

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Grace Baptist Church, Hazleton, PA

Rationale

We desire to glorify God by providing a safe environment so that we can reach our families, friends, and community with the gospel of Jesus Christ and train one another to know, love and serve Him. Grace Baptist Church values children as image bearers of God and fellow disciples disdaining as sin the abuse of children. Such abuses are unacceptable; we seek to protect those in our care from harm and abuse by providing a safe place for children to thrive physically and spiritually.

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SECTION 1: CHILDREN'S WORKER SELECTION

Procedures for Selecting Children's Workers

1. **Background Check/Clearances** - Criminal background checks will be performed as well as a child abuse clearance check to screen any potential child worker of previous incidents of abuse. All pastoral staff and deacons will be subject to these checks as well. These safeguards (criminal background checks and child abuse clearance history) are to be performed prior to ministry service in accordance with applicable laws and as frequent as needed to meet such standards. Records for each volunteer will be held on file in the church office to ensure compliance and accountability. These records will be maintained by the secretary.
2. **Interview/Enlistment** – Department heads and ministry leaders in collaboration with pastor(s) will enlist and/or interview individuals who may wish to serve with children's ministries. Individuals will be considered for ministry fitness based on Grace Baptist Church's understanding of Biblical standards (See GBC Constitution and Statement of Faith).
3. **Workers** – Individuals who desire to teach or lead minors (0-17 years old) at Grace Baptist Church must be official members in good standing. Must also meet requirements 1 and 2 above.
4. **Non-Adult Workers** – Minors desiring to serve in children's ministry roles must meet requirement 2 and be a member in good standing. Serving minors must have supervision of an adult meeting requirements 1, 2, and 3.

SECTION 2: CHILDREN'S WORKER PROCEDURES

General Policies

- Regular training on the policies and procedures presented in this document should take place in order to keep workers updated.
- Workers are responsible to supervise those in their care from the moment of drop-off until the moment of pick-up. Workers are expected to arrive at least 10 minutes before a scheduled ministry activity.
- Only approved workers will be in the classrooms/nurseries unless it is a nursing mother in the nursery.
- Modest attire must be worn by all workers. Remember that you will be bending down, sitting on the floor, playing games, etc.
- Once a child is in the room, he/she will not be allowed to leave the room for any reason without permission from a worker.
- No worker should be alone with a minor in a room without a window or an open door.
- A hallway monitor may be assigned for any children's ministries to assist with bathroom runs, check-ins, and other needs as needed.
- Monitors must be approved workers meeting requirements 1, 2, and 3.

Drop-Off Procedures

Nursery (ages 0-4)

- A worker must be at the door to ensure that the parent/guardian (16 years old or older) checks in the child when arriving. Each attending family will have an assigned pager and/or ID tag/sticker that will be given to the parent correlating with their child's ID tag/sticker.
- The worker needs to inform the parent/guardian (16 years old or older) that they need to keep the pager and/or ID tag/sticker and present it in order to pick up the child.

Elementary and Intermediate (Pre-K to 6th grade)

- A worker/monitor must be present to ensure that a parent/guardian (16 years or older) checks in the child when arriving.
- Parents should not drop off children to an empty room where the worker/monitor has not yet arrived.

Pick-Up Procedures

Nursery (ages 0-4)

- A parent/guardian (16 years or older) must present the pager and/or ID tag/sticker when picking up a child. If they do not have it, or lost it, then they need to wait until all the other children are picked up and the workers can be assured that the child is supposed to be released to the individual. Only a parent/guardian (16 years or older) may pick up the child.

Elementary (Pre-k to 6th grade)

- The parent/guardian (16 years or older) should come to the designated pick-up location for each ministry and pick up the child at the end of the class or activity.

Restroom Guidelines

- Parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to have their child visit the bathroom prior to each class or ministry event.
- For the protection of all, ministry workers will never be alone with a child in the bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child.
- If a child requires assistance, the worker/monitor will prop open the bathroom door as he/she assists the child. Every effort will be made to protect the child's privacy while still providing an environment of accountability for the worker/monitor.

“Two-Adult” Rule (Infant through 6th grade, best practices)

- Grace Baptist Church will strive to have two adult workers per class when children are being supervised during our ministries/events.
- Two adult workers of the same family may not work together in the same room without at least one other adult worker from another family. If only two adults are present, the two adults must be from two different families.

Youth Ministry (7th-12th grade)

- Youth workers will never be alone with a student without express parent permission.
- Best practice is to have two adults and/or multiple minors.
- If meeting indoors, youth ministries will always meet in rooms which the doors have windows or an open door.
- Youth leader will practice an open-door counseling policy. Counseling should never be done behind closed doors and/or without another worker.
- For trips and events, a permission slip must be completed for each child/family prior to any official day or overnight trip.
- No worker should sleep in a room with one other child. Either two adults must be present in the room, or 2-3 children must be in the room. The two adults cannot be from the same family (as per the two-adult rule explained above).

Discipline Policy

- All children are expected to follow the basic behavior guidelines set down by each department and teacher.
- Grace Baptist Church children's workers will not administer bodily punishment, even if parents have given permission for it. At no time will there be spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. The only exception to this would be the restraint of a child who is in danger of harming him/herself or others in which case, the restraint should be done carefully, and only as long as absolutely necessary, while the parents/guardians are summoned. As a best practice, restraints should be done with multiple adult workers.
- At no time will Grace Baptist Church children's workers engage in verbal abuse, putdowns, belittling comments, or other inflammatory language.
- Behavior problems will be handled on an individual basis with the goal of instruction and correction to protect each child's dignity. The child will receive a warning for behavior that is deemed disruptive or destructive. If the behavior continues, the child will be removed from the classroom. The child's parents will be contacted and asked to help correct the behavior before the child is re-admitted to the classroom.

Record Keeping

- Grace Baptist Church will maintain adequate records according to the policy guidelines that include background check forms. We will maintain confidential background checks to which only the Pastors, Deacons, and the secretary will have access.
- An attendance list will be kept for all ministry functions involving children or youth. The date of the function, along with the names of all participants and leaders will be recorded and will be filed.
- A written incident/"Notice of Injury" report will be prepared by workers whenever an injury occurs during a ministry function. The incident report will be turned in to the church office promptly upon completion and will be filed.

Injuries or Illness

- Workers or children who are ill (with fever or having a communicable disease which can be transmitted by cough or by touch) will not be permitted to participate in any ministry activity or be admitted to the nursery. Babies who have had a fever within the previous 24 hours will not be admitted to the nursery.
- A suitable substitute (who has been approved as a leader through the approved screening process) must be used to take the place of a worker who is ill.
- Children should be returned to their parent or guardian as soon as illness is discovered. If this is not possible, then the child who is ill should be isolated in a manner that will allow supervision to continue until the child can be returned to their parent or guardian.
- Reasonable steps should be taken to avoid contact by anyone with bodily fluids of any kind.
- Any worker who becomes aware of an injury to a child will take steps to ensure proper medical attention is given to the injured person. Grace Baptist Church provides a basic first-aid kit which is always available in the church lobby. For immediate assistance in emergency situations, dial 911 and then immediately notify the child's parent or guardian. A "Notice of Injury" report will be filled out by the GBC worker who assisted the injured person. In addition to this, a pastor or deacon will be notified.
- Children who have received an injury which is obviously minor, should be given immediate first aid at the time of the injury. The child's parent or guardian should be notified of the minor injury when they pick up the child.
- With any injury--- deemed to be major or minor--- a "Notice of Injury" form recording the injury and related details will be filled out and kept on file maintained by the secretary in the church office.

Nursery Guidelines

- Only assigned nursery workers (along with nursing mothers) are allowed to stay in the nursery or be in the nursery area during ministry times or worship services.
- Adequate staffing should be maintained for proper child/worker ratio determined by nursery director and this policy.
- There shall be at least two female workers present in the nursery. Additional workers may be male.
- Nursery workers who change diapers should adhere to the following guidelines:
 - Always use gloves when changing diapers, applying lotion, or ointments.
 - Always keep a cloth or wipe between one's hand and the child.

SECTION 3: RECOGNIZING, REPORTING, AND RESPONDING TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Recognizing Abuse

Workers with minors at Grace Baptist Church need to be able to identify three forms of child abuse because they are legally mandated to report evidence (as defined below) of any form of child abuse. The National Committee of Prevention of Child Abuse defines the three forms of abuse as: physical abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse.

- **Physical Abuse**

What constitutes physical abuse?

Physical abuse is a non-accidental injury, which may include beatings, violent shaking, human bites, strangulation, suffocation, poisoning, or burns.

What are some physical abuse indicators?

Some physical abuse indicators are bruises, welts, broken bones, scars, permanent disfigurement, and internal injuries.

- **Neglect**

What constitutes neglect?

Neglect is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, including food, shelter, clothing education, and medical care.

What are some indicators of neglect?

Some indicators of neglect are children who are frequently absent from activities; begs for or steals food; lacks needed medical or dental care, or glasses; is consistently dirty and has severe body odor; lacks sufficient clothing for the weather; abuses alcohol or other drugs; or states that there is no one at home to provide care.

- **Sexual abuse**

There are two forms of child sexual abuse. Grace Baptist Church's children's workers must understand what constitutes child sexual abuse and be able to identify its various indicators.

What constitutes child sexual abuse?

Non-touching sexual abuse includes:

--Verbal comments, pornographic material, obscene phone calls, emails, and text-messaging, exhibitionism, allowing children to witness sexual activity.

Physical sexual abuse includes:

--Fondling, oral, genital, or anal penetration, intercourse, or forcible rape.

What are some indicators / symptoms of child sexual abuse?

Physical indicators

- Cuts and / or bruises
- Nightmares
- Irritation or pain to the genital area
- Difficulty with urination
- Discomfort with sitting
- Torn or bloody clothing, especially undergarments

Behavioral indicators:

- Anxiety when approaching nursery area
- Nervous behavior towards adults
- Sexual self-consciousness
- Acting out of sexual behavior
- Withdrawn from church activities and friends

Verbal signs may include the following statements

- “I don’t like (specific person)”
- “(Specific person) does things to me when we’re alone”
- “I don’t like to be alone with (specific person)”
- “(Specific person) did this or that to me”

Reporting Procedure for Abuse and Misconduct

- Every youth worker is a mandated reporter as required by PA state law.
- Children's ministry workers shall seek assistance from pastors and deacons in reporting abuse and misconduct (defined above). All accusations will be treated seriously and confidentially to protect all who are involved. Pastors and deacons will help in defining, recording, and reporting all abuses that may occur. A pastor or deacon will assist workers in reporting online the suspected abuse (www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis). Reports need to be made immediately and should be done from the church's computer. Email confirmation should be kept on file in the Grace Baptist Church office.
- The church leadership team (pastors/deacons) will seek to notify the parent(s) or guardians of the alleged victim at the direction and discretion of the appropriate authorities.
- A member of the church leadership team (preferably the Lead Pastor or Chairman of Deacons) will contact the church's insurance company agent and legal counsel.
- If the alleged perpetrator is a Grace Baptist Church worker, then the worker will be placed on leave of absence from working with children pending an official investigation.
- Strict confidentiality will be maintained on behalf of the victim and perpetrator until directed otherwise by the pastors/deacons. The report will be kept confidential and include only necessary parties.
- Anyone found guilty of abuse charges will be permanently removed from working with minors.
- The Lead Pastor will speak to the media on behalf of Grace Baptist Church. If the church is without a pastor at the time, the Chairman of Deacons will speak. All other workers and church members will refrain from speaking to media in order to maintain confidentiality.

Response Guidelines (in addition to the reporting procedure)

- All allegations presented to Grace Baptist Church will be taken and treated seriously. We will assume that complaints or allegations are made in good faith. We will treat all parties with dignity and respect.
- We will handle all allegations professionally with respect to the confidentiality of all involved parties.
- We will fully cooperate with any investigation by public agencies in cooperation with legal counsel.