

# Children's Ministry Protection Policy

## General Information

### Statement of Intent

The Session and members of CRPC recognize that our youngest covenant members are entrusted to the care of other church members during classes and activities, both on and off campus. The Session and members of CRPC are committed to maintaining an environment in which children, youth and vulnerable adults are protected from physical and sexual abuse, and in which volunteers are protected from any false allegations of abuse.

To achieve the goals of preventing either incidents of abuse or the unfounded assertion of such conduct, CRPC has developed appropriate procedures to be implemented in the following areas:

- I. Approval
- II. Training
- III. Supervision
- IV. Reporting

### Applicability

The general policy and procedures shall apply to all persons including staff, teachers, volunteers, church members and guests. As situations arise which are not appropriately covered by a specific procedure or policy, this policy may be revised by the Session of CRPC.

### Definitions

The following definitions shall apply:

**Abuse** as referred to in this document includes neglect, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse.

- i. **Emotional Abuse:** Verbal or nonverbal conduct including mental exploitation, degrading communication, or humiliating or threatening conduct that may or may not include bullying or emotional abuse as defined by state law.
- ii. **Physical Abuse:** Any act which, regardless of intent, results in non-accidental physical injury. It may result from over-discipline or from punishment that is inappropriate to the minor's age or condition. Results of physical abuse can range from minor bruises and lacerations to severe neurological trauma and death.
- iii. **Sexual Abuse:** Acts of sexual assault and sexual exploitation of minors. Sexual abuse encompasses a broad range of behavior and may consist of many acts over a long period of time or a single incident. Specifically, sexual abuse can include, but is not limited to fondling, sexual proposition or enticement, indecent exposure and pornography.
- iv. **Neglect:** failure to provide for a child's physical or emotional needs (food, clothing, shelter, medical care, physical or emotional attention); failure to provide guidance or supervision, abandonment.

**Activity:** An activity provided by CRPC where children or vulnerable adults are under the direct supervision of employees or volunteers, typically a regular, scheduled classroom or nursery event

on the CRPC campus, though it might occur off campus. All other times children and vulnerable adults are deemed under the care of their parents or guardians, for example, during times on the CRPC campus when not in a classroom or nursery event, or off of the CRPC campus when not in a supervised activity of CRPC.

**Children, youth, minors:** Any person under 18 years of age involved in activities provided by CRPC.

**Employee:** Any individual who is paid by CRPC on a full or part-time basis, and is serving in any position involving the supervision of minors.

**Hall Monitor:** A session-approved male who patrols the halls and other areas of church during Sunday School and worship services in order to assist employees or volunteers and watch for any problems.

**Mature Woman:** A woman adult volunteer or staff who is at least 22 years of age and who is otherwise considered by the person coordinating the activity to be mature enough to supervise the activity under the terms of this policy.

**Non-CRPC event:** An event not sponsored by CRPC but occurring at the CRPC facility where children or vulnerable adults will be present.

**Adult Volunteer:** A communing member of CRPC, who is in good standing, 18 years and older, and who has been a member of CRPC for at least six months, and who has been hired or approved to care for minors and vulnerable adults through activities provided by CRPC.

**Student Volunteer:** A member of CRPC, who is in good standing, aged 10-18, who has been a member of CRPC for at least six months, and who has been hired or approved to care for minors and vulnerable adults through activities provided by CRPC.

**Vulnerable Adults:** Persons 18 years or older who live in or receive services from licensed facilities such as nursing homes, hospitals, or treatment centers for chemical dependency, mental retardation, mental illness, or physical disabilities; or are in family settings and would not by themselves report abuse or neglect because of impaired physical or mental function or because of emotional status.

## **I. Procedures for Approving**

### **A. Approving**

1. All potential volunteers and employees must complete and submit an application provided by the Session. As part of this application, they must give the session of CRPC permission to

conduct a background check. The Session or its appointed representative(s) reserves the right to conduct a background check, as well as check references for any adult volunteer.

2. The Session or its appointed representative(s) will review these materials and either approve or disapprove the applicant for service, based upon their discretion.

3. Applications and background checks will be treated with appropriate confidentiality by the Session, who are the only persons who are privileged to have access to them. Ready access to these confidential files will be limited to the Session or its appointed representative(s).

4. Adults who have been convicted of sexual or physical abuse are not permitted to volunteer in any church sponsored activity for minors and/or adults or be employed by CRPC. Upon discovery that any volunteer or employee has been convicted or is convicted of sexual or physical abuse, that person will not be permitted to continue as a volunteer or employee.

## **B. Waiting**

1. No volunteer candidate will be considered for any ministry position involving contact with children, youth, or the disabled until the candidate has been a communing member in good standing with CRPC for a minimum of six months.

## **II. Training**

1. All volunteers and employees will receive a copy of the Child Protection Policy. They will also sign that they have read, understood, and intend to implement the policy.

2. In addition, the Session may provide volunteers and employees training in the knowledge and implementation of this policy prior to beginning their supervision of minors.

3. Additional training may be offered at the discretion of the Session and/or their appointed representative(s). Training will serve to educate participants about the nature, impact, and prevention of child abuse. Training may also include CRPC reporting guidelines and procedures.

## **III. Supervision**

### **A. Responsibility**

1. It is the responsibility of activity coordinators to ensure, when practical, that all staff and volunteers have been approved by the Session.

2. It is the responsibility of all approved staff and volunteers to implement this policy during coordinated activities of CRPC.

3. It is the responsibility of parents to supervise their children, or assign trusted supervisors to them at times outside of CRPC activities, but while on the property of CRPC.

## **B. Routine Protective Measures**

### **1. Two adult rule and one mature woman rule**

A minimum of two adult volunteers, including one Mature Woman, must be present at any activity with minors or vulnerable adults during all Church activities. This includes all activities in the classroom, on the property, and any off-site church-sponsored activities. An exception to the one mature woman rule may occur when there is a stated and approved male-only event hosted by CRPC.

### **2. Safe key rule**

A child, second grade and younger, is to be released only to the parent, grandparent or sibling over the age of 16 (for more information see the Nursery handbook in Appendix E)

### **3. Safe Room policy**

A. A window shall be installed in each classroom door or other room where an activity may take place, which must remain uncovered during the use of the room. When in use, any classroom without a window installed must have an open door. The only areas that will have complete privacy are the restrooms and the nursing mothers' section (which may be screened off within the classroom).

B. An adult volunteer must not leave the activity without being replaced unless briefly (for example, to take a child to the bathroom), in which case the door to the activity room will be left open and blocked as needed to prevent children from leaving the room. The hall monitor is an appropriate replacement for a brief departure.

C. Parents are advised to attend to their children in the nursery or classroom only if necessary.

### **4. Safety Check-In**

A hall monitor will patrol the corridors during Sunday School and all worship services using the windows installed in each classroom door to be aware of the activities in the church building.

### **5. Safe Bathroom**

A. Only a female adult volunteer may accompany a child or vulnerable adult to the bathroom during a supervised activity of CRPC. When appropriate in the opinion of an adult staff or volunteer, a female Youth Volunteer may render this service. Exempted from this rule are the child's parents, grandparents and siblings.

B. Only a female staff or volunteer may change a child's diaper. Exempted from this rule are the child's parents, grandparents and siblings.

### **6. Safe Travel and Meetings**

A. One-on-one contact with a middle school or senior high student is acceptable only when the visit takes place in a public area. "Public area" is defined to mean an area where there is the certainty--not just possibility--of being observed, like a busy restaurant. Pastoral counseling is an exception to this, provided that ministers use a room with window-inserted doors, and parents have given permission for private counseling (see Pastoral Counseling waiver in Appendix D).

B. When travel is provided by CRPC, minors will travel to off-site activities with at least three people in the vehicle. A travel waiver may be used if it is deemed useful by the supervisor of the off-site activity. See Travel Waiver in Appendix D) However, all other travel, including travel to and from home and church or home and church activity, is under the jurisdiction of the parents, not the church, so is not regulated by this policy.

#### 7. Overnight Safety

An overnight event involving minors or vulnerable adults, and all staff or volunteers for said event, must be approved in advance by the session or its appointed representative(s).

#### 8. Safe Teaching

Materials used with minors or vulnerable adults must be approved by the Session or its appointed representative(s). This includes, but is not limited to, Youth Groups, Sunday School, Vacation Bible School and mid-week children's activities.

#### 9. Safe Use of Facilities Policy

Any persons or organizations who hold a non-CRPC event must abide by the two-adult rule, and use the classrooms with the window-inserted doors. They must also provide the Session with the name and address of the person responsible for their group. CRPC will provide such groups with a copy of this policy and should require a signed and dated receipt and agreement to observe this policy. It shall not be the duty of CRPC to supervise the non-CRPC event in any way.

## **IV. Reporting**

### **A. Policy Violations**

1. Employees and volunteers should promptly notify their coordinator/supervisor of any activity undertaken on their own behalf or by others that violates the Policy. Violations will be documented by the coordinator/supervisor to whom the violation has been reported by filling out the form in Appendix D, and giving this document to the session or the session's appointed representatives. If an employee or volunteer incurs repeated policy violations, the supervisor/coordinator may remove them from involvement with minors.

### **B. Abuse Allegations**

Those who witness abuse or have reasonable suspicion of abuse at any time or place are required by law and by God to report said event or suspicion to responsible authorities:

#### **i. To Civil authorities**

*This Section i is for information only, of every citizen's duty under the law.*

North Carolina law currently requires that “any person or institution who has cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent...shall report the case of that juvenile to the director of the department of social services in the county where the juvenile resides or is found” (see Appendix C of applicable North Carolina laws). Suspicion includes but is not limited to being informed of abuse by the child, or seeing physical evidence of abuse or neglect. Therefore:

1. Any person who witnesses or who has suspicion of an incident of abuse or neglect, whether that be at CRPC or occurring off-site during CRPC sponsored activity, should immediately report said witnessed event or suspicion to the department of social services by calling their anonymous tip-line 828-250-5900. A witness or person with suspicion who doubts that his or her report should be made may contact the ChildHelp National Child Abuse Hotline at 800-4-A-CHILD to be given confidential guidance about reporting.
2. Any person who is informed of suspected or witnessed abuse is likewise obligated to report said incident or suspicion of abuse to the above number. Thus, the Session’s Response Team is required to report the allegation of or suspicion of abuse as representatives of the elders when it is reported to them.

## **ii. To Church Authorities**

3. As soon as possible after the event, the one with reasonable suspicion or observation of abuse must then report the incident or the suspicion to a pastor or ruling elder, who are, in turn to report this to the Session. The Session’s response to alleged abuse is detailed in Appendix A and B.
4. The elder receiving the report of alleged abuse shall promptly require a written report from the witness or person who suspects it, which he or she shall complete and return as quickly as possible. The report shall be signed and dated by both the reporting witness/one with suspicion and the elder receiving the report. This report shall be given to the Session, and in turn to the Response Team. Any time the report is passed to another person, it shall be signed and dated by both parties.
5. Any person or organization who holds a non-CRPC event upon CRPC property must alert the coordinator/supervisor of their activity immediately should there be an incident of abuse or the reasonable suspicion of abuse at CRPC property. Where practical, the same procedures for responding to and reporting incidents of abuse should be followed.