

**HEBRON BAPTIST CHURCH  
DACULA, GEORGIA**

**CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES**

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## **Statement of Policy:**

Hebron Baptist Church is committed to providing an environment which is as safe as possible for children and youth who attend the church or any sponsored programs or activities, and to take the necessary precautions to protect church leaders from accusations or suspicions.

Church leadership recognizes the need to have formal, written policies and guidelines to help prevent the opportunity for, or the appearance of, abuse to a minor. The following procedures are not based on a lack of trust in a particular worker but instead are needed to protect our pre-schoolers, children, youth, employees, volunteers and the entire church body.

*"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them." Mark 10:14, 16*

## **Procedures:**

### **1.0 DEFINITIONS**

.01 A minor is any person under the age of 18 years of age and may also be referred to as a preschooler, child or a youth.

.02 Child abuse means any of the prohibited behaviors named in section 2 of these policies or any behavior named in O.C.G.A. §19-7-5 (b) (3).

.03 Sexual abuse means any of the prohibited behaviors named in sections 2 of these policies or any behavior named in O.C.G.A §19-7-5 (b) (3.1).

### **2.0 PROHIBITED BEHAVIOR**

.01 The following behaviors are prohibited for all paid employees and volunteers:

- Threatening or inflicting physical injury upon a minor, other than by accidental means.
- Committing any sexual offense against a minor, or engaging in any sexual contact with a minor.
- Making any kind of sexual advance, or making a request for sexual favors, or engaging in other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature.
- Any prohibited behaviors named in O.C.G.A §19-7-5 (b) (3), (3.1).

### **3.0 WORKER ENLISTMENT AND SCREENING**

.01 All volunteers considered for a position in the preschool, children and youth areas of ministry must be actively involved with the ministries of Hebron Baptist Church for a minimum of six months before serving in these areas. Involvement may include worship attendance, Sunday School attendance or attendance in one of the other ministries of Hebron Baptist Church. Attendance must be regular and verifiable.

.02 All volunteers with preschool, children and youth must complete the Volunteer Application Form including a criminal background check Authorization and undergo the volunteer screening process, including a criminal background check, before they can serve.

.03 All employees must complete the Application for Employment and must undergo the normal pre-employment screening process including reference checks and a criminal background check.

.04 Names of all potential workers will be submitted to the ministerial staff as an additional screening procedure. A pastor/director or ministry leader responsible for that particular ministry area will interview all preschool, children and youth volunteer workers.

.05 All workers, volunteer or paid, will be asked to provide institutional and personal references on the Volunteer Application Form. At least two of these references will be checked, with institutional references having priority over personal references.

.06 All the steps listed above must be completed prior to the person being allowed to serve in the preschool, children or youth ministries. Departments will receive notification when the applicant has been given approved status.

.07 Any person for whom the church has reason to believe might endanger or harm children shall not be allowed to serve in any capacity where they will have contact with minors. Individuals who have been arrested for, charged with, under probation for, or convicted of any of the following crimes shall not be allowed to serve in any capacity where they will have contact with minors: homicide; aggravated assault; possession, use or sale of drugs or controlled substances; sexual abuse; sexual assault(rape); aggravated sexual assault; injury to a child; incest; indecency with a child; any sex crime involving a minor; possession or promotion of child pornography; sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a minor; employment harmful to children; endangerment of a child; kidnapping; public lewdness; indecent exposure; enticing a child.

.8 All volunteers and employees must sign a written acknowledgement receipt form acknowledging they have read and understand the churches child protection policies.

#### **4.0 GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS & EMPLOYEES IN PRESCHOOL AND CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS**

##### **4.1 Volunteer & Employee Conduct**

.01 Under no circumstances, shall a volunteer or employee be alone with a child behind a closed door. Two adults must always be present in each room where children are present.

.02 Classrooms doors without glass inserts should be kept open whenever possible or, in the case of rooms with Dutch doors, the top half of the door should be kept open.

.03 Classes shall remain in the assigned spaces. If there is to be a change, the ministry Pastor or Director must be informed and approve the change.

.04 Each room shall maintain a sign-in-sheet or class roll. Any special information provided by the parent shall be kept on the proper form. This sign-in-sheet and/or class roll should be taken with the class in the event of a fire or other emergency requiring the evacuation of the room so that attendance can be taken after the evacuation.

.05 Care should be taken by volunteers and employees so that young children do not leave the classroom unattended.

- .06 Classroom doors must never be locked while occupied.
- .07 Volunteers and employees shall always wear their assigned nametags while on duty.
- .08 With pre-school and kindergarten children, only a parent or other person specifically designated by the parent and known to the volunteer may pick up preschoolers. No one under the age of eighteen will be permitted to pick up a child. Parents will be requested to provide the Director with any special information regarding a possible child custody dispute where leadership should pay particular attention to who picks up the child. Children may not be released without being picked up by a parent or other designated person unless the parent provides written permission to do so. When the parents must pick up a child, the parents should do so immediately after the service and before going to coffee hour or other activities.
- .09 Younger children should wear a nametag to allow easy identification.
- .10 Touching to comfort or affirm a child in an age-appropriate manner is permitted. Children in first grade or older should not sit in the lap of volunteers or employees. Volunteers and employees shall not touch children in genital areas except as necessary to change a diaper or to assist a child in the bathroom as noted below.
- .11 The Pastor of Preschool shall prescribe, and communicate to the volunteers and employees, precautionary measures for dealing with dirty diapers, blood, vomit and the like, such as the use of protective gloves. Any items needed for the precautionary measures will be provided by the church. These rules will be updated as new knowledge becomes available.
- .12 Either men or women may change diapers if it is done in open view.
- .13 Preschoolers and children must be accompanied to the bathroom by two approved volunteers or employees. The volunteers and/or employees are not permitted to use the bathroom themselves when taking the children. When a child is taken to a bathroom, someone must check the bathroom before the child is permitted to enter to ensure it is safe.
- .14 Workers may only assist children age five (5) or younger in using the bathroom while in view of another approved adult.

## **4.2 Discipline of Children**

- .01 Physical discipline, such as spanking, is never permitted. Using physical restraint to prevent a child from doing something disruptive or dangerous is permitted and may, in some instances, be necessary. Affirmation and encouragement is always appropriate.
- .02 The Pastor of Preschool or Children's ministries shall advise volunteers on the best age-appropriate discipline methods.
- .03 The behavior of a child who is a constant disruption to a class should be discussed with his or her parents and the Director. In appropriate circumstances, the parents can be asked to attend class to observe or control the problem behavior. If the behavior persists, the child may be removed from the class. A child who is a danger to other children shall be removed immediately.

## **4.3 Continuing Training for Volunteers**

- .01 Volunteers and employees are encouraged to take advantage of ongoing continuing education opportunities. Some classes may be mandatory.

.02 The substance of these guidelines shall be communicated to volunteers and employees, all of whom must agree to comply with them.

#### **4.4 Communication with Parents**

.01 Volunteers and employees should attempt to keep open lines of communication with parents.

.02 All children who attend must be registered. The registration form will include information on special needs, disabilities, continuing medications and will be updated annually.

.03 Parents shall always be permitted to observe a classroom, if done through the glass door, although the parent may be told that his or her presence may be disruptive to the child. Parents may enter their child's room with the approval of the pastor or director of that ministry area.

.04 Parents should be given a summary of the guidelines which have an impact on them.

.05 Parents shall be clearly advised as to where to report suspected abuse or other concern regarding a classroom situation and be assured that they will not be retaliated against for making a report.

.06 Parents should pick up their preschool children no later than ten (10) minutes after the service is over unless special arrangements are made, with consent of the volunteers concerned.

.07 Parents are encouraged to change diapers and take children to the bathroom before class.

.08 Parents shall not leave a child if the child has a fever or other severe illness. Parents must advise the volunteers if the child is on medication.

#### **4.5 Staffing of the Children's Program**

.01 There shall be a minimum of two (2) adult qualified volunteers or employees assigned to each class, and a minimum of one (1) assigned to each "break-out group" which is part of a larger class. In Kindergarten and pre-school rooms, at least one (1) of the volunteers or employee must be female.

.02 Our goal is to have a ratio of volunteers to children of not less than 1:10 for pre-school classrooms and 1:10 for school age classrooms.

.03 There shall always be a paid staff member on duty while class is in session who will make roving checks of all classrooms from time to time.

.04 Teenage students under the age of 16 may assist adults. Students under the age of 16 must always work under the direct supervision of an approved adult worker.

.05 To ensure that there shall be sufficient substitutes available when the regular volunteer or employee cannot attend parents should be encourage to undergo the volunteer screening process to be available on a standby basis.

### **5.0 GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS & EMPLOYEES OF YOUTH PROGRAMS**

#### **5.1 Physical Contact**

.01 Back rubs, neck rubs, massages, kissing, or similar contact are not allowed by any volunteers or employees. Side-by-side hugs are to be used instead of full body contact. Touching need not be completely avoided, but employees and volunteers must be aware of how it looks and how the person being touched may interpret the contact.

## **5.2 Staffing Considerations for Planned Activities**

.01 A minimum of two (2) adults who have completed the required screening and training should be present for all activities. A specific ratio of leaders to youth is not suggested; instead, the ratio should be appropriate for the activity being undertaken.

.02 Any one-on-one meeting involving a minor requires prior written consent from the parent or guardian and must be conducted with the door open. One-on-one meetings of any kind outside the office should not occur.

## **5.3 Unplanned Meetings Between Employees and Youth**

.01 Unplanned contacts between a youth and employees or volunteers shall, insofar as possible, be conducted under the same rules as are planned activities

## **6.0 GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS & EMPLOYEES OF ALL PROGRAMS INVOLVING MINORS**

### **6.1 Driving Rules**

.01 Only qualified, screened individuals may drive. If requested all drivers must show to the person in charge of an event, a valid driver's license and proof of insurance. The two-adult rule still applies.

.02 If the event requires the use of a church owned vehicle, the driver must be a qualified driver on the churches Approved Drivers List.

### **6.2 Overnight and Trip Rules**

.01 Written Permission and Medical Consent forms must be completed prior to the trip. Two-deep adult leadership must be followed throughout the trip.

## **7.0 REPORTING AND INVESTIGATIONS**

### **7.1 Reporting Requirements**

.01 All volunteers and employees children or youth workers shall immediately report and document any incident of abuse or violation of the two-adult or open door policy of which they have knowledge or which they have observed to their supervisor. Any person making such a report shall keep the information strictly confidential.

.02 Although most church employees and volunteers are not required by law to report suspected child abuse it is the policy of Hebron Baptist Church to file a report with the appropriate authorities when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused.

.03 Certain individuals by virtue of their profession may be legally required by law to report suspected child abuse. (O.C.G.A. §19-7-5(c) contains a complete list of mandatory reporters)

## **7.2 Incident of Abuse Defined**

.01 An "incident of abuse" means any occurrence in which any person:

- Has threatened or inflicted physical injury upon a child, youth or vulnerable adult, other than by accidental means, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.
- Commits or allows to be committed any sexual offense against a child, youth or vulnerable adult, or engages in any sexual contact with a child, youth or vulnerable adult, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.
- With respect to if a child, youth, or vulnerable adult makes any kind of sexual advance, or makes a request for sexual favors, or engages in sexually motivated physical contact, or engages in other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.

## **7.3 Reporting Procedure**

.01 The person reporting an incident of abuse shall contact:

- The Pastor of Preschool Ministries if the incident of abuse involves a preschooler (or in his absence an Administrative Pastor).
- The Pastor of Children's Ministries if an incident of abuse involves a child (or in his absence the Director of Children's Ministry)
- The Pastor of High School or Middle School Ministry if an incident of abuse involves a youth (or in his absence the Associate Pastor)
- The Pastor of Adult Ministries if an incident of abuse involves a vulnerable adult (or in her absence an Administrative Pastor)
- The Pastor of Recreation if an incident of abuse involves a child while participating in the recreation programs
- The Administrative Pastor in all cases, should be advised of the incident and a report is required to be made to him.

.02 The reporter shall inform him of all relevant facts with respect to the incident of abuse. Upon receiving a report of an incident of abuse, the person receiving the report, together with the reporter, shall complete the written Suspicion of Child Abuse Report. However, in all cases where the alleged wrongdoer is the person to whom a report should be made, he or she shall be considered absent for purposes of this reporting procedure.

## **7.4 Imminent Threat**

.01 In all cases where an imminent threat of continued or additional abuse exists, any witness shall immediately contact a Police Officer on call at Hebron Baptist Church and request that the officer take immediate steps to ensure the safety of the alleged victim. After the safety of the alleged victim has been secured, the personal witnessing the incident of abuse shall complete a written report.

## **7.5 Obligation to Report to the Child Abuse Investigators**

.01 In all cases where any child or youth worker has reasonable cause to believe that a child or youth, known to the child or youth worker in an official or professional capacity, may be abused or neglected, the worker shall, after first consulting with the Administrative Pastor make a report to the local law enforcement agency's child abuse investigators.

## **7.6 Responding to the Report**

.01 When someone receives a report of an incident of abuse, he or she shall immediately take all steps necessary to ensure the safety of the alleged victim. After the safety of the alleged victim has been secured, and after the report has been appropriately documented, the person receiving the report shall:

- Immediately contact Hebron Baptist Church Administrative Pastor, who shall within 72 hours of the report conduct an investigation and determine whether there is reasonable cause to believe that the abuse may have occurred.
- Contact parents or guardian of the alleged victim to inform each one of them of the incident and shall ensure each parent or guardian has been notified. If one parent or guardian is the alleged wrongdoer, the person receiving the report shall contact the other parent or guardian and inform him or her of the incident individually.
- Take all reasonable steps necessary to ensure that the alleged wrongdoer has no contact with the alleged victim pending investigation.
- Take all steps necessary to ensure that the alleged wrongdoer is barred from further work with children, youth or vulnerable adults pending the investigation.

## **7.7 Investigation**

.01 Upon learning of a reported incident of abuse, the Administrative Pastor with the assistance of legal counsel and qualified lay people will conduct the investigation.

.02 They shall ensure:

- That the investigation is kept strictly confidential and that all evidentiary privileges are maintained.
- That the investigation is thoroughly documented and that a confidential file is maintained.
- That all relevant witnesses are contacted and interviewed.
- That the interests of the alleged victim and alleged wrongdoer are protected during the investigative phase.
- That within 72 hours of the report of abuse a conclusion shall be made as to whether there is reasonable cause to believe abuse may have occurred.

## **7.8 Conclusion of No Abuse**

.01 If it is concluded that there is not reasonable cause to believe the abuse may have occurred, the Administrative Pastor shall provide a written report to the Senior Pastor of Hebron Baptist Church.

.02 The written report shall:

- Preserve the anonymity of the victim and the witnesses.
- Summarize the allegations and the steps taken to investigate them.
- Set forth the conclusion and the reasons supporting the conclusion.
- Set forth the temporary actions taken by the investigative team and also set forth a recommendation of additional action to be taken by the Administrative Pastor in response to the reported incident of abuse.

## **7.9 Conclusion of Abuse**

.01 If there is reasonable cause to believe abuse may have occurred the Administrative Pastor shall provide a written report to the Senior Pastor of Hebron Baptist Church.

.02 The written report shall:

- Identify the alleged victim, the alleged wrongdoer, and all witnesses identified and contacted.
- Set forth the allegations and the steps taken to investigate the allegations.
- Set forth the facts revealed by each significant witness.
- Set forth the conclusion and the reasons supporting the conclusion; and
- Set forth the temporary actions taken by the Abuse Investigation Team and also set forth a recommendation of additional actions to be taken by the Administrative Pastor.

.03 The Senior Pastor, the Executive Pastor and the Administrative Pastor shall have the power to take all reasonable action they deem appropriate in response to the reported incident of abuse.

.04 In addition, the Administrative Pastor shall:

- Report the incident to the appropriate local law enforcement and governmental authorities.
- Send notice of a claim or potential claim to Hebron Baptist Church general liability insurance carrier and, if appropriate, the sexual misconduct liability insurance carrier, as soon as possible.
- Cause the crisis response plan to be implemented.
- Conduct all further investigations as directed by the Senior Pastor.

## **7.10 Violations of the Two-Adult or Open Door Policy**

.01 Upon receiving information indicating a violation of the two-adult or open-door policy, the person receiving the report shall report said violation to the division or department head.

.02 If any person refuses to comply with the policy or continues to violate the policy, such person shall be barred from further youth or children's work.

## **8.0 CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN**

### **8.1 General Guidelines**

.01 After consultation with legal counsel the Sr. Pastor, the Executive Pastor or the Administrative Pastor shall act as spokesperson to handle dissemination of information to employees, media and congregation. In their absence, the Pastor of Music Ministries will be the spokesperson.

.02 Have ready for release, a clear position statement stating Hebron Baptist Church's policy regarding sexual abuse of minors and established safeguards.

.03 Select outside Legal Counsel (if necessary) who will be present with the spokesperson while answering any investigative questions from the police or social service agencies.

.04 Use text or prepared public statement to answer press and inform congregation. At all times, the privacy and confidentiality of all those involved must be strictly maintained.

.05 The church spokesperson should keep in mind that information given to or obtained by news media may have a bearing on the church's liability, so careful judgment should be exercised.

### **8.2 Guidelines for Spokesperson**

.01 Be prepared.

.03 Be candid and honest.

.04 Never say "no comment."

.05 Be clear, concise and in context. Do not answer more than what is asked. Do not volunteer information.

.06 Always respond to all calls and questions as quickly as possible.