

Child Protection Policies and Procedures

Hope Community Bible Church

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Introduction

A safe and secure environment includes a formal, written policy to help prevent the occurrence of child abuse. The following policy and procedures are for the protection of our children, employees, volunteers and our entire church family at Hope Community Bible Church.

Scope

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

Any unique circumstances or procedures must be approved by the Elder Board.

Definitions

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

- *Child, children, and minor* shall be defined as any individual under eighteen years of age, or whose mental capacity is that of a minor.
- *Adult* shall be defined as any individual at least eighteen years of age.
- *Worker* shall be defined as any adult who serves as a volunteer or paid person given the responsibility of working with or caring for minors. All workers must have a clear profession of faith and be striving to live in obedience to Christ as defined by the Scriptures.
- *Teen Worker* shall be defined as any individual at least thirteen years of age, but under eighteen years of age, who serves as a volunteer or paid person by assisting with caring for minors. All teen workers must have a clear profession of faith and be striving to live in obedience to Christ as defined by the Scriptures.
- *Child Abuse* shall be defined as physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of a child or minor.
- *Criminal Background Check* is the procedure used to check the background of adult volunteers for criminal activity.

What is Child Sexual Abuse?

Child sexual abuse is:

- Any sexual activity with a child – 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 (at least four years older than the victim).
- Child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent.
- All child sexual abuse is an exploitation of a child's vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the action.
- Child sexual abuse is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially, and developmentally ready.
- Child sexual abuse includes behaviors that involve touching and non-touching aspects.

Worker Enlistment

It is our normal practice that no volunteer will be allowed to work with minors until they have been a member or regular attendee of Hope Community for a minimum of six months. Special consideration may be given with the approval of the Elder Board if there has been a history of faithful service at another church.

- Only approved workers and teen workers are allowed in classrooms with minors.
- All adults desiring to work with minors will be required to complete a Worker with Minors Application.
- All teens desiring to work with minors will be required to complete a Teen Volunteer Application.
- After an application is received, the prior 10 years of employment, volunteer service, and personal references will be checked.
- A Criminal Background Check may also be obtained on adult applicants, after the applicant has signed the Criminal Background Check authorization, and prior to being enlisted as a worker.
- The Elder Board will review and either approve or deny applications.
- If approved, workers and teen workers will be notified when they have been approved to serve at church-related functions.
- A Criminal Background Check may be performed on adult workers on an ongoing basis, randomly or as deemed necessary.

Any prospective worker that has prior incidents of sexual misconduct or child abuse will not be allowed to serve in any capacity where they would have contact with minors.

- All Criminal Background Checks will be kept strictly confidential, will only be viewed by an elder-approved person, and will be maintained for a maximum of 30 days.

- At the applicant's request, Hope Community Bible Church will allow the applicant to review his/her criminal history record transcript at the church, but in no event will the applicant be allowed to retain and/or copy his/her transcript.

Regarding Application Forms

All employees and volunteers at activities or programs of Hope Community Bible Church that involve minors will be required to complete one of the following: Workers with Minors Application (adults), or Teen Volunteer Application (teens).

There are no exceptions for substitutes or occasional volunteers – all workers must complete the entire process.

These application forms provide personal and confidential information necessary to perform a Criminal Background Check (for adults) and reference checks (for adults and teens) on each individual worker.

While this process understandably trespasses into the privacy of our lives, the security of our children outweighs the personal invasion inherent with such investigations and disclosures.

All personal information voluntarily disclosed, and the results of all criminal background and reference checks, or the refusal of any person to participate in a program or activity in lieu of such disclosure requirements, will be maintained in the strictest of confidence.

Reasons for Disqualification

Any conviction for any of the following will disqualify anyone from being allowed to work with minors at Hope Community Bible Church:

- Criminal homicide
- Aggravated assault
- Possession, use, or sale of drugs or controlled substances
- Sexual abuse
- Sexual assault (rape or statutory rape)
- Aggravated sexual assault
- Injury to a child
- Incest
- Indecency with a child
- Inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance of a child
- Possession or promotion of child pornography
- The sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a minor
- Employment harmful to children
- Abandonment or endangerment of a child
- Kidnapping or unlawful restraint
- Public lewdness or indecent exposure
- Enticing a child

All charges for these crimes or charges or convictions for any other crimes not listed above will be reviewed by the designated leadership of Hope Community Bible Church.

Only qualified persons authorized by the Elder Board of Hope Community Bible Church may view information obtained through Criminal Background Checks.

Specific Acts & Omissions in Violation of the Policy

The following acts or omissions are violations of this policy and will not be tolerated or accepted during any activity or program and are to be immediately reported to the designated program staff, after the safety of the child or minor involved has been assured.

- Any direct observations or evidence of sexual activity in the presence of or in association with a minor.
- Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct towards a minor.
- Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any person and a minor.
- Physically abusive behavior or infliction of bodily injury to a minor.
- Physical neglect of a minor, including failure to provide adequate supervision at church-related functions.
- Mental or emotional injury to a minor.
- The presence or possession of obscene or pornographic materials at any function of Hope Community Bible Church.
- The presence, possession, or being under the influence of any illegal or illicit drugs.
- The consumption of or being under the influence of illegal or illicit drugs or alcohol while leading or participating in a function for minors at Hope Community Bible Church.

Worker Supervision

- At least two adult workers must always be present in the classroom with minors, with the following exceptions:
 - One adult worker and at least one teen worker is acceptable for children age 0 through 6th grade.
 - One adult worker is acceptable for minors in 7th - 12th grade.
- The church will seek to maintain the following ratios of workers to children in each situation involving the supervision of children:
 - A 1:15 ratio of workers to children in 1st - 12th grade
 - A 1:6 ratio of workers to children aged 0 - Kindergarten
- In the event one of the workers must leave the classroom, another worker must be summoned to be present during their absence.
- Church staff will supervise on an ongoing basis and make occasional, unannounced visits into classes or other program sites.
- Prior permission must be granted by the parent who drops off a child to authorize the release of the child to a specific adult other than the same parent, such as another parent, a grandparent, or a sibling.
- In counseling sessions with minors, parental permission shall be obtained prior to a leader meeting privately with a minor.
- If two adults are present, then parental permission is not required.
- Prior permission may be granted by parents to cover a particular time period (i.e., a school year) for their child to receive counseling from a particular minister.
- All activities, including scheduled or impromptu counseling situations, will occur in an appropriate room or setting, where visibility of the session is maintained – either in a room with windows with the blinds open enough to provide visibility, or in some other setting providing appropriate visibility. If there is no window in the door of the room, then the door shall remain open.

Reporting Suspected Abuse

Hope Community Bible Church has a well-defined procedure for handling suspected abuse at church-related functions.

Any time a worker or teen worker sees something at a church-related function or program that creates a concern regarding child abuse, the following procedure should be followed.

- Intervene as necessary to halt the suspected abuse.
- Immediately notify one of the elders of Hope Community Bible Church.
- Continue involvement and cooperation as requested by the elder in any additional reporting requirements.

Age-Specific Release and Bathroom Policies

Ages 0 - 1

- All children must be checked in and out by a parent/guardian or parent/guardian-authorized individual.
 - No child will be released to unauthorized individuals.
 - Unless explicitly authorized, this includes siblings, grandparents, etc.
 - A parent or guardian can authorize individuals in writing or electronically.
- No worker should ever be in the bathroom with a child with the door closed.
- All diapers must be changed at the diaper station.

Ages 2 - Kindergarten

- All children must be checked in and out by a parent/guardian or parent/guardian-authorized individual.
 - No child will be released to unauthorized individuals.
 - Unless explicitly authorized, this includes siblings, grandparents, etc.
 - A parent or guardian can authorize individuals in writing or electronically.
- For bathroom breaks:
 - The workers will make certain that no one is in the bathroom.
 - The door will be propped open.
 - One worker will assist children in the bathroom as needed, while the other worker(s) wait in the hall with the other children.
 - Only female workers will assist the children in the bathroom during both scheduled and unscheduled bathroom breaks.

1st - 6th Grade

- All children must be checked in and out by a parent/guardian or parent/guardian-authorized individual.
 - No child will be released to unauthorized individuals.
 - Unless explicitly authorized, this includes siblings, grandparents, etc.
 - A parent or guardian can authorize individuals in writing or electronically.
- Buddy system for bathroom breaks.

7th - 12th Grade

- No check in or check out required.
- No restriction on bathroom breaks.