

NEW HOPE CHRISTIAN CENTER

Child Abuse Prevention

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New Hope Christian Center

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to provide policy to facilitate a safe and secure environment for those children/youth who participate in programs and use the facilities here at New Hope Christian Center. In addition, it will help in protecting our church and staff from lawsuits and penalties because of false accusations or real abuse and/or neglect of children/youth.

Current trends in our society require some adjustments in our approach to children/youth ministries. We can no longer assume that children/youth will be safe in our church unless we actively participate in protecting them. We want children/youth in our church environment to trust and become close to our workers. We do not want our children/youth vulnerable to any form of abuse and/or neglect from anyone who would take advantage of them.

This policy applies to all children/youth workers, both volunteer and compensated staff. We respect the integrity and sincerity of those we work with, and we thank God for their commitment to minister to our children/youth. In light of the priceless value of the children/youth whom God has entrusted to our care, we are endeavoring to have a well defined policy in writing that helps clarify our standards for excellence in ministry in addition to protecting the reputation of our church, volunteers, and paid staff.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. Church – New Hope Christian Center
- B. Child/Youth – Any person under the age of 18 who is participating in a church sponsored program or using the church facilities.
- C. Staff – A church approved, appointed, and identified adult worker who is responsible for the supervision and care of children/youth in church sponsored programs or while using church facilities.
- D. Child Abuse – The term “child abuse” carries many connotations, and can be generally stated as any act on the part of parents, or other persons legally responsible for the child’s care, which causes injury or places the child in danger.
- E. Child Neglect – Child neglect is normally seen as a failure to provide for the child’s needs. Major categories of neglect are:

1. Physical neglect - improper or inadequate food, clothing not suitable to the weather, unhealthy or inadequate physical arrangements.
 2. Abandonment – lack of supervision – leaving young children alone, inadequate childcare planning, failure to supervise children.
 3. Educational neglect – failing to see to the child’s school attendance or school related needs.
- F. Sexual Abuse – Engaging in sexual contact or sexual penetration with a child by a person responsible for the child’s health or welfare.
- G. Sexual Exploitation – Includes allowing, permitting, or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution by a person responsible for the child’s welfare; or allowing, permitting, encouraging, or engaging in the photographing, filming, or depicting of a child engaged in a sexual act by a person responsible for the child’s health or welfare.
- H. Programs – Weekly church scheduled classes or special activities sponsored by a specific area of children/youth ministries at New Hope Christian Center.

III. SAFE ENVIRONMENT GUIDELINES FOR CHILDREN/YOUTH

- A. Introduction – The church, and any program identified with the church, must be a safe environment for those children/youth who are entrusted to our care. Due to our increasingly complex society, we can no longer assume that even the church will be a reliable refuge for children unless we take the necessary steps to make it one. Our safe environment guidelines for children/youth are practical guidelines and set policy written to protect the children/youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities and to insure an environment that is free from abuse and/or neglect. We also maintain these standards for excellence in ministry and to uphold the good reputation of our church and staff.
- B. Toilet Time (with 0 – 5 year olds)
1. Children in Nursery (0-2 year olds) may need diapers changed, or assistance in toilet training. It is preferable that only female workers be allowed to change the diapers of children who are not part of their family. When children’s private body parts need to be cleaned it is advised that the workers wear plastic or surgical gloves and use baby wipes. Avoid touching private parts with bare hands. (Note Appendix)
 2. Children in early childhood (2-5 year olds) should already be toilet trained, but may need to be monitored or helped while on the toilet. It is preferable

that only female workers assist children who are not part of their immediate family. (Note Appendix)

3. Children in first grade and above should not require any assistance in the rest room. Approved workers may monitor discipline of children using the rest room, but may only enter the rest room of their gender (e.g., men in the men's room only). Workers should be careful to respect children's privacy.

C. Transportation Of Children / Youth

1. By personal vehicle or church vehicle, drivers may be required to pass the State license record check (to ensure a good driving record).
2. Van limit is 11, including the driver. For passengers in excess of 15 people (in any vehicle), the driver must possess a CDL endorsement

D. Permission Slips

For field trips, a permission slip must be filled out for each youth attending.

E. Child Identification And Pick-Up (0-5 Year Olds)

Young children must be escorted to class by a parent or guardian. Parents will be given a tag when their child arrives to class. Children may not leave a class until their parent arrives with the tag to claim the child, or if indicated that they are going to another class or children's program, are escorted there by an approved worker. This is to prevent children from being taken by an unauthorized person.

F. Abduction

It is regrettable that abductions take place in our society. Our policy is that every reasonable measure will be taken to prevent this situation at New Hope Christian Center. If an abduction occurs, New Hope Christian Center will cooperate with law enforcement officials to the fullest possible extent.

IV. DISCIPLINE OF CHILDREN/YOUTH

Good discipline is needed for a safe environment where children/youth can learn and enjoy being in church. Children/youth most often misbehave when they are bored, frightened, need attention, or have trouble with self-control.

A. Discuss the rules and keep them posted

1. Be considerate of the teacher or peer who is talking, by listening to what they have to say and waiting for your turn to speak.
2. Snacks or candy are special treats to be enjoyed only when your teacher gives permission.
3. The class will be more enjoyable for everyone if you remember to show kindness in word, action, and facial expression.
4. Stay where you are expected to be. Because we are spread out in a large building, we need to know where you are.

B. Discuss the consequences of breaking rules:

1. Give a reminder of the rules.
2. Apply discipline appropriate to infraction:
 - a. Quiet time
 - b. Move child to another chair away from friends.
 - c. Restrict from activity
3. Take child to appropriate department leader or Pastor that is over that ministry.
4. Conference with Parent and Pastor over that ministry.
5. Conference with Sr. Pastor, Pastor over the ministry and Parent

C. Guidelines for Rules Enforcement

1. Enforce the rules at all times. Be consistent and realistic in application. Reinforce positive behavior. (Have a “quiet seat” incentive). Apply the consequence of rule breaking in a uniform and consistent manner.
2. Keep the ministry Pastor informed of all disciplinary measures.
3. Discipline may not include depriving a child/youth of sleep or food, placing a child alone without supervision, or subjecting a child/youth to ridicule, threat, corporal punishment, or excessive physical exercise.
4. Classify the offense: Is it a serious infraction? Does the particular student do it repeatedly? We don't want to encourage chaos, but we also don't want to run a military camp.

5. Isolate the offender: Handle discipline away from the peer group. If you confront someone in front of his or her friends, they become embarrassed and may rebel to save face.
6. Get support: Always have another worker present when issuing discipline.
7. Be an example: Demonstrate the desired attitude and actions.
8. Do all disciplining in love.

V. STAFF SELECTION AND TRAINING

A. Staff (Compensated and Volunteer)

1. All workers must complete our Worker's Application. This is not an application for employment, but a form to help us screen potential children/youth staff members. To protect our children from that person who would harm them, we must uniformly screen every staff member in this manner (even those we already know and trust).
2. Identification of Staff – Workers who are with children/youth should wear a name badge to identify them as an approved children/youth worker. This way children/youth and parent can identify which adults in our facilities or at our sponsored programs are approved as safe children/youth workers.
Adult and teen-aged visitors (i.e., unidentified and/or unapproved people) are not allowed in children/youth classes unless they are accompanied by an approved children/youth worker or they are accompanying their child for a portion of the class. We should always make visiting families feel comfortable and safe.
3. The Buddy System. Cases of child abuse and neglect (or accusations thereof) most often occur where workers are unsupervised and/or alone with a child. Therefore it is our policy that children be cared for in the company of two or more approved workers at church sponsored activities or while using church facilities. Staff will use this “buddy system” to supervise each other, and they will be held accountable for their actions.

The “buddy system” should be enforced at all times, especially in circumstances like these:

- taking young children to the rest room
- driving children/youth to and from events
- overnight activities
- meeting with children/youth in your home (or theirs)
- camp outs
- using secluded meeting rooms
- counseling/support groups

Do not be alone in seclusion with a child/youth who is not your own. Even if you do nothing wrong, you may open yourself up to accusation. Avoid even the appearance of evil. If you are with several children/youth, meet in a public area or use a room with a window in the door (or keep the door ajar) and have your “buddy” check on your meeting periodically. The buddy system may be suspended only when an immediate danger to the child/youth is greater than the risk of being alone in seclusion with a child/youth. Use common sense and good judgment.

B. Boundaries For Sexual Conduct Of Staff

1. Children/youth need to be touched in good ways that show love, acceptance, and respect. Examples of good touching are a handshake, a shoulder hug, and a gentle pat on the back. Some examples of questionable touching (especially for older children) may be sitting on laps, back rubs, bear hugs, and kissing.
2. Avoid all forms of sexual conversation. Even instructions in sexual morality and sexual safety are only to be given with written pre-approval of parents and the Pastor responsible for that area of ministry.
3. Non-touching offenses include: verbal stimulation, obscene phone calls, indecent exposure, peeping in windows/doors, causing or allowing a child/youth to witness adult relations, or exposing a child/youth to pornography, whether written or video.
4. Reporting of Abuse or Accusation of Abuse
 - a. Who must report:
 - 1) Any individual who has reason to believe that a child is a victim of child abuse or neglect shall make a report.
 - a) Immediately report any suspected signs or information of abuse or neglect to the Senior Pastor.
 - b. Keep all information confidential. Do not discuss reported cases of abuse or neglect with other staff, children/youth or parents. Leave in-depth questioning of a child/youth to professionals.
 - c. Do not confront a suspect until you are sure the child/youth is safe. The police will be called if a child's/youth's safety is in danger.
 - d. The child's/youth's parents will be notified that abuse/neglect has been reported and that counsel is available.
 - e. Ongoing Care
 - 1) Our pastors are available to work with families and individuals who are involved in or victimized by child abuse or neglect. Our policy is to strive for healing and reconciliation in Christ. May our church be a fortress of safety for ministry to healthy children/youth, and a refuge for those who are abused or neglected.

5. Responding to Disclosure of Abuse.

- a. Find a private place to talk to the child/youth (remember the buddy system).
 - Do not panic or express shock
 - Express belief in the child/youth
 - Reassure the child/youth that it is good to tell, and not his/her fault.
 - Don't promise not to tell
 - Let the child/youth know what you will do
 - Trust your Spirit led instincts
 - Resolve doubt in favor of the child

C. Church Volunteer Selection And Training

1. Every staff member (volunteer or compensated) must submit to a criminal background records check in order to be involved in a leadership position. This policy applies to any person working with children under the age of 18.
2. Every person involved in ministry to children under the ages of 18 must submit a "Worker's Application," have sat through the training session, and have indicated in writing that they have read and understand this policy on child abuse prevention.

ALL INFORMATION WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL AND KEPT UNDER LOCK AND KEY IN THE CHURCH OFFICE. ONLY PASTORAL STAFF WILL HAVE ACCESS TO THE INFORMATION ON A NEED TO KNOW BASIS.

D. Minimum Age Requirement For Ministry

No person under the age of twelve may work in Christian Education, Children's Church or Nursery unless special approval and permission to serve as helpers is given. Permission to participate will be considered, but not guaranteed if the following criteria are not met:

1. Preferably Female – Young males are more prone to abuse than females. Only 5 percent of abusers are female. This is not only to protect the children, but also young boys who may be falsely accused while helping with the children. (Note Appendix)
2. Written request from the parents giving permission and stating the reasons why they want their children involved.
3. Written request must be submitted to the Pastor of that ministry for approval.

VI. STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

At New Hope Christian Center, one of our highest priorities is to be a ministry that can be trusted. To help assist in the development of an atmosphere of trust, we want you to understand the extent and limitations of confidentiality.

Confidentiality will be broken in the following specific situations:

- A. If there is reason to believe that you may be a physical threat to your own safety or well being.
- B. If there is reason to believe that you could be physically harmful to another person. In such cases all appropriate people will be notified, including the police and the person(s) at risk.

APPENDIX

Profile Of A Child Abuser (from “Protecting Your Children from Sexual Assault”, by William Katz)

Adult Men

1. 80-90% of offenders are known to the child
2. A respected, upstanding member of your community
3. Almost always “average” and “normal” in their apparent lifestyle
4. Someone with an admitted problem with pornography

Adolescent Boys

1. 12-18 years old
2. Does not relate well to children his own age
3. Characterized as a “loner”
4. May have been the victim of physical abuse himself
5. Seeks out position of independent authority over younger children

NOTE: Someone may fit these descriptions and not be a child abuser. Also these descriptions do not cover all possible signs of an abusive nature.