



**grace**church  
CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

# PROTECTION POLICY FOR MINORS & WORKERS

## I. Worker Screening

- A. There are forms that must be completed for paid and volunteer workers before service is allowed with children and youth at Grace Church.
- B. Those who have been accused or convicted of either child or physical abuse will not be considered for a paid or volunteer position.
- C. Survivors of childhood sexual or physical abuse must be interviewed by the pastor or Children's Ministry Director before approval for service.
- D. All adult volunteers working with youth or children are required to be members of Grace Church, known to our body of believers for a minimum of six months and screened by a representative of the Children's Ministry Team.
- E. Youth under 16 years of age may be used, with the exception of the Infant Nursery, and only with an adult worker present.
- F. References and background checks will be done for all paid workers and background checks will be done for all volunteer workers of those working with minors.
- G. All adult volunteers working as teachers or leaders in Children's Sunday School, Pioneer Clubs, or Youth Group are required to complete a training course on Sexual Abuse Awareness.
- H. All conduct with children and youth is expected to be above reproach and there should never be any questionable touching or suggestive remarks or comments.

## II. Worker Supervision

- A. Windows have been installed in all children's classroom doors and all groups are periodically observed. During Sunday School and Pioneer Clubs, the Children's Ministry Director is active in observing the classrooms. The nursery captains are charged with the task of supervision during the Sunday morning worship services.
- B. Every reasonable effort will be made to assign at least two adult teachers to each group of children. In rare instances where implementing this policy is unfeasible, teachers will be placed in adjoining rooms with more than the usual supervision.
- C. No teacher is to go into the restroom alone with a child unless the door is left open. Written parental permission must be given before any field trips. All adult workers on the trips must meet the requirements for working with our children or youth. The same "two adult" rule will continue to be in effect away from the church building whether in a car, cabin, tent, etc.

- D. There should never be any comments that could be taken as sexual in nature. Any counseling should be done in view of others.

### **III. Reporting**

- A. Adult volunteers, paid workers or anyone else should immediately report any behaviors which seem abusive or inappropriate to the pastor or Children's Ministry Director.
- B. Reported or suspected abuse will be immediately (within the hour) reported to the pastor and elders who will begin an investigation and will report any evidence of abuse to the Service Unit of the Tuscaloosa County Department of Human Resources (554-1100).
- C. The insurance carrier will be contacted at once.
- D. The church's legal counsel will be contacted at once.
- E. Unless the legal and insurance advisors instruct otherwise, the following format will be followed.

### **IV. Response to Allegations**

- A. The reports of abuse will be documented at once including names, dates, times, places and details of the incident.
- B. The child's parents will be notified if they were not the reporters.
- C. Any reports of abuse will result in the alleged abuser's immediate removal from contact with children until the allegations are found to be baseless.

### **V. Investigation**

- A. All information received (names, dates, times, detailed accounts) and all steps taken will be documented.
- B. The confidentiality of the complaint and of the investigation will be maintained as much as is possible. Each person involved will be asked to not discuss the situation with any other person not directly involved in the investigating process.
- C. The alleged victims and their families will be visited and interviewed by at least two of the elders. If the victim's family knows of other possible victims, they will be contacted also.
- D. The victims will be assured that the church takes very seriously the charges and will immediately and thoroughly investigate the charge. The family will be told of the steps taken by the church to screen and supervise workers. A detailed account of the

incident will be obtained from the victim and his/her parents. They will be asked for any documentation of the abuse (letters, notes, witnesses, medical examination etc.). Witnesses and other victims will be interviewed.

- E. The family will be advised that anonymity is their right, but that it will seriously hamper any investigation.
- F. The victim or his/her parents will be kept informed.
- G. The applications, references and other records on the accused will be reviewed. A criminal background check will be done if this has not already been done.
- H. The accused will be interviewed.
- I. He/she will be informed of the nature of the complaint and advised of the investigation.
- J. If the victim has agreed to the disclosure of his/her identity, the alleged perpetrator will be asked his/her account of the incident.
- K. The nursery captain or others responsible for supervision will be interviewed concerning any information they have. They will be asked how he obtained any information about the allegation.
- L. If the accused denies the allegations, he/she will be asked about any motives of which the person would have in bringing the complaint.
- M. The conclusion of guilt or innocence will depend upon the testimony of the witnesses, past accusations or convictions, documentary evidence, observations of the supervisor, possible motives for false accusations.
- N. If the accused admits the abuse, he/she will immediately be dismissed from the position of worker with children. If he/she is a church member, appropriate church discipline will be put into effect. The proper legal authorities will be notified.
- O. If the accused does not admit the abuse, no action will be taken if the accusation is obviously frivolous. However it should be made clear that supervision will be stringent.
- P. If there is incriminating evidence, the worker should be suspended until resolution of the case by civil authorities.

## **VI. Informing the Congregation**

- A. In appropriate cases the MEMBERS of the congregation will be informed of the incident at the proper time (they will need facts as opposed to rumor). The identity of perpetrators and/or victims will not be revealed without legal counsel and written consent of the individuals involved.
- B. One spokesperson should be delegated to make all contacts with the congregation and media. A carefully worded statement should be prepared that will give facts and emphasize the awareness of the problem, the concern for victims and the extensive steps the church has taken to provide a safe environment for the children. Precautions taken and policies implemented should be described along with facts about the ongoing investigation.

## **VII. Procedure for Known Abusers**

The leadership of Grace Church agrees that our children must be protected at all costs. However it is believed that the spiritual needs of child sexual abusers including pedophiles and other sexual addicts must not be ignored. For this reason there is a policy and procedure in place to provide protection for both the children and the offender.

### **A. Pedophiles**

- 1. Background information will be gathered on the person's past behavior and any civil/criminal action taken. Family members will be interviewed to determine behavior patterns, etc. The pedophile will be carefully supervised by the elders or other designated persons until the necessary information is received.
- 2. The pedophile will be interviewed to determine his understanding and evaluation of his problem including his spiritual state. He will be informed of the leadership's awareness of the problem and concern for him.
  - a. He will not be given any position of leadership
  - b. Clear guidelines will be given to him.
  - c. He will not be allowed in the children's area of the building at any time.
  - d. A deacon or other person will be assigned to accompany him when he is on church property. This is for his protection as well as that of the children.
  - e. He is not to touch children for any reason.
  - f. He is not to talk with any children unless they are in the company of their parents.
  - g. There is to be no other contact with children of the church through letters, cards, telephone calls, texts, or social media.

- h. Church members and regular attendees who participate in the Grace 101 Class will be advised of the situation as soon as the facts are ascertained and the guidelines are in place. (The information will be kept in confidence until that time to minimize rumors).
- i. New members and/or new attendees will be advised of the situation by their shepherding group leaders or other designated person.

**B. Procedure for Other Child Sexual Abusers \***

1. Clear guidelines will be made known to the individual by an elder
2. He is not to teach children or hold other positions of leadership or authority.
3. He is not to go into any area designated specifically for children.
4. He is not to touch any child on the premises.
5. He will be asked to limit conversations with children to times when their parents are present.
6. He will understand that the Children's Ministry Director knows of his situation.
7. In case of court publicity, parents and teachers of children will be advised of the situation and of the guidelines being enforced.

\* "Child sexual abuse is any sexual activity with a minor -whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day care situation, a foster/residential setting, 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, provided the child is four years older than the victim." (National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse, 1992)

This activity includes any form of sexual contact or exploitation in which a minor is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator. It may be violent or nonviolent...it includes behaviors that involve touching and non touching aspects. Touching includes fondling, oral, genital and anal penetration, intercourse and forcible rape. Non-touching activities include verbal comments, pornographic videos or pictures, obscene telephone calls, exhibition and allowing children to view sexual activity. (*Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church*, Church Law and Tax Report, 1993 by Richard R. Hammar, Steven W. Klipowicz & James F. Cobble, Jr.)

**C. Procedure for Known Sexual Addicts\***

1. Clear guidelines will be given to him.
2. He will not be allowed to teach or lead children or youth until there is clear indication that he has been in full recovery (no lapses or relapses as verified by his mentor or counselor) for a minimum of one year.
3. If he is involved in child pornography, all procedure points of item VII will be put into effect.
4. Leaders of the Freedom in Grace groups or other accountability/support groups for those with sexual addictions will be given a copy of this information to be shared with our church attendees in the groups about whom the elders have no information.
5. Cases will be reviewed on an individual basis by the elders and changes made to the policy as deemed appropriate for that situation.

*\* For our purposes, a sexual addict is defined as one who is clearly in bondage to any of the following activities: pornography or fantasy with or without masturbation, prostitution, exhibitionism, voyeurism, sexual telephone calls, affairs, rape, incest, pornographic videos or pictures, obscene telephone calls.*

**D. We will strive to follow these guidelines to the best of our ability, but we cannot guarantee anyone's safety.**

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