

## **Holmeswood Baptist Church Child Abuse Prevention Policy**

**PURPOSE:** It is the purpose and intent of Holmeswood Baptist Church to provide a safe, secure environment to teach and care for children and youth of our faith family.

**GOAL:** Our goal is to protect children (from birth to age 18) from all forms of child abuse and neglect. This includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse or neglect of a child by an adult or adolescent caregiver (employee or volunteer) of Holmeswood Baptist Church. It is also our goal to protect employees and volunteers from false accusations.

### **DEFINITIONS:**

**SEXUAL ABUSE:** The National Resource on Child Sexual Abuse defines 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. Child sexual abuse can involve fondling, penetration of the oral, genital, and anal areas, intercourse and forcible rape. Other forms of abuse can include verbal comments, and any exposure to pornographic materials, inappropriate internet activity, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, or allowing children to witness sexual activity.”

**PHYSICAL ABUSE:** Maltreatment which results in physical injury, including but not limited to bruises, cuts, welts, fractures, and internal injuries.

**EMOTIONAL ABUSE:** Maltreatment which results in impaired psychological growth and development, including, but not limited to, belittling, rejection, constant unequal treatment, verbal assaults, excessive demands on child’s performance and isolation from normal social activities.

**NEGLECT:** Failure or inattention on the part of the caregiver to provide for a child’s basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and supervision.

**SCOPE:** The policy and procedures set forth below will apply to all people who give supervision or have custody of minors or who have opportunity to have contact with minors at all church sponsored activities.

## **I. SELECTION PROCESS**

**A. Employee** – Anyone who is paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis, whether or not they work directly with preschoolers, children and youth.

- Complete a confidential application form
- Complete a consent to release confidential information
- National criminal records search
- Sex offender registry check
- Interview by appropriate church members
- References checked and verified

**B. Volunteer** – Anyone who is not paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis, and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors.

- Volunteer applicants seeking to work with children or youth must have been regularly attending [worship] Holmeswood Baptist Church for at least six months.
- Volunteers seeking to travel with the Youth Group for mission trips must work with the youth group as a Wednesday night counselor, or Sunday morning BFG leader for at least one year prior to traveling with the group.
- Complete a volunteer registration form
- Interview by appropriate staff member
- Complete a consent to release confidential information
- National criminal records search
- Sex offender registry check
- References checked and verified

**C. Volunteer Driver**—Anyone who is not paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis who transports children or youth to church related activities.

- Must complete all of the above listed steps for volunteers
- Must be at least 21 years old
- Provide a copy of driver's license to the church
- Provide proof of auto insurance to the church, updated annually.
- Agree to abide by all state laws regarding child safety seats and seatbelts for adults and minors

**D. Minors** – Teens who work with children on a regular basis will do so only with adult supervision and permission of a parent or guardian.

**E.** Any adult member of the congregation, volunteer, or compensated worker who has been convicted of a crime against a child or a violent crime against another adult,

shall not provide service in any church-sponsored activity or program for children or special needs persons.

- F. The application and the results of any screening shall be kept confidential by authorized church staff.

## **II. PROTECTION POLICY**

### **A. Two Adults**

Every effort will be made to have two (2) adult workers present, or nearby, with preschoolers, children and youth during church activities. This rule extends to transporting children to and from church activities including those off the church premises.

Situations that arise where these standards cannot be met should be reported to the supervising staff member immediately. In such cases the adult in charge will use the best judgment in assigning appropriate supervision and remain in frequent contact with the supervisor.

Planned, organized transportation events may require a single driver per vehicle. In these situations, drivers will transport in a convoy with one another in sight to and from the church related event. These situations are to be for short distances only (less than 15 miles from the church). Any transportation event beyond the fifteen mile radius will require two adults per vehicle. If there are not enough adult volunteers for two adults per vehicle, a van or mini-bus will be considered for the trip.

### **B. View Windows/Open Doors**

Every effort will be made to place preschoolers, children and youth in rooms with view windows or open doors for all teaching, learning, and counseling activities.

### **C. Open Classrooms**

Classrooms or child care rooms may be visited without prior notice by staff, other volunteers, or parents. Program directors will be strongly encouraged to do this.

### **D. Training**

All volunteers will receive training regarding child abuse prevention, warning signs and symptoms of child sexual abuse, and reporting procedures. All volunteers will sign an agreement to abide by Holmeswood Baptist Church policies and procedures regarding child abuse.

**E. Additional Guidelines for Preschool Ministry (Birth – Kindergarten)**

1. When possible, children are to be encouraged to take care of their own bathroom needs. Should assistance be required, another adult should be present or the bathroom door must remain ajar while the caregiver assists the child.
2. Parent/guardian (adult responsible for the child while at church) is required to sign in their child/ren at the reception counter and proceed to walk their child into the appropriate classroom. Children shall be required to have proper identification provided from the sign-in before admitted into the classroom. Parent/guardian is not to leave a child in a classroom without the teacher's presence or knowledge.
3. Children shall be released to parent or guardians at the reception counter or the classroom door. Parents or guardians must present an ID badge to pick up his or her child. Authorized siblings, ages 12 and over, may pick up the child with the proper ID badge.
4. When children are taken out of the room (playground, etc.), the caregivers shall take a count of the children upon leaving and upon return, to ensure all are present.
5. A positive approach to discipline shall be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits will be established to help the children function appropriately.
6. The Director of Preschool Ministry or appropriate staff person must approve preschool activities that are held off site. Parent or guardian permission shall be obtained in writing and there shall be a minimum of two adult caregivers present.

**F. Additional Guidelines for Children's Ministry (First Grade – Fifth Grade)**

1. Children shall take care of their own bathroom needs. No assistance should be provided by caregivers.
2. Parent/guardian is required to supervise children in their care at all times, including walking the child to the appropriate classroom. Parent/guardian is required to pick up children after each event in the appropriate classroom. Children will only be released to the parent, guardian or authorized sibling (age 12 and above).
3. Children who are visitors or guests must have identifying information provided to the adult volunteer in charge of the event. This includes information about potential allergies and disabilities, permission slips, and other related forms for each event. Adult volunteers who are responsible for the child while at the church event must see that this information is provided.

4. A positive approach to discipline will be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits shall be established to help the children function appropriately.
5. The Director of Children's Ministry or appropriate staff person must approve children's activities that are held off site. Parent or guardian permission shall be obtained in writing and there shall be a minimum of two adult caregivers present.
6. For camps, retreats, or similar activities, two adult caregivers shall work as a team when it is not possible to have two adults in the same sleeping room. The team approach shall be encouraged and coordinated by the supervisory staff person. The supervisory staff person shall be aware of and responsible for such activities.
7. Organized events on or off site (Holmeswood Baptist Church) shall be staffed with a minimum of 1:10, adult caregiver to child.
8. Overnight events that are attended by children of both genders must be chaperoned by adult caregivers of both genders.

**G. Additional Guidelines for Youth Ministry (Sixth – Twelfth Grade)**

1. Organized events on or off site (Holmeswood Baptist Church) shall be staffed with a minimum of 1:10, adult caregiver to youth.
2. Parent/guardian is required to supervise youth in their care who have special needs at all times, including walking the youth to the appropriate classroom. Parent/guardian is required to pick up the youth after each event in the appropriate classroom. Youth with special needs will only be released to the parent, guardian or authorized sibling.
3. The Youth Minister shall be informed in advance of all activities to be held off site.
4. Overnight events that are attended by youth of both genders must be chaperoned by adult caregivers of both genders.
5. A positive approach to discipline shall be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits shall be established.
6. It is recognized that certain counseling and ministerial situations may preclude the presence of two adult caregivers and that the general guidelines for supervision of caregivers should not restrict situations where individual counsel and guidance is necessary. In this case the door must be left open or the window of the door shall remain uncovered and all individuals in the room must be visible through the window.
7. For camps, retreats, or similar activities, two adult caregivers shall work as a team when it is not possible to have two adults in the same sleeping room. The team approach shall be encouraged and coordinated by the supervisory

staff person. The supervisory staff person shall be aware of and responsible for such activities.

### **III. REPORTING PROCEDURES**

Observed, reported, or suspected child abuse or child molestations should be reported immediately to the appropriate age group minister. Reporting abuse can precipitate severe consequences to a family, so it should never be done casually or thoughtlessly, and certainly not for malicious purposes. At the same time, failing to report abuse can have severe consequences to a child at risk. Therefore, if you have reasonable cause to suspect abuse, you should talk with an appropriate staff person to see what steps should be taken to protect the child and help the family.

### **IV. RESPONSES TO ALLEGATIONS**

- A.** All allegations and suspicions of all forms of child abuse will be taken seriously and church staff will take appropriate action in accordance with the laws of the State of Missouri, insurance policy requirements, and based upon advice of legal counsel.
- B.** Any suspicion or allegation of child abuse or neglect will be reported to the proper legal authorities within 24 hours of it being discovered. The protection of the children must be the most important concern.
- C.** The official spokesperson for the church in any of these matters will be the Senior Pastor or his or her appointee. No other staff members or church members shall speak to the media in an official capacity.
- D.** The church staff will document (in writing, with date and signature) all efforts in the handling of any incident.
- E.** If the accused has assigned duties within the life of the church, or is hired staff, that person will be temporarily relieved of his or her duties until the investigation is concluded. Permission to return to duties will be given by the Risk Management Team, Placement Team and/or Personnel Team.
- F.** The church staff will not deny, minimize, or blame any individual involved in allegations. Holmeswood Baptist Church will minister to all involved, as well as cooperate with authorities.