

# **Child Protection Policy**

**Belle Aire Baptist Church**

1307 N. Rutherford Blvd.

Murfreesboro, TN 37130

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## 1.0 GENERAL

### 1.01 Goal

It is the goal of Belle Aire Baptist Church (“the Church”) to provide a safe environment for the physical and emotional well being of all children participating in church supervised activities. The church shall inform workers and enforce policies to ensure that all children are safe and well protected while attending scheduled activities.

### 1.02 Definition of “Children” and “Youth”

The term “child” or “children” includes all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “youth” refers to a child who is in Grade 7 or higher.

### 1.03 Definition of Child Abuse

According to the Tennessee Department of Children’s Services:

*“Child abuse and neglect occurs when a child is mistreated, resulting in injury or risk of harm. Abuse can be physical, verbal, emotional or sexual.*

*Physical Abuse is non-accidental physical trauma or injury inflicted by a parent or caretaker on a child. It also includes a parent’s or a caretaker’s failure to protect a child from another person who perpetrated physical abuse on a child. In its most severe form, physical abuse is likely to cause great bodily harm or death.*

*Physical Neglect is the failure to provide for a child’s physical survival needs to the extent that there is harm or risk of harm to the child’s health or safety. This may include, but is not limited to abandonment, lack of supervision, life endangering physical hygiene, lack of adequate nutrition that places the child below the normal growth curve, lack of shelter, lack of medical or dental that results in health threatening conditions, and the inability to meet basic clothing needs of a child. In its most severe form, physical neglect may result in great bodily harm or death.*

*Sexual Abuse includes penetration or external touching of a child’s intimate parts, oral sex with a child, indecent exposure or any other sexual act performed in a child’s presence for sexual gratification, sexual use of a child for prostitution, and the manufacturing of child pornography. Child sexual abuse is also the willful failure of the parent or the child’s caretaker to make a reasonable effort to stop child sexual abuse by another person.*

*Emotional Abuse includes verbal assaults, ignoring and indifference or constant family conflict. If a child is degraded enough, the child will begin to live up to the image communicated by the abusing parent or caretaker.”*

## 2.0 SELECTION AND SCREENING PROCESS

It is the goal of the Church to adequately screen the applications of all persons desiring to work with children in any church program.

## 2.01 Classification of Workers

In order to screen workers appropriately for their responsibilities, the head of each department (preschool, children, youth, and weekday preschool) will categorize workers into two categories: primary and secondary. These terms refer to the relative levels of responsibility and risk, not to the ages of the children being served.

**Primary Workers:** All paid staff members plus those volunteers in roles with greater responsibility or risk are classified as primary workers.

**Secondary Workers:** This class refers to persons who occasionally interact with children and/or do so in less risky circumstances (i.e., volunteers who see children only in a group setting and who interact with children in the presence of an approved primary worker). This category may also include parents of participants who help supervise activities.

## 2.02 Minimum Age

Primary workers must be at least 18 years of age. The Church may employ responsible teens (under the age of 18) only as secondary workers under the direct supervision of a primary worker. All workers must be at least 14 years old.

## 2.03 Six-Month Rule

Primary workers must have been an active and participating attendee of the Church for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children. The six-month rule may be waived with the authorization of the Personnel Committee, as in the case of a new staff member. This rule does not apply to the weekday preschool program. There is no requirement for these staff members to be active attendees of Belle Aire.

## 2.04 Volunteer Applications

The preschool, children and youth departments shall require all volunteers to complete and sign a volunteer application form. Although the application may be tailored to meet the unique needs of each department, it must document answers to the following questions:

- Have you ever been known by another name?
- During your lifetime, have you ever been arrested for molesting or abusing a child, accused of physical assault or a sexual offense of any nature?
- Have you ever been prosecuted for child abuse or molestation?

Applications will be submitted to the department administrative office. The head of the department in which the volunteer will work will be responsible for the interview process and reference checks. If an applicant needs additional confidentiality they may choose to submit their application directly to the department head.

The Church shall keep all confidential information received in the applicant

selection process. Such information shall be stored with access afforded only to appropriate staff on a need-to-know basis.

If the Church learns of false, misleading or amended information on an application that could cause potential danger to children or liability to the Church, that person will be asked to step down from his or her position.

## **2.05 References**

The head of the department in which the person will work must check and document at least three (3) references for each primary worker applicant and must conduct a reasonable inquiry into the character of secondary worker applicants. References may be checked by phone, mail or in person.

Whenever possible, the references should include:

- a person who has known the applicant for an extended period and
- a former supervisor

Information gained in these checks should be noted directly on the application.

## **2.06 Confidential Interviews**

All applicants desiring to work with children must be interviewed to determine their suitability for the work they desire to do. The leader of the program in which the applicant will work typically will conduct the interview. However, a team of interviewers may be used. The organization's policy concerning prevention and response to child abuse and neglect must be discussed during the interview.

## **2.07 Criminal Background Check**

A criminal background check and sexual offender registry check shall be required for all children's worker positions, both employee and volunteer. No one who has been convicted of a crime involving misconduct with children will be allowed to work with children. (See Appendix A for other disqualifying convictions.)

Background checks will be kept confidential in a locked file with access afforded only to appropriate staff on a need-to-know basis.

The minister of administration will conduct all criminal background checks and will notify the applicant and the department head (or appropriate ministry leader) if a negative report is received. In the event that the applicant feels a mistake has been made in their background report, it is the applicant's responsibility to contact the reporting agency, resolve any issues, and provide evidence to the contrary before being approved to work with children in any capacity.

Except for felony sex offenses, felony violence offenses or felony offenses involving a child, the applicant may request reconsideration based upon additional information provided by the applicant that relate to or explain efforts at rehabilitation, or pertinent circumstances underlying the conviction.

## **2.08 Vehicle Safety**

Persons who drive Church-owned or privately-owned vehicles for conducting business or transporting children on a regular basis must be at least 21 years old and maintain a current valid driver's license, provide proof of insurance in such amounts as may be required by the organization, and comply with the Church Transportation Policy.

## **2.09 First Aid Training**

It will be the goal of the Church that most paid employees who work with children will maintain a current certification in basic life saving. The organization will pay the cost of this training. Employees will be paid for attending training.

Primary workers are encouraged, but not required to get training if they frequently accompany children on activities such as recreational activities, camps, retreats, mission trips or any other activity with an element of risk.

## **2.10 Identification Badges**

All primary workers in the preschool and children's departments are required to wear a photo identification name tag whenever they are supervising children. These tags will be provided by the Church and will show the worker's name and their picture. This rule does not apply to the weekday preschool program.

# **3.0 SUPERVISORY REQUIREMENTS**

It is the policy of the organization to provide adequate supervisory control of persons working with children. The rules that follow apply to both primary and secondary workers.

## **3.01 Safety of Children**

It is the responsibility of all children's workers to promote the emotional and physical safety of the children under their care. If in their opinion, an unsafe condition exists; the worker shall immediately take appropriate precautions to protect all children. Nothing contained in any other policy, procedure or instruction shall be construed to relieve children's workers from this responsibility.

## **3.02 Preschool Security System**

To reduce the possibility of kidnapping/abduction, the Church will have in place an identification system so that the adults who drop off a preschool child are the same adults who pick the child up or are persons designated by the child's parent/guardian. Any deviation from this rule shall be approved by the department head or person in charge of the event. The identification system will not be necessary for children above the grade of kindergarten unless the department head requires it or a parent/guardian specifically requests it in writing.

## **3.03 Two-Adult Rule**

It shall be the goal of the Church to have two workers in attendance at all times



when children are being supervised; regardless of the number of participants, location or activity. At least one of these must be a primary worker. These two adults should not be related to one another.

Some youth classes may have only one adult in attendance as the teacher while the class is in session.

At no time will an adult meet alone with a child in any room where the door is closed or in an area where they cannot be seen. Where possible, a window will be installed in the door of all rooms typically occupied by children and in the door of all offices. A window is not necessary on Dutch doors if the upper section remains open.

### **3.04 Ratio of Workers to Children**

It is required that a reasonable ratio of adults to children is maintained at all times. The department minister shall be responsible for setting and maintaining a reasonable ratio of workers to children; giving due regard to all factors present, including the number and age of the participants, the nature of the activities and the location where the activities are taking place.

### **3.05 Worker Training**

Each new worker will be given a copy of the Church's *Child Protection Policy*. They must sign a statement (see Appendix B) indicating they have received and read the policy before they can begin working with children.

### **3.06 Ministry Oversight**

The department head shall coordinate with all ministry leaders in their age group to ensure compliance with the Church's *Child Protection Policy*. This should include regular unannounced visits into classes and other program sites.

### **3.07 Awareness of Organization Policy**

Each department head shall review the Church's *Child Protection Policy* with their children's workers annually and whenever a change is made to the policy. These reviews may be conducted either with the workers individually or in groups. Each worker shall acknowledge participating in the periodic review of the Church's policies and procedures and having received revisions to the policy when they are issued. The signed acknowledgements shall be retained in the personnel file of the worker.

### **3.08 Children's Pickup**

Children in preschool through Grade 3 classes shall not be allowed to leave the area of a scheduled event unsupervised unless the Church has previously received written permission from a parent or guardian. If the parent or guardian does not pick up his or her child on time, the child will be kept in the event area where safe supervision can be continued until a parent or guardian is located.

## **4.0 REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO ALLEGED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT**

### **4.01 Reporting Policy**

It is the policy of the Church to report any incident of child abuse or neglect toward any child. This would include participants in temporary childcare programs. Workers must abide by the following rules:

- Do not treat any suspicion as frivolous.
- Notify your supervisor immediately. Commence the investigation right away.
- The staff member in charge should suspend the accused person from the performance of his/her duties involving children until the official investigation has been completed.
- Cooperate fully with law enforcement officials.
- The department head will inform the victim and the victim's family of all steps being taken, and continue to keep them advised of the status of the investigation.
- If child abuse is confirmed, ask the victim and the victim's family what action they would like to take in the matter and fully cooperate to address their requests within the bounds of a legal and prudent response. (Legal counsel should assist in this determination.)
- In an instance where child abuse is confirmed, the Church will immediately dismiss the worker from their position. Termination will be considered appropriate in the circumstances.
- In instances where evidence is inconclusive, the Church should take action with the advice of legal counsel in consultation with law enforcement officials depending on the strength of the evidence available and after consideration of the victim and the victim's family's requests.
- The department head, in consultation with legal counsel, will determine the amount of information they believe is appropriate to relate to the Church's membership. Usually commenting in detail on an ongoing investigation is not wise.

### **4.02 Reporting Obligation**

By Tennessee law, anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that a child is being physically abused, sexually abused, or neglected is required to report this information. Any worker of the Church who has cause to believe that a child is being abused or neglected shall report that belief according to the following procedure:

- The worker shall report such belief to the local Child Abuse Hotline (1-877-237-0004 or 1-877-54ABUSE) or any local law enforcement agency and to the appropriate department head.
- The department head receiving the report will immediately verify that the Department of Children's Services has been notified.

- The department head will notify the parents of the child (unless the parent is the person responsible for the abuse or neglect).
- The department head, in consultation with the pastor, minister of administration, and Board of Trustees will notify the appropriate legal counsel.
- The minister of administration will notify the church's insurance agent that an abuse report has been filed with the appropriate local or state agency.

#### **4.03 Incident Report**

The person making a report should identify:

- The name and address of the child.
- The name and address of the person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the child.
- Any other pertinent information concerning the alleged or suspected abuse or neglect.

#### **4.04 Confidentiality**

All reports of child abuse or neglect shall be held in absolute confidence. No person shall communicate any information concerning the alleged event to any person except as necessary to cooperate with any official investigation. Any breach of this confidentiality by an employee shall be cause for immediate dismissal. The pastor, in consultation with the official conducting the investigation may authorize limited additional disclosure if necessary to protect other children from harm in the near future (particularly where the person responsible for the abuse cannot be identified) but in no case shall the identity of the victim or the accused person be disclosed except as required by law.

#### **4.05 Investigation of Alleged Abuse or Neglect**

No person shall attempt to conduct a detailed investigation either through examination or interrogation of the child, the accused person or a witness. It is acceptable to obtain a reasonable amount of information to have cause to believe a child has been abused or neglected. Interviews shall be conducted only by authorized officials of the agency to whom the suspected crime has been reported or, when appropriate, by legal counsel or persons representing the organization in an official capacity. All employees and volunteers shall cooperate with the official investigation as requested.

#### **4.06 Suspension of Duties**

A person accused of child abuse or neglect will be suspended from all duties involving children. This would include all childcare, teaching, transportation or sponsorship duties.

If the accused is an employee of the Church, the Personnel Committee shall be allowed to monitor any such investigation and receive confidential information concerning the incident as may be necessary to determine issues concerning continuation of employment and compensation. The person accused should be

suspended on 'paid leave' until the validity of the accusation is determined.

Removal from duty should occur in such a way that an innocent person is not immediately deemed guilty. If the allegation is determined to be unsubstantiated, the employee may be returned to their prior position.

#### **4.07 Preservation of Records**

Copies of all documents relating to an event of abuse or neglect, including a list of all persons known to be present or in the vicinity shall be collected by the department head. The department head will review them to verify they are complete and in accordance with the Church's policy. Once reviewed, the documents will be transferred to the minister of administration for safe keeping until advised that all criminal and civil investigations and actions have been completed.

#### **4.08 Ministerial Care**

The staff shall encourage and assist the child and the parents in securing appropriate counseling, care and support. In the event the abuse or neglect involves a member or employee of the Church, the staff shall encourage and assist the individual in securing appropriate spiritual care and support, including third-party counseling, being mindful of the potential for a conflict of interest.

#### **4.09 Liaison with the Community**

The pastor, or his appointed agent, will serve as the Church's sole access to the media. The Church should emphasize to the public its position on child abuse, its concern for the victim and the extensive steps being taken to address the safety of all children.

#### Note

Major portions of Sections 1.0 – 4.0 have been copied with permission from resources found at [kentuckybaptistconvention.org](http://kentuckybaptistconvention.org)

## **5.0 SEXUAL OFFENDER POLICY**

### **5.01 Guiding Principle**

We believe that any addictive or compulsive habit, life hurt, or struggle may be overcome through the grace of God as it is given to us by way of his son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and his people, the church. We also believe that the local church should be a place where genuinely repentive people can come to worship and grow in their personal relationship with Christ. However, when the nature of a person's sin demands it, specific measures must be taken to ensure that the church remains a safe haven for all who wish to attend.

### **5.02 Requirements for Attendance**

If a person who is a registered sex offender (RSO) wishes to attend Belle Aire Baptist Church the following procedures shall be followed:

- The RSO must meet with a Church minister and the leader of the ministry in which the RSO wishes to participate. The minister will serve as the RSO's accountability partner on matters related to his/her relationship with the Church.
- The Church minister performing the interview will also talk to the RSO's parole officer/case worker/counselor and any government officials involved with the RSO to inform them of our actions, to gather pertinent information about the RSO's situation, and to receive permission to allow the RSO on our property.
- All information gathered about the RSO's crimes and current situation will be discussed with the pastor who must grant his approval for the RSO to attend.

Note

*After careful consideration of all the facts and with the approval of the parole officer or case worker, the pastor may waive the requirements of this policy if it is clear, based on the nature of the offense, that the RSO poses no danger to children.*

- The RSO shall be assigned a Church escort who will meet the RSO at his/her car and escort him/her at all times (including restroom visits) while on the Church premises or at any Church event the RSO wishes to attend.
- The RSO can only attend those functions specifically approved by the assigned Church minister. These functions should be limited to Church worship services and one small group (care group or Bible study).
- The RSO shall not approach or initiate contact with children (ages 0-17) nor enter areas of the facility designated for children.
- A photo ID of the RSO will be provided to all ministerial staff, children's teachers, and the Church safety team.

**5.03 Termination of Privileges**

Should the RSO violate any of the terms of this policy, attendance privileges shall be immediately and permanently terminated.

**5.04 Commitment Form**

The RSO shall carefully read and sign the Registered Sex Offender Commitment form prior to attending any Church function.

**5.05 Alleged Sexual Offender**

Prudence requires the Church to ban persons charged (but not arraigned or tried) with child sexual molestation from attending Church events or coming on campus until their legal status is officially determined by the courts. This conditional ban should be handled in such a way that an innocent person is not unjustly assumed to be guilty. If the allegation is determined to be unsubstantiated, the person can return to his/her former place of service.

## Appendix A. Criminal Background Checks: Disqualifying Convictions

1. Felony Sex Offenses – regardless of the amount of time since the offense, including but not limited to:
  - Child molestation
  - Rape
  - Sexual assault
  - Sexual battery
  - Sodomy
  - Prostitution
  - Solicitation
  - Indecent exposure
2. Felony Violence Offenses – regardless of the amount of time since the offense, including but not limited to:
  - Murder
  - Manslaughter
  - Aggravated assault
  - Spousal abuse
  - Kidnapping
  - Robbery
  - Aggravated burglary
  - Arson
3. Felony Offenses Involving a Child – regardless of the amount of time since the offense, including but not limited to:
  - Child abuse or gross neglect
  - Contributing to the delinquency of a minor
  - Child pornography
  - Internet luring of a child
  - Child trafficking
  - Child endangerment
4. Felony Offenses (Other) – within the past 10 years that would be considered a potential danger to children or is directly related to the functions of the applicant, including but not limited to:
  - Drug offenses
  - Burglary
  - Theft
5. Misdemeanor Violence Offenses – within the past 5 years, including but not limited to:
  - Simple assault
  - Battery
  - Domestic violence
  - Hit & Run
6. Misdemeanor Drug and Alcohol Offenses – within the past 5 years or multiple offenses in the past 10 years, including but not limited to:
  - DUI or DWAI
  - Simple drug possession

Drunk and disorderly  
Public intoxication  
Possession of drug paraphernalia

7. Misdemeanors Offenses (Other) – within the past 5 years that would be considered a potential danger to children or is directly related to the functions of the applicant.
8. Other Disqualifying Factors
  - a. Pending Charges. Should the background check indicate that an applicant has criminal charges of any nature pending, including a deferred judgment or deferred prosecution, the applicant will be considered on a case by case basis and may be rejected until there is a resolution of the charges or successful completion of the deferred period.
  - b. Subsequent Charges. Should an approved applicant subsequently have any criminal charges brought against him/her during their term of service, they will be required to disclose the nature of the charges to the church administrator and voluntarily terminate their duties until a determination is made regarding the effect of the pending charges on the employee's/volunteer's functions.

## **Appendix B. Related Forms**



## Registered Sexual Offender Commitment

I, \_\_\_\_\_, will strive to live a life worthy of the calling that Christ has given me. I also know that doing so will take time. Therefore, I agree to abide by all requirements made of me by this agreement while attending Belle Aire Baptist Church. Furthermore, I agree to adhere to the guidance, counsel and requests made of me by the leadership of Belle Aire Baptist Church, not only while in attendance at church functions, but in my personal life as well.

The following requirements are in order that I may be restored to a right relationship with my Savior and my fellow believers. I understand that time will show my fellow believers when I am worthy of their trust.

*Please initial each item below:*

- \_\_\_\_\_ I agree to allow the official church escort to be with me at all times while on the church premises and at designated church functions, which may be off campus.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I will work out the details of connecting with my assigned escort prior to arriving at church.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If I am on church premises without the official church escort, I understand that I will not be allowed to return to Belle Aire Baptist Church.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I understand that my assigned Belle Aire minister must grant approval for me to attend any church functions that are in addition to those already approved.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I will refrain from being in designated children's areas of the building and I will not initiate contact with children, making every effort to avoid being in contact with children, on or off church premises.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I commit to being honest with myself and with the leadership of Belle Aire Baptist Church.

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Belle Aire Minister: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Ministry Leader: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Official Escort: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_



**Belle Aire Baptist Church  
Child Protection Policy  
Acknowledgement of Understanding**

I have read and understand the **Belle Aire Baptist Church Child Protection Policy** dated March 1, 2014. I understand that my service as an employee of Belle Aire Baptist Church or as a volunteer worker who works with children at Belle Aire Baptist Church is dependent on my strict adherence to these policies.

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

