



## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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(pending final approval)

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## **Vision / Mission**

“Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! ... **We will not hide them from their children**, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.” (Psalm 78:1, 4)

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and **how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings**, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3:14-15)

Bethany Baptist Church’s vision for our children’s ministry is to bring children to Christ, build them in their spiritual maturity, and equip them for lives of service in the church, community, and world.

This vision is achieved through the following guiding principles:

- We will maintain a safe and secure environment for all children who come to the church.
- We will support and encourage parents in their role as the primary influencers of their children.
- We will teach the Scriptures to children through our various ministries.
- We will provide children with adult workers who live faithfully as Christian role models.
- We will uphold the highest ethical standards in order to protect children and to be consistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## **Policy Parameters**

This child protection policy applies to children (from infancy through fifth grade) who are voluntarily placed by parents under the responsibility of Bethany Baptist Church (hereafter commonly referred to as “the church” or “Bethany”) for the church’s public worship services or

specific children's ministry-related church sponsored activities (including Vacation Bible School, childcare for church events, babysitting nights, etc.). Other issues related to children at home, school, or in any Bible study, activity, or venue not directly related to children's ministry at Bethany are not covered by this policy. Other children's ministries operated through the church (e.g. Upward Sports, Awana) are governed by the principles in this policy unless otherwise stated in their own ministry's policies.

### **Definition of Personnel**

- *Adults* are individuals eighteen years or older.
- *Minors* are individuals under the age of eighteen.
- *Staff* are paid employees of the church.
- *Volunteers* are adults who work with children and are not employed by the church. Volunteers could fill a multitude of roles in children's ministry, including (but not limited to) teachers, childcare workers, assistants, and ministry leaders.
- *Helpers* are minors who are assisting in ministering to children younger than them alongside an adult.
- *Deacons* and *Shepherds* are elected officers of the church.
- *Pastors* are those who serve as Shepherds and are remunerated by the church for their work. All pastors are church staff members.
- *Children's Ministry Coordinator* and *Nursery Coordinator* are individuals who exercise supervision over those respective ministry areas.

### **Child Protection**

In order to make every effort to keep children safe while they are in the care of the church, the following procedures will be followed:

- All children's ministry volunteers will go through a screening process, including background checks for all adults. Full-time church staff will also undergo background checks, whether or not their role is directly working with children.

- All children's ministry volunteers must undergo training prior to being able to serve with children. Training must include reviewing the church's child protection policy.
- Volunteer/child ratios will be established.
- Responsible individuals will be tasked with monitoring hallway and classroom safety during church services.
- Each classroom will be equipped with a first aid kit.
- Staff and volunteers will be trained to recognize suspected child abuse and to understand and follow applicable reporting laws. Abuse reports are to be made not only to church leaders, but to appropriate civil authorities as well.
- A healthy child policy will be adhered to in all children's ministries and posted clearly near the entrance of each classroom.
- Two adults will be in each room with children whenever possible. Additional safety measures will be taken when there are not two volunteers present.
- Volunteers will know how to evacuate the building in case of an emergency.

### **Screening Process for Volunteers**

In order to work with children at Bethany Baptist Church, volunteers must undergo the following screening process:

- All volunteers must attend the church for at least 6 months prior to volunteering in children's ministry. This waiting period may be extended at the discretion of the pastors, church officers, or ministry coordinator. Approval of non-members for service in children's ministry will be at the discretion of the pastors.
- Volunteers must be at least eighteen years old.
- Minors who serve as helpers must do so alongside adult volunteers.
- All volunteers and teenage helpers must complete Bethany's children's ministry volunteer application and receive approval from a pastor and/or the Children's Ministry Coordinator or Nursery Coordinator.
- At least one reference check must be satisfactorily completed for all adult volunteers before beginning service.
- A criminal background check must be satisfactorily completed for all adult volunteers before beginning service. Prior sexual misconduct or child abuse offenses revealed by a

background check will result in the applicant being permanently ineligible for service with minors. Other serious offenses that may come up will be screened by the Child Protection Committee, who will determine the individual's fitness for working with children.

- All volunteers must repeat the screening procedures and criminal background checks every five years.

Bethany Baptist Church reserves the right to reject any applicant for volunteer service or to dismiss an existing volunteer for any reason, including, but not limited to, refusing or failing to complete screening; failing to provide requested information; providing information that is subsequently determined to be false or misleading; sin issues that compromise the applicant or volunteer's ability to care for children; any criminal report or charge; obtaining information from references or criminal records checks that suggest that the applicant is not suitable to help with children; or other behaviors that may call into question the applicant's character or trustworthiness.

Any volunteer, helper, staff member, church officer, or pastor who learns of or has knowledge of misconduct by an applicant or volunteer must report that knowledge to one of the appropriate coordinators or pastors. Each individual is also personally responsible for his or her legal obligation to report information to authorities. Mandatory reporting laws are outlined in Oregon Revised Statute 419B.005.

### **Training**

All children's ministry staff, volunteers, and teenage helpers must attend Bethany's childcare training before they are allowed to work with children. Children's ministry workers who have completed the initial training will from time to time be asked to undergo additional training, including on updates to policies and procedures. Parents are welcome to attend training sessions as well, in order to be educated about the church's childcare standards.

### **Volunteer Arrival and Departure**

Volunteers should be ready to accept children 10 minutes prior to the start of any session. Parents are encouraged to pick up their children immediately after the conclusion of the session. In the event that a child is not picked up within 15 minutes of the end of the session, volunteers will contact the parents, or ask one of the coordinators or church officers to help locate the parents.

### **Sign-in Procedures**

Children are to be signed in whenever they are left in the care of the church, that the church may have an accurate record of which children were in attendance. On Sunday mornings, children are to be signed in using the electronic check-in system. If the system is not functioning, a record of children in attendance should be manually kept in each classroom. The following information must be gathered and accessible for any child in the care of the church:

- Child's name and birthdate
- Parents' contact information
- Adults who are allowed to pick the child up
- Any allergy information or safety concerns

### **Two Volunteer Emphasis**

All children's ministry programs should strive to staff each separate group of children with at least two unrelated adult volunteers. A single volunteer should only work with children when there are other individuals in the church building and other programs going on (for example, a Sunday School class). In instances where there is a single volunteer working with children, there must be full visibility of the classroom from the hallway and the volunteer must remain in that line of sight as much as possible. Classrooms with larger windows (19x23 inches) or Dutch Doors may have the door closed and maintain visibility, provided that the top half of the door

is open and/or the window is completely unobstructed. Classrooms with smaller windows (3x17 inches) must always leave the door open if there is a single volunteer in the room.

Children must never be left alone by volunteers in a classroom.

### **Child-to-Volunteer Ratios**

The following ratios ought to be maintained during the Sunday morning ministries of the church:

- Children under 12 months old – 1:3
- Children 12-35 months old – 1:5
- Children 3-5 years old – 1:8
- Children 6-12 years old – 1:12

Should a ratio be met, additional volunteers should be added in order to add additional children to the class rather than exceed the appropriate ratios.

### **Diaper Changing and Restroom Procedures**

Parents are to take children to the restroom before dropping them off with the children's ministry, and are to let children's ministry workers know if their child is potty training. Diapers should be changed by parents before drop off as well, if necessary. The following procedures are to be followed for restroom and diaper changes:

- *Children through two years old:* volunteers may change diapers as needed, and may contact parents to change diapers if necessary. Diapers must always be changed in the presence of another volunteer.
- *Children two years old through Pre-K:* Children using the restroom must be accompanied by a female volunteer and at least one other child. The volunteer is to wait outside the closed restroom stall while the child uses the restroom, unless the child needs assistance. Should the child need assistance, the volunteer is to inform the child's parents upon pick up that bathroom assistance was needed and provided to their child.



Should children this age need diapers changed, parents are to be contacted in order to change the diapers.

- *Kindergarten through third grade:* Any child needing to use the restroom shall go with another child of the same age and sex.
- *Fourth grade and up:* Any child needing to use the restroom may go on his or her own.
- All children and volunteers must wash hands with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer, prior to returning to the classroom. After changing diapers, volunteers must wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer, and disinfect the surface area.

### **Classroom Discipline**

All children's ministry classes and activities should strive to be loving and organized environments where children can learn, have fun, and interact with others. Though this type of environment should be positively directed and encouraged, at times it may become necessary for volunteers to correct or redirect inappropriate behavior.

Acceptable means of redirection include verbal correction, withholding a certain privilege or activity for a brief time, or separating a child from the situation or problem for a brief time (particularly if the child's behavior is endangering or upsetting other children). Volunteers should seek to use instances of correction to talk with the child, share the gospel with them, and (when appropriate) to reconcile with others. During correction, the child should not be removed from the classroom. Correction should be discrete, in the classroom (not in the hallway), and never outside the sight of others.

Children's ministry volunteers, helpers, and staff members are strictly prohibited from using any form of corporal punishment such as slapping, kicking, punching, spanking, or hitting. They should never speak harsh words, insults, belittling comments, threats, or any other form of verbal humiliation. Children's ministry workers are allowed to physically restrain a child only as a last resort if the child is physically endangering himself/herself or other children, and must strive to do so in as safe a manner as possible for the child being restrained.

If a child's behavior is uncontrollable or unresponsive to the acceptable means of correction listed above, the child's parents are to be contacted. Children's ministry workers may also contact the child's parents in any other instance in which they feel it is necessary. Parents may be contacted via the text messaging function on the electronic check-in system, or through other means.

If a child assaults, harasses, or bullies other children, misbehaves beyond minor correction, has a pattern of misbehavior, or is a danger to other children, the parents may be asked to remove the child from the classroom. When a child has been removed from the classroom, reinstatement can be made at the determination of the Children's Ministry Coordinator and/or a pastor, who will determine if the risk of re-offense has been adequately reduced.

### **Physical Touch Policy**

Physical contact between adults and children can have positive uses, such as aiding in communication, redirecting attention, calming restlessness, and showing appropriate love and care. However, it can also be misinterpreted and misused. The following standards are instituted in order to keep children's ministry workers above reproach.

- Always remain in sight of other adults.
- Appropriate physical touch is that which nurtures children and develops a sense of emotional security and maturity in their interactions with adults. Appropriate touch is applied only to meet the needs of the children, and never the adults.
- If a child expresses a desire not to be touched, their request should always be respected. The only exception to this is in a potentially dangerous situation requiring physical restraint, as described above.
- Appropriate physical contact varies according to age. Many appropriate behaviors with nursery children (holding, rocking, sitting on laps) can be inappropriate for grade school children.
- Inappropriate touch involves, but is not limited to, coercion or other forms of physical contact which exploit the child's lack of knowledge, satisfies adult physical needs at the

expense of the child, violates laws against sexual or physical contact between adult and child, and any attempt to modify child behavior with physical force.

- Only women can take children preschool and under into the restroom.
  - Sitting on laps is only appropriate for ages 0 to 5, and should be initiated only by the child once they are old enough to do so.
  - In general, a man will need to limit physical contact more than a woman in the same situation, especially when working with older children. This is not because any individual man is a greater risk to children, but is in recognition of the reality regarding the demographics of abuse cases.
  - Volunteers are to refrain from rough-housing, wrestling, shoulder or piggy-back rides, rubbing, massaging, tickling, or any physical activity that might make a child feel unsafe or uncomfortable. If children request such activities, they must be redirected.
  - Children should never be touched on or near any region that is private or personal (i.e. their bathing suit areas), even if that area is clothed.
  - Children should never be touched out of anger or frustration. Physical discipline is not an appropriate or acceptable means of correcting someone else's child.
  - Examples of appropriate touch for volunteers can include sitting side by side, high fives, fist bumps, handshakes, side hugs, pats on the shoulder, or light pats on the head.
- However, even these potentially positive touches should never be done against a child's expressed or implied will.

### **Minor Helpers in the Classroom**

Helpers must be at least one age group older than the children they are helping with (age groups: nursery, lower preschool, upper preschool, K-1<sup>st</sup> grade, 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade, middle school, high school), and must serve alongside an approved adult.

It is to be understood that the adult volunteers in the room are responsible not only for supervising the children, but for supervising any minor helpers as well. Teenage helpers must undergo volunteer training. Younger helpers serving alongside their parents are not required to receive training.

### **Food and Drink in the Classroom**

Volunteers may distribute the snacks that are in each classroom to the children. Parents are expected to notify the church and/or classroom volunteers about any allergy concerns prior to placing their child in children's ministry, and may send an alternate snack for their child if necessary. The discretion of the classroom teacher shall determine when it is appropriate and allowed to consume any food or drinks.

### **Security and Emergency Response**

In emergency situations, if appropriate, 911 will be called to secure help. All children's ministry volunteers should be prepared to provide appropriate help and guidance in the event of an emergency.

All classrooms are equipped with basic first aid kits with band-aids, and there is a more substantial first aid kit in the church office as well. A defibrillator machine is located in the back of the church auditorium, in the northwest corner. For major injuries, emergency medical services must be called immediately, as appropriate. Volunteers may administer care for minor injuries, though parents should be notified as soon as possible. In the event of any medical incident, an Incident Report Form should be filled out prior to leaving the premises on the day of the accident.

In the event of a fire or other emergency event requiring evacuation, 911 should be called, and all children should be evacuated through the nearest safe exit, following the diagrams posted in the church. Volunteers and staff will keep evacuated children in their classroom groups in a safe space outdoors—either the front yard or back softball field, depending on which exit the children were evacuated through. Parents should not go to their children's classrooms, but will instead meet their children in the designated evacuation space outdoors.

## **Live Threat**

A live threat includes a shooting or some other type of security hazard.

### Step 1: Volunteers and Staff evacuate children

- As soon as staff and/or volunteers are confronted with a real threat, they respond immediately.
- The first course of action should be to evacuate the building, as stated above.

### Step 2: Volunteers and Staff communicate the danger

- When it is safe to do so, whoever sees or hears the live threat should notify the ministry coordinator, church staff, and/or church officers about the problem.
- Staff and volunteers should call 911, providing the location and nature of the threat. In the event that shots have been fired, they should tell police that there is an “active shooter” on the premises.

### Step 3: Hide

- If evacuation is not a safe option, hide in as safe a place as possible.
- Close the door, including the top portion of each door.
- Barricade the doors with heavy objects.
- Close and lock all windows and blinds.
- Turn off lights.
- Silence all electronic devices.
- Maintain silence.
- Have children lie or sit on the floor away from the door and out of sight.

### Step 4: Staff/Volunteers fight the live threat

- If neither evacuating or hiding is a safe option, as a last resort, when confronted by a shooter or some other danger, adults in immediate danger should consider trying to disrupt or incapacitate the shooter by using aggressive force and items in their environment, such as a fire extinguisher or chairs.
- Under no circumstances should a child be tasked by an adult with confronting the potential danger.

After the area has been made safe and secure by police, a pastor or ministry coordinator will communicate an “all clear” signal to all who have been locked down.

### **Missing Children**

In the case of a missing child, volunteers and staff will first do a thorough check of the church building. If the child cannot be found in the building, all classrooms are to be notified and “locked down” (no one entering or exiting) until otherwise notified by a pastor or ministry coordinator. Pastors, church officers, and other volunteers will search for the child until they are found. If they cannot be found, the police will be contacted to secure further help.

### **Use of Technology While Serving in Children’s Ministry**

Volunteers and helpers will only use technology that has been previously approved by the Pastors or Ministry Coordinators. Volunteers and helpers will refrain from any use of unauthorized technology in the classroom. Time on personal devices should be limited to only what is necessary.

Volunteers are not to photograph children while serving unless parent permission has been obtained.

### **Healthy Child Policy**

Children are not allowed to participate in class if any of the following symptoms exist:

- Fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or non-clear runny nose (children should be free of all such symptoms at least 24 hours prior to the class)
- Temperature over 99.9 degrees
- Any symptom of scarlet fever, measles, mumps, chicken pox, or whooping cough
- Croup
- Lice

- Any unexplained rash
- Any skin infection
- Pink eye or other eye infection
- Thick green, yellow, or constant nasal discharge
- Any other communicable disease

Children who begin showing symptoms of illness during a class will have their parents notified so that they can be removed. Volunteers are not allowed to give any medication to children.

The following practices are also required in order to best prevent the spread of communicable disease:

- Volunteers will practice proper hygiene procedures when changing diapers, wiping noses, and handling bodily fluids.
- Volunteers will regularly practice hand washing, both for themselves and the children in the classroom, using soap and/or anti-bacterial hand sanitizer.
- Toys and classroom equipment will be washed and disinfected regularly.
- Rooms shall be disinfected with disinfectant spray at the close of each session.

### **Neglect and Abuse Definitions**

*Child neglect* is failure, regardless of intent, of the person responsible for the child's care to provide for the child's basic needs such as adequate food, clothing, medical care, supervision, and/or proper education, or the failure to protect the child from harm.

*Child abuse* is any action or failure to act resulting in an imminent risk of serious physical, emotional, or sexual harm of a child by a parent or caretaker who is responsible for the child's welfare.

*Sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult* is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child and an adult. This includes activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the

sexual desires of the adult or child. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered to be forced, regardless of any supposed indicators of consent.

*Sexual abuse perpetrated by a child* is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between children, with or without the consent of either child, when one child has power or perceived authority over the other.

*Sexual exploitation* includes forcing a child or soliciting a child for the purposes of prostitution; and using a child to produce pornography.

*Child sexual abuse* is any form of sexual conduct with a minor, non-touching offenses, or sexual exploitation of a minor. This is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they cannot be personally, socially, and developmentally ready.

*Child spiritual abuse* is the use of spiritual authority to emotionally, physically, and/or sexually abuse a child.

Any instance of suspected or observed abuse should be taken seriously and handled with great care and intentionality, using the following guidelines.

### **Neglect and Abuse Reporting and Response**

Bethany shall maintain a **Child Protection Committee (CPC)** consisting minimally of the church pastors, the Children's Ministry Coordinator and/or Nursery Coordinator, and the chairman of the Deacon Board. The CPC must have at least two female members. All church members should be ready to address all allegations or suspicions of neglect and abuse in accordance with the church membership covenant and all applicable laws. Any church member is welcome at any time to bring concerns of abuse or neglect to any member of the CPC.

Any volunteer who suspects, witnesses, or has any reason to believe that a child has been or is likely to be neglected, harmed, and/or threatened with abuse in any form should contact the



Children's Ministry Coordinator or any church officer. This reporting includes questionable behavior (overly flirtatious behavior, shoulder massages or other intimate acts, etc.) and/or possible offenses (volunteers observing actual abuse or possible evidences of abuse like abrasions, lacerations, etc.).

Any volunteer who serves as the initial point of contact is required to report all allegations to a member of the CPC. All church members are expected to comply with mandatory reporting requirements, as defined in Oregon Revised Statute 419B.005. Reports can be made to the Oregon Department of Human Services by calling 1-855-503-SAFE (7233). All clergy members are mandatory reporters by law, so all Bethany pastors are required to see to it that all abuse allegations are reported to the proper authorities. This is not only a legal requirement, but a moral and ethical expectation as well.