

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES IN THE PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE

First Church of the Nazarene
Children's Ministries Department
Wichita Falls, Texas

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

It is the purpose of the members and staff of Wichita Falls First Church of the Nazarene to provide a safe and secure environment for preschoolers, children, youth, and mentally/physically handicapped persons entrusted to our care. This policy and following procedures encompass the protection of preschoolers, children, and youth, as well as, employees/volunteers.

SCOPE

This policy shall apply to all future workers, compensated and/or volunteers, who will have the responsibility of supervising the activities of preschoolers, children, youth, and mentally/physically handicapped persons.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy the following definitions shall apply:

“Preschooler”/ “Child”/ “Children” / “Youth” and “Minor” shall be defined as any individual under the age of 18, or whose mental capacity is that of a minor.

“Adult” shall be defined as any individual at least 18 years of age or older.

“Worker” shall be defined as any adult who serves as a volunteer and/or paid position given the responsibility of working or caring for minors.

“Teenage Worker” shall be defined as any worker at least 14 years old, but under the age of 18, enlisted with the care of minors.

“Child Abuse” shall be defined as verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of a preschooler, child, or youth.

“Criminal Background Check” (CBC) is the procedure used by qualified agencies to check the background of adult volunteers or paid employees for criminal activity.

VOLUNTEER WORKER AND PAID EMPLOYEES SCREENING PROCEDURES

1. Prior to consideration for a position, any candidate who may be working with preschoolers, children, youth, or the disabled will complete and return an employment application.

2. A ministry leader, or designee, will carefully review the application to make certain the worker will be appropriate for the position, based on the information provided.
3. If the person appears to be appropriate for the position all references will be checked to confirm information provided on the application.
4. Any information indicating a candidate poses a threat to others or has had prior history of “**physical**” or “**sexual**” abuse directed against another person, will result in immediate removal of the individual candidate from consideration for the position within this organization.
5. A criminal background check (CBC) will be performed through a state law enforcement agency or through a legitimate on-line internet source with respect to all candidates seeking a paid position that involves working with preschoolers, children, youth or the disabled.

WORKER SUPERVISION

An identification system (Attachment A) shall be adopted for children birth to 3 years of age so adults who drop off a child are the same adults who pick up the child(ren). Permission slips (Attachment B) will be available for adults to sign, authorizing the release of the child(ren) to other adults.

Lists of workers with photographs, who meet the organizations approval, shall be posted outside the room they are working in for public viewing.

Workers must wear a photo identification badge at all times.

A door without a window must remain open at all times.

Use a “check-in/check-out” (Attachment C) procedure for all children 3 years of age and younger.

Using the awareness attachment (Attachment D) educate all volunteers and paid workers with minors regarding the policies and procedures adopted concerning the matter of child abuse.

INJURIES OR ILLNESS

1. Persons who are ill (with a fever or having a communicable disease which can be transmitted by cough or by touch) will not be permitted to attend or participate in activities.
2. Participants should be returned to their parent or guardian as soon as illness is discovered. If this is not possible, then the person who is ill should be isolated in a manner that will allow supervision to continue until the person can be returned to their parent or guardian.
3. Reasonable steps should be taken to prevent exposure to body fluids of any kind.
4. Any coordinator/supervisor who becomes aware of an injury to a worker or participant will take steps to ensure proper medical attention is given to the injured person.

5. Minors who have received an injury should be given first aid as needed at the time of injury. The person's parent or guardian should be notified of the minor injury when they pick up the injured person.

6. Any injury which may require medical treatment beyond simple first aid should be given immediate attention. The parent or guardian of the injured person should be promptly notified, along with the worker's coordinator/ supervisor. An ambulance should also be called if warranted by the injury.

7. A written "Incident/Notice of Injury Report," (Attachment E) should be prepared when an injury occurs during a ministry function. The incident report should be completed and immediately forwarded to the leader of the program.

NOTICE OF INJURY, ABUSE, OR MOLESTATION

1. Workers who become aware of an injury, abuse, or molestation connected with any ministry event, whether that incident has been disclosed by the preschooler, child, youth, or mentally/ physically handicapped person as having happened at home or at any other location prior to his/her attendance at the given event, will immediately inform their coordinator/supervisor or ministry leader of such injury, abuse or molestation.

2. Any coordinator/supervisor that becomes aware of an injury, abuse, or molestation connected with any ministry event will immediately inform the District Children's Ministry Director of such injury, abuse, or molestation and will complete an "Incident/Notice of Injury Report."

- A. Do not treat the suspicion as frivolous.
- B. The ministry director or leader receiving the initial report will be responsible for confirming the facts reported and the condition of the child on the same day on which the first report is made.
- C. Data concerning the child's name, address, and other pertinent information will be obtained through discussions with the initial reporter and other staff members. The name and the address of the person responsible for the care of the child needs to be obtained.
- D. The District Children's Ministries Director or leader will promptly notify the appropriate district leaders and the proper state agencies. There will be full cooperation with law enforcement officials.
- E. Maintain confidentiality of the investigation as much as possible.
- F. Ministry leaders will inform the family of the steps that are being taken and continue to keep them advised of the status of the investigation. (Church legal counsel should assist in determining the bounds of a legal and prudent response to action taken.)
- G. In instances where child abuse by a worker is confirmed, the worker will be immediately dismissed from his/her position.
- H. Keep the congregation informed of the investigation with respect to matters that are not confidential, so the congregation will hear about the investigation from within the church rather than from the news media.

3. Any ministry leader who suspects that abuse or molestation of a participant has occurred will ensure that the participant's parent or guardian is immediately informed that possible abuse or

molestation is suspected. The church must take action depending on the strength of the evidence available.

4. Upon written notice of abuse or molestation, the district's insurance carrier must be promptly notified, as well as the District Superintendent and the appropriate department chair.

5. Respond to the media through only a designated spokesperson. It is imperative that the Ministry or department emphasize its position on child abuse and concern for the victim. Focus should be placed on the extensive steps being taken to address the present occurrence and eliminate future risks, in order to provide a safe environment for children. Every allegation of abuse or molestation should be investigated promptly and thoroughly by officials and reported as stipulated. If an allegation is factual, the relationship with the Worker should be terminated immediately. It is unlikely the problem will ever be resolved by relying on promises of the employee or volunteer to reform.

VIOLATION OF POLICY OR PROCEDURES

1. Workers must promptly notify their director, coordinator/supervisor of activity undertaken on their own behalf or by others who violate this policy or procedures.

2. Directors, coordinators/supervisors or ministry leaders aware of a violation of the policy or procedures will take all necessary steps to ensure compliance with the policy and procedures by workers; and will remove workers from their position if such a removal is warranted, or if the worker poses a threat to others.

CONCLUSION

Wichita Falls First Church of the Nazarene needs to be prepared. There are legal reasons for creating safety policies, but there's a deeper, more significant reason—to protect children. Policies are printed expressions of the value placed on children. If the only reason for safety policies is to protect the organization, the church has missed Jesus' passion for children.

Some people may think that our church is too small to worry about these safety problems or that our church "knows" everyone. Remember it's much easier to make plans and develop safety policies as a means of prevention than to wait until they are needed as a reaction to an abuse case.

Accidents will happen. There will always be unforeseen circumstances that need to be handled. Therefore, the church should build sturdy safety policy into the walls of its ministry to protect children.

Wichita Falls First Church of the Nazarene desires to protect children through the implementation of the above policy. Adoption of these provisions will enable our Church to provide a safe and secure environment for each individual of our church family and its guests.