by an appropriate staff member or church representative. Prospects must have references checked and verified, and give written permission for a criminal background check. **A criminal background check will then be performed and confidential results will be kept in a separate, confidential, locked file in the Church Finance Manager's office.** Any information indicating that a candidate has questionable background, 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 individual candidate from consideration for employment with this church.

- B. Volunteer workers – workers whose hours, terms and conditions of work and the manner in which they perform their work are controlled by the church and who are not paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis. There are two types of volunteer workers:

1. Volunteer workers who serve in any position **other than one working directly with children.**

2. Volunteer workers who serve in any position **working directly with children.**

All volunteers working with minors will be required to complete a confidential application form. They must give written permission for a criminal background check if they are going to be working in the care of children or have custody or supervision of children. **A criminal background check will then be performed and confidential results will be kept on file with the signed application in the Church Financial Manager's office.** In addition to the above requirement, a volunteer must be a member or regular attender of Central Baptist Church for at least six (6) months prior to being eligible to volunteer in areas that minister to minors.

Note: There will be no variations permitted for criminal background checks. This will be performed on all employees and volunteers who work with minors. "Grandfathering" of existing volunteers is not permitted.

II. Supervision of Workers

- A. **Two Adult Rule. Two adults must be present with minors in all instances.**

For the church at large, an older teenager is considered anyone 15 years and older, and if necessary, one older teenager can serve in the place of one absent adult. When an older teenager serves in the place of an absent adult, there must be one adult present in order to be in compliance with this two-adult rule. Under no circumstance, should two older teenagers be allowed to serve in the place of two adults.

In high-risk settings such as events occurring off the church property and events on the church property at times that cause children to be in an isolated area with the caretakers, two adults should always be present. In addition, age-group ministers, appropriate team leaders and/or program directors will be present and available in the hallways where minors are present. Every effort will be made to use teenagers only in addition to the two adults in a classroom. Further, every effort will be made not to use any husband/wife team(s) in classrooms of children under three years of age unless there is a third adult in the classroom as well.

- B. View windows. Every effort will be made to place preschoolers, children, and students in rooms with view windows for all teaching/learning activities.
- C. Adequate Personnel. For the church at large, every effort will be made to provide adequate personnel for supervision. Correct adult/child ratios will be maintained if at all possible. However, the number of children supervised by an adult should never exceed the following:

Babies not walking	6 babies to 1 adult
Walking – 2 yrs.	8 children to 1 adult
Twos	10 children to 1 adult
Threes	15 children to 1 adult
Fours to Kindergarten	18 children to 1 adult

Ratios for minors 6 years of age and above should be determined by the adult leadership but should not exceed 1 adult to 25 children, keeping in mind that the Two Adult Rule must be followed.

- D. Overnight Supervision. In any children's ministries that require an overnight stay, all overnight chaperones and supervisors will be cleared in advance with a **completed criminal background check on file** and will be required to comply with all outlined policies. The Two Adult Rule will be upheld in all cases of overnight supervision.

III. Work Restrictions

- A. In the church at large, children five years of age or younger (boys and girls) should be assisted as needed in the restroom by an adult female.
- B. Children over the age of five should be accompanied by at least one adult to the restroom facility. The adult should check to make sure the facility is safe, and then wait outside the restroom until the child comes out.
- C. Workers in all children's ministries should never touch a person's private areas except when necessary, as in the case of changing a diaper.
- D. Workers should avoid any appearance of impropriety, such as a male adult sitting a female 12-year-old on his lap, kissing or embracing others, etc.
- E. Central Baptist Church strongly discourages one-on-one interactions between ministers, staff, volunteers and children outside the normal scope of Church activities such as private tutoring, lessons and coaching. Public settings and/or parental presence are encouraged as a best practice.

IV. Discipline

- A. In all ministries, workers are never to spank, hit, grab, shake, or otherwise physically discipline anyone.
- B. Disciplinary problems should be reported to the workers' coordinator/supervisor or to a parent or guardian.

V. Reporting Procedures

All church employees and volunteer workers who are **NOT directly supervising or caring for children** are considered to be “**permissive reporters**” and although they are not required to report suspected child abuse to authorities, are under the law provided immunity for persons who or entities that report abuse in good faith. Observed, reported, or suspected child abuse or child molestation in the church shall be verbally reported immediately to the Senior Pastor and written documentation shall follow. Any reporting to civil authorities, law enforcement or any investigating governmental agency will be by the Senior Pastor with the advice and knowledge of the Church's attorney.

Any employee or volunteer worker **directly supervising or caring for children** in any of the church ministries is considered a “**mandatory reporter**” and if they have “reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused,” are required to notify the Senior Pastor. Any reporting to civil authorities, law enforcement or any investigating governmental agency will be by the Senior Pastor with the advice and knowledge of the Church's attorney.

VI. Crisis Response Plan

- A. All allegations will be taken seriously, and the church staff will take appropriate action including immediately notifying the Personnel Committee

Chairperson and Senior Pastor regarding cases where there is reason to believe abuse or criminal acts have occurred.

- B. The church staff will not deny or minimize the incident. The Central Baptist Church pastoral staff will minister to all persons involved, as well as investigate, and cooperate with civil authorities, law enforcement or any investigating governmental agency.
- C. In cases where the “mandatory reporter” rule applies, incidents must be reported to the Department of Family and Children’s Services first, according to the procedure outlined in Section V above. In cases where the “permissive reporter” rule applies, the parents of the alleged victim will be notified immediately by the Senior Pastor regarding any allegations of sexual misconduct or abuse. Reporting alleged abuse to the civil authorities, law enforcement or any investigating governmental agency would be handled by the Senior Pastor with the advice and knowledge of the Church’s attorney at their discretion.
- D. The appropriate church staff will document on a prescribed form (in writing with date and signature) all efforts in the handling of any incident.
- E. Any employee of the ministry who is the subject of an investigation will be removed from their position, with pay, pending completion of an investigation (unless the employee has admitted to the abuse or molestation, in which case they will be terminated in accordance with organizational employment practices).

- F. Any volunteer worker who is the subject of the investigation will be removed from their position pending the completion of the investigation.
- G. Any employee against whom allegations are substantiated for any form of abuse will be removed from work with minors. The church will consult with legal counsel for advice if termination of employment is indicated.
- H. The Senior Pastor and Chairman of the Deacons, with advice and input from the Church attorney will designate the official spokesperson for the church. Consultation will occur with the church attorney and insurance company prior to any public comments. No other staff members or church members shall speak to the media with regard to any actual or alleged incidents of abuse.
- I. 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 activities of the church.

VII. Annual Employee/Worker Review

- A. This policy and procedures will be conveyed for review annually to all workers, employees, coordinators, supervisors, and leaders to whom it applies.
- B. All ministry employees and volunteer workers who will be working in any capacity with minors will complete a brief renewal application every year affirming no allegations concerning sexual abuse have been made against them. As part of this renewal, a new criminal background check will be completed every two years.

- C. Should the renewal application for criminal background check show that any employee or volunteer worker has become unsuitable for working with minors, they will be immediately removed from their current position, and will not be considered for other positions involving work with minors.

VIII. Revision of Policy/Procedures

The Board of Deacons will coordinate a review of this policy and procedures regularly (at least annually) with legal counsel, the Personnel Committee, and the Senior Pastor. The policy and procedures should then be updated to incorporate new laws and procedures in accordance with the bylaws of the church. Any such modification should be promptly conveyed to all persons affected by the modification and should also be reviewed as part of the annual renewal application.

IX. Training

The Church attorney shall provide training with regard to this policy and procedures on an annual basis.

Lesson objectives for training workers with children and youth should include the following:

- A. Provide a basic orientation to the facts about child abuse and the church.
- B. Present a rationale for the emphasis upon protecting young people from abuse in the church.
- C. Describe church policies governing ministry to minors.
- D. Encourage worker commitments to follow church policies.

X. Bullying

Central Baptist Church will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one child by another child. In addition, Central Baptist Church will not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, Central Baptist Church will take steps needed to eliminate such behavior.

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, is repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take on various forms, including:

- A. *Physical bullying* – when one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.
- B. *Verbal bullying* – when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful names.
- 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 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:

- Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images.

- Posting sensitive, private information about another person.
- Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad.
- Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.
- 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.
- Sexualized bullying – when bullying involves behaviors that are sexual in nature. Examples of sexualized bullying behaviors include sexting, bullying that involves exposures of private body parts, and verbal bullying involving sexualized language or innuendos.

Ministers, employees, or volunteers who observe acts of bullying shall report them to the Senior Pastor.

XI. Violation of Policy or Procedures

- A. Workers must promptly notify their coordinator/supervisor of any activity undertaken on their own behalf or by others which violates this policy or procedures.
- B. Any coordinator/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.

XII. Conclusion

In all ministries with children and youth, Central Baptist Church is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child will be “. . . surrounded by steadfast love, . . . established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.” (From Baptismal Covenant II, in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 44).

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