

## *Child Protection Policy*

### **Goal**

- To provide a safe and secure environment for our minor children and ministry volunteers
- To minimize the HBC ministry and children's volunteers' vulnerability to unwarranted accusation
- To communicate to parents and congregants our commitment to the safety and protection of the children in our care

The following policy has been approved and adopted and will be enforced.

### **Screening**

#### ***Volunteers***

1. No volunteer candidate will be considered for any ministry position involving contact with children, youth, or the disabled until he has been regularly attending HBC for six months
2. Before being considered for a position, any candidate who may be working with children, youth, or the disabled will complete and return a Children's Ministry Application. Applications are accessed through our website at: [www.heritagebiblechurch.org](http://www.heritagebiblechurch.org). Applications are processed through an outside screening organization. References are checked in-house. Once references are checked, and the application is approved, the applicant is to complete the online training provided by Protect My Ministry.
3. A ministry leader will carefully review the Ministry Application to ensure that the volunteer will be appropriate for the ministry position. All children's volunteers, with the exception of nursery and short-term summer programming volunteers, will be subject to elder approval.
4. If the applicant appears to be appropriate for the work, then at least two of the references will be checked to confirm the information provided on the Ministry Application.
5. Any information indicating that a candidate poses a threat, or may pose a threat to others or has any history of physical or sexual abuse directed against another person will result in the immediate removal of the candidate from consideration for a ministry position with this organization.
6. A background check (which includes criminal, as well as a DSS abuse and neglect registry check) will be performed through a state law enforcement agency for any candidate seeking to work with children, youth, or the disabled.

#### ***HBC Employees***

1. A background check (which includes criminal, as well as a DSS abuse and neglect registry check) will be performed for all candidates for employment.
2. The procedure set forth above for volunteers will apply to all employees, regardless of ministry position.
3. Any substantiated or unsubstantiated information indicating that a candidate poses, or may pose a threat to others or has any prior history of physical or sexual abuse directed against another person will result in the immediate removal of the individual candidate from consideration for employment with this organization.
4. The elders may investigate unsubstantiated matters to the extent possible.

#### ***Annual Employee/Volunteer Review***

1. This policy document will be reviewed annually with volunteers and employees to whom it applies.
2. All children's volunteers will be reviewed annually by the pastoral staff.
3. If, at any time, an issue should arise rendering an employee or volunteer unsuitable for working with children, youth, or the disabled, he will be removed immediately from his position and would be unable to be considered for other positions involving work with children, youth, or the disabled. This individual would be shepherded through this process under pastoral care.
4. An employee or volunteer shall also be immediately removed pending any investigation, even if the adverse information is unsubstantiated. The elders will investigate the matter to the extent possible.

## **Training**

No person shall be allowed to work with children, youth, or the disabled until he has completed our online training, as well as training in the following policies and has demonstrated that he understands them. Nursery volunteers are responsible for guidelines contained in the HBC Nursery Handbook, and Preschool through 5<sup>th</sup> grade volunteers are responsible for guidelines contained in the Children's Volunteer Handbook.

### ***Physical Contact with Children***

1. A church nursery volunteer who deals with diapers should adhere to the following procedures:
  - a. Only females aged sixteen (16) and older may change diapers.
  - b. The volunteer should never apply lotion or powder.
  - c. A cloth or wipe should always be between the volunteer and the child's genital area. The volunteer must be able to testify under oath that he did not inappropriately touch the child directly.
  - d. Gloves are provided in each nursery room for use by the volunteer.
2. Children five years of age or younger (boys and girls) should be assisted as needed in the restroom by an adult female or an adult of the same sex. An adult is someone eighteen years of age or older. Preschool rooms are equipped with restrooms. A volunteer should allow the child to enter the restroom and wait outside the door if needed for assistance. The door should remain open at all times. At no time should a volunteer be in the restroom alone with the child with the restroom door shut.
3. For children over the age of five, at least one adult female should take girls to the restroom, and one adult male should take boys to the restroom. The adult should check to make sure the facility is safe and then wait outside the restroom until the children come out. The door should remain open at all times.
4. For a child over the age of five who has wet or soiled his clothes, the volunteer should avoid physically assisting, but rather, instruct the child on how to clean himself without direct assistance. Parents should be paged to assist their child.
5. Volunteers should avoid appearances of impropriety.

## **Supervision**

### ***Check-in/Check-out Policy***

1. Check-in: Parents are to sign in at the door of the child's room. This applies to Nursery – Preschool (age 5). Parents will receive a card with a number that corresponds to the line on which they signed.
2. Check-out: No child is to be released to anyone other than the adult with the numbered card. Volunteers are to release children (3<sup>rd</sup> grade and under) in their care only to parents, guardians, or persons specifically authorized to pick up the children. An older sibling may pick up younger siblings if the parents have made arrangements with the appropriate overseer or with the Nursery Supervisor or Children's Ministry Director. Numbered cards are not issued to parents of 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> graders. A note providing permission for a child to be picked up by another responsible adult or an older sibling should be provided.
3. Please note: Activities taking place in the Cave require parents to pick up their children *through the 5<sup>th</sup> grade*.
4. Volunteers should arrive fifteen (15) minutes before a scheduled activity and should keep watch over those in their care until all have been picked up by an authorized person. A volunteer should not send children 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and under out to find their parents or release any child or youth to await transportation. If, after fifteen (15) minutes, a parent fails to arrive to pick up, volunteers are to ask an usher or another individual to locate the child's parents. Volunteers should not take the child with them to go find their parents.

### ***Ratios***

1. The two-adult minimum is the best protection for our children and against potential false accusation. At least two volunteers—at least one of them over the age of eighteen—should be present at every function, and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area, during every child, youth, and disabled ministry program. Activity vehicles transporting children 6<sup>th</sup> grade and above may have one approved adult volunteer. The number of adult volunteers will be increased when appropriate.
2. For events that involve use of only part of the church building, leaders are responsible to ensure that children remain in the supervised areas.
3. The church premises and vehicles should be safe environments for our children. Any isolated areas of the church property should be patrolled before, during, and after church services. Ministry leaders should make random visits to all classrooms as well as patrolling any isolated sections of the church building.
4. At any function involving children or youth, 8<sup>th</sup> grade and below, doors to rooms will remain locked until the adult responsible for that room arrives; or an overseer or usher will patrol the area until the adults responsible for each room have arrived. The intent of this procedure is to prevent situations where children are in rooms without qualified supervision.

### ***Discipline/Correction***

1. A volunteer is never to spank, hit, grab, shake, or otherwise physically discipline anyone.
2. Gently taking the child aside, talking with them, attempting to redirect their behavior and attention to another activity, or a brief “time out” are appropriate responses to uncooperative behavior. Volunteers should feel comfortable having parents paged if these types of attempts are unsuccessful. A behavior issue should never be allowed to escalate.
3. Ongoing disciplinary problems should be reported to the volunteer’s immediate overseer, the Children’s Ministry Director, or to the parent or guardian.
4. Volunteers should keep the parents informed about and involved in their child’s activities and behavior (both positive and negative). The volunteer should never assume the role or responsibility of the parent.

### ***Illness or Injury – Maintaining a healthy environment***

1. A person who is ill (with a fever or having a communicable disease that can be transmitted by cough or by touch) will not be permitted to participate in any ministry activity.
2. A suitable substitute, who has been approved as a volunteer through the above screening process, must be used to take the place of an ill volunteer.
3. An ill child should be returned to his parent or guardian as soon as illness is discovered. If this is not possible, then he should be isolated in a way that will allow supervision to continue until he can be returned to a parent or guardian.
4. Volunteers should take reasonable steps to prevent contact between any person and the bodily fluids of any other person, such as:
  - Washing hands before and after any contact with bodily fluids, including wiping noses, changing diapers, cleaning vomit, and treating a blood spill
  - Wearing disposable gloves when dealing with any bodily fluids
  - Treating all soiled linen (i.e. sheets, clothing) as potential infectious agents
  - Removing toys that children have mouthed from the general play area for washing
  - Disinfecting the room with disinfectant spray at the end of a session
5. Any supervisor who becomes aware of any injury to a volunteer or child will take steps to ensure that proper medical attention is given.
  - a. A child who has received an injury that is obviously minor (i.e., paper cut, scrapes, etc.) should be given first aid as needed at the time of injury. The child’s parent or guardian should be notified personally by the ministry volunteer of the minor injury when the child is picked up.
  - b. Any injury that may require medical treatment beyond simple first aid should be given immediate attention: the parent or guardian of the injured child should be notified immediately, along with the volunteer’s overseer. An ambulance should be called immediately if needed.
6. HBC has health care teams in place at each service to assist in any medical emergency.

### ***Incident Reports – Notice of Injury***

1. An incident report should be completed before the volunteer leaves his ministry time, in order that the injury and surrounding events are documented promptly and accurately. Parents should be informed upon pick up if a child was injured during any ministry activity.
2. Incident reports are located in each individual room, at the Nursery Desk, and in the Children's Ministry Director's office.
3. Completed incident reports should be given to your ministry leader.

### ***Food Allergies***

1. HBC wants to serve and accommodate our families who have children with food allergies to the best of our ability.
2. It is the parents' responsibility to inform the volunteers of any food allergies or special dietary needs their child may have at check-in. Parents should provide a cell number so that they can be reached if necessary.
3. Stickers for "no-gluten" and "no-peanuts" are available at check-in for children to wear up through Preschool. Parents should talk to volunteers about what, if any, snacks are being served in their child's room. Parents are welcome to and should provide a snack for their child if they have any concerns about what is being served.
4. Parents should advise the volunteers if a child has an epi-pen or inhaler (or similar item) in the child's possession (backpack, church bag, etc.) and provide any instructions for their use in an emergency situation.
5. Volunteers should be aware of the children in their care with allergies and accommodate accordingly.
6. Should an allergic reaction occur, the parent will be paged, and the HBC health care team summoned.

***Administering Medicine*** – No volunteer will administer medicine of any kind (aspirin, topical lotions, Benadryl, tums, etc.). A parent will be called to do so.

### ***Attendance***

An attendance list should be kept for all of the ministry's functions involving children, youth, and the disabled. It should include the date of the function and the names of all participants and adults in the room.

### ***Evacuation***

Evacuation plans are posted in each room, and will be updated as necessary. Ministry leaders and volunteers should familiarize themselves with the posted plan so that they may act accordingly in the event of an evacuation.

## **Response to Neglect, Abuse, or Molestation**

### ***Child Safety Committee***

The HBC Child Safety Committee consists of the Executive Pastor, Pastor of Youth and Young Adults, Children's Ministry Director, Nursery Supervisor, Facilities Manager, and two parent representatives (one of which is in law enforcement or has a law enforcement background). This committee regularly reviews our children's policies, works to improve our children's learning environment, and stands ready to receive and address any concerns regarding safety issues in the children's ministry.

### ***Violation of Policy or Procedures***

1. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at Heritage Bible Church to act in the best interest of all children in every program; therefore, a volunteer must promptly notify his supervisor of any activity that violates our Child Protection Policy.
2. Any supervisor who becomes aware of a violation will take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance by all volunteers and will remove a volunteer from his position if removal is warranted, or if the volunteer poses a threat to others.
3. If a volunteer suspects or sees signs of neglect, abuse, or molestation, they are to notify one of the following individuals immediately: Executive Pastor, Pastor of Youth and Young Adults, Children's Ministry Director, or the Nursery Supervisor. These individuals are committed to addressing all allegations in accordance with the laws of the State of South Carolina, including mandatory reporting laws as defined by South Carolina law.
4. While not every individual is a Mandated Reporter as defined by South Carolina law, any report of inappropriate behavior or suspicion of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported to the appropriate agency, in accordance with this policy and state law.
5. *Under no circumstances should the volunteer attempt to investigate their suspicions or speak to the individual or parents of the child on their own.*
6. No church member, staff, or volunteer will be discredited or criticized for making a good-faith report of suspected abuse or neglect. Every possible effort will be made to protect the privacy of the reporter as well as the privacy of the children involved.

### ***Investigation of Abuse or Molestation***

1. Any individual of the ministry who is the subject of an investigation will be removed from his position, pending completion of the investigation (unless the employee has admitted to the abuse or molestation, in which case he will be terminated in accordance with organizational employment practices).
2. Any person found guilty of abuse or molestation in either Family or Criminal Court will be removed from work with children, youth, or the disabled within the organization, and termination of employment may result.

### ***Law Enforcement and Media***

1. All ministry leaders, employees, and volunteers will cooperate fully with any law enforcement or governmental agency that may be investigating allegations of injury, abuse, or molestation in connection with activities of the organization.
2. Legal counsel will be contacted for advice and guidance as soon as possible after the organization receives notice of possible abuse or molestation in connection with organization activities. Decisions concerning the ministry's response to the allegations will be made in accordance with such advice.
3. A single organizational leader will be designated as spokesperson following notice of any abuse or molestation in connection with activities of the ministry. This spokesperson will be the only person to convey information to the media concerning the situation and (to avoid compromising any ongoing investigation) will convey only such information as is necessary under the circumstances.

## **Revision of Child Protection Policy**

This Child Protection Policy will be reviewed regularly with legal counsel and can be modified in accordance with the bylaws of the organization. Any such modification should be promptly conveyed to all persons affected by the modification.