



## **WHBC Child Protection Policy**

### **What we believe**

We believe it is our responsibility to protect the children in our care. Children (and parents) need to know that we have taken every reasonable step to ensure children's safety in our ministry.

We believe it is our responsibility to protect staff and volunteer workers in our ministry from being exposed to false accusations of sexual misconduct. To this end, we have screening and supervision policies in place to protect our ministry workers.

We believe it is our responsibility to protect our ministry. By requiring child protection training, as well as implementing screening and supervision policies, we are modeling good safety procedures to others who look to our ministry as an example of a well-run ministry to children and youth.

### **General**

#### **I. Goal**

It shall be the goal of White Hall Baptist Church to provide a safe environment for the physical and emotional well being of all children participating in church activities. The church's goal is to inform workers and enforce policies to ensure that all children are safe and well protected while attending scheduled activities. Future revisions of this policy may be made with the authorization of both the Pastor and the Deacons.

#### **II. Definition of "Children"**

The term "child" or "children" shall include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

### **Selection and Screening Process**

#### **III. Pre-employment Procedures for Paid and Volunteer Workers**

It is the goal of White Hall Baptist Church to adequately screen the applications of persons desiring to work with children participating in all church programs.

#### **IV. Volunteers Must be Members of the Church**

All volunteers who work with children must first be members of White Hall Baptist Church. Under certain circumstances, the Pastor or the Deacons may authorize an exception to this rule for a specific, planned event.

#### **V. Minimum Age**

All volunteer workers must be 18 years of age or older. Younger persons may assist adults, but may not take the place of adult workers. The church may employ responsible teens (under the age of 18) only in positions with and under the direct supervision of an approved adult worker.

#### **VI. Six-Month Rule**

No volunteer will be allowed to work with children in any capacity until they have been an active and participating member of the church for a minimum of six (6) months. The applicant must have been a regular attendee and involved in church activities for that period of time. 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 Pastor and Deacons, as in the case of a new staff member.

#### **VII. Criminal Background Check**

A criminal background check and child abuse registry check shall be required for all children's worker positions, both employee and volunteer workers. No one who has been convicted of a crime involving misconduct with children will be allowed to work with children. Completing the *Application for Volunteer Workers Who Will Work with Children* authorizes the church to conduct these checks. Background checks will be kept confidential in a locked file with access afforded only to appropriate church staff on a need to know basis.

#### **VIII. Vehicle Safety**

Persons who drive White Hall Baptist Church owned or privately owned vehicles for conducting church business or transporting children on a regular basis must maintain a current valid Kentucky driver's license, be at least 21 years of age, and comply with all other church transportation policies.

#### **IX. Acknowledgement of Church Policies**

All volunteers and employees must acknowledge in writing that they understand the church's policies pertaining to the protection of children and that they agree to abide by them. This requirement will be met by having applicants sign the *Acknowledgement of Receipt* form.

### **Supervisory Requirements**

#### **X. Safety of Children**

It is the responsibility of all persons having contact with children participating in church programs to promote the emotional and physical safety of the participants giving regard to all factors and circumstances known to them. If, in their opinion, an unsafe condition exists, such persons shall immediately take appropriate precautions under the circumstances to protect all children. Nothing contained in any other church policy, procedure, or instruction shall be construed to relieve persons having contact with children from this responsibility.

#### **XI. Preschool Identification System**

To reduce the possibility of kidnapping, the church will have in place an identification system so that the adults who drop off a small child are the same adults who pick the child up. The person in charge shall maintain the system to identify persons authorized to pick up and take responsibility for preschool children leaving a church activity. The identification system will not be necessary for children above the grade of kindergarten unless a parent specifically requests it in writing.

#### **XII. Two-Adult Rule**

It shall be the goal of White Hall Baptist Church that a minimum of two workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during a church activity regardless of the number of participants, location, or activity. Some Youth Sunday School classes may have only one adult in attendance as the teacher while the class is in session. In these instances, doors to the classrooms will be either removed or will remain open. Windows may be installed between these classrooms for full visibility. At no time should an adult ever be in a room or an enclosed area along with a child. Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

### **XIII. Observation of Children**

Church activities for children should be scheduled in areas visible from adjoining areas. Such visibility will be maintained by leaving curtains and blinds open and, wherever possible, by leaving the door to the room open. Reasonable exceptions to this rule may be made by the person in charge where seclusion is necessary for rest, provided two workers are present in the room at all times. 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.

### **XIV. Restroom Guidelines**

Children five years of age and younger should use a classroom bathroom if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the workers should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

For children over the age of five, at least one adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female should take girls. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom is empty, and then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, workers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

### **XV. Accidental Injuries to Children**

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.

For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.

Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

### **XVI. Worker Training**

All volunteers and employees desiring to work with children must attend the Child Abuse Prevention Training Class. Each new worker will be given a copy of White Hall Baptist Church's Child Protection Policy. They must sign a statement indicating they have received and read the policy before they can begin working with children.

### **XVII. Children's Pickup**

Children who are six years old or older are permitted to leave the area of the church activity at the conclusion of the scheduled activity without further supervision of the workers unless otherwise instructed by the parent or guardian. If their parent or guardian does not pick up a child younger than six on time, the child will be kept by their teachers in the children's area where safe supervision can be continued until the parent or guardian is located. A child of twelve years or younger shall not be taken from or allowed to leave church property, either unattended or in a group without specific parental permission.

### **XVIII. Sick Child Policy**

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at White Hall Baptist Church. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off.

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from the other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

### **XIX. Medications Policy**

It is the policy of White Hall Baptist Church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the Nursery Director to develop a plan of action.

### **XX. Discipline Policy**

It is the policy of White Hall Baptist church not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the Nursery Director if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

### **XXI. Release of Claims**

Prior to any activity away from the church, a *Release of Claims*” will be necessary to be signed by the child’s parent or legal guardian. Without the form signed and in the possession of the church, the child will not be allowed to participate in the away activity.

## **Reporting and Responding to Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect**

### **XXII. Reporting Policy**

It is the policy of the church to report any incident of child abuse or neglect toward any child in the church.

- 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 duties involving children until the official investigation has been completed.
- Cooperate fully with law enforcement officials.
- The pastor or his agent will inform victim and victim’s family of the steps that are 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. (Church 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 pastor, in consultation with legal counsel, will determine the amount of information he believes is appropriate to relate to the congregation. Usually commenting in detail on an ongoing investigation is not wise.

### **XXIII. Reporting Obligation**

By Kentucky law, anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that a child is being physically abused, sexually abused, neglected, or is dependent is required to report this information. If you suspect abuse, you should call your local Department for Community Based Services office or the Child Abuse Hot line 800-752-6200. Church leadership should also be informed immediately of any suspected child abuse.

### **XXIV. Reports Required**

Any worker of the church who has cause to believe that a child's physical or emotional health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect shall report that belief according to the following procedure:

- a. The worker shall report such belief to the pastor, a member of the church staff, and/or church leadership.
- b. The pastor or staff member will immediately report to one of the following: the local Department for Community Based Services (Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services), the Child Abuse Hotline (800-752-6200), or any local law enforcement agency.
- c. The pastor or his agent will notify the parents of the child (unless the parent is the person responsible for the abuse or neglect).
- d. The pastor, or his agent, in consultation with the chairperson of the Personnel Committee and/or the chairman of the Deacons will notify the appropriate legal counsel.
- e. The pastor, or his agent, will notify the church's insurance agent that an abuse report has been filed with the appropriate local or state agency.

### **XXV. Incident Report**

The person making a report should identify:

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

### **XXVI. 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 of the church 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.

### **XXVII. 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 church in an official capacity. All employees and volunteers of the church shall cooperate with the official investigation as requested.

### **XXVIII. Suspension of Church Related Duties**

A person accused of child abuse or neglect will be suspended from all church related duties involving children. This would include all childcare, teaching, transportation, or sponsorship duties. The Personnel Committee is not authorized to conduct an investigation of the incident, but is 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 investigation is completed. This removal from duty should occur in such a way that an innocent person is not immediately deemed guilty. There are false claims made each year. If the allegation is determined to be unsubstantiated, the employee can be returned to their prior position.

### **XXIX. 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 transferred to the Pastor or his agent. They will review them to determine if the documents are complete in accordance with church policy. If any documents are missing, they shall make a written notation and transfer the documents to the deacons, who shall retain them until advised that all criminal and civil investigations and actions have been completed.

### **XXX. Ministerial Care**

The ministerial 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 pastoral care and support, including their party counseling, being mindful of the potential for a conflict of interest. All persons shall act towards the child, the parents, and the accused in accordance with the principles of Christianity at all times.

**At least once a year and following each change in or addition to this policy, all workers will be required to review the church's Child Abuse Prevention Policy. Each worker will acknowledge participation in the annual review of the church's policies and procedures by signing an acknowledgement form. This form will be retained in the personnel file of the worker. All new workers will be required to attend training on the church's Child Abuse Prevention Policy and acknowledge they have received a written copy of this policy prior to the time they commence working with the children or youth.**

**TO REPORT SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE, NEGLECT, OR DEPENDENCY CALL 1-800-752-6200 (24 HOUR HOTLINE). IF A CHILD IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER, CALL THE POLICE.**

#### **KENTUCKY SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY**

- **1-866-564-5652**
- **[www.kspso.state.ky.us](http://www.kspso.state.ky.us)**

#### **NATIONAL SEX OFFENDER PUBLIC WEBSITE**

- **[www.nsopw.gov](http://www.nsopw.gov)**

#### **KENTUCKY BAPTIST CONVENTION**

- **[www.kybaptist.org](http://www.kybaptist.org)**
  - **Safe Church Initiative**
    - **Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect Booklet**