



Ebenezer Bible Chapel

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General Purpose Statement

Ebenezer Bible Chapel seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of **Ebenezer Bible Chapel** from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

Selection of Workers

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a) **Six Month Rule**

No person will be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with **Ebenezer Bible Chapel** 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.

b) **Church Membership**

Volunteers who serve as Lead Teachers or Sponsors must be church members. Those who serve as helpers need not be members but must serve under the direction of a member.

c) **Criminal Background Check**

A criminal background check is required for all workers (regardless of position) age 18 and up. The background check authorization form may be completed online at www.compass.state.pa.us or by mail (request form). Results will be maintained in confidence and kept on file at the church office. Clearances must be renewed not less than every five (5) years.

d) **Pastoral Review**

Upon submission of the background check, a face-to-face interview *may* be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position. Convictions for an offense involving children will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Disqualifying conduct contrary to our mission may be discussed confidentially on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances.

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be present in the *area* at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. If only one adult is available for an *individual classroom* the door must have a window and/or be left

open and *never* locked. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity including transportation.

Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or even desirable to enlist helpers who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities (e.g. babysitters or classroom assistants). The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 14 and generally 3-5yrs. older than those being supervised.
- Must be selected according to applicable guidelines (Selection of workers).
- Must be under the general supervision of an adult church member who is responsible to communicate our guidelines.

Physical Contact

Children above the age of five should not be seated on your lap. Physical contact should be limited to the child's hands, shoulder or upper back (e.g. hugs). **Restroom** visits up to age five should be cared for by women, generally in a group, clear the restroom, stand outside and prop the door if a child needs assistance. Above age five encourage parent to care for this prior to class but if needed an appropriate worker may escort the child in the same way.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

In the event that an worker with children at **Ebenezer Bible Chapel** becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under our care, this should be reported immediately to the church **Superintendent** or **Pastor** for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law (see "In The Event of an Allegation").

*"I have carefully read and agree to abide by the given requirements during my involvement with **Ebenezer Bible Chapel**."*

SIGN _____

DATE _____

(this page will be read but not distributed)

In The Event of an Allegation

If an incident of abuse is alleged to have occurred at **Ebenezer Bible Chapel** or during any sponsored program or activity, the Pastor in consultation with the Church Board shall observe the following procedure:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The worker or church member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be relieved of their position pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the children and/or premises during the investigation. He or she should be instructed to have no contact with the victim or with witnesses.
3. All allegations of abuse should be reported to the civil authorities, and the organization will comply with the state's requirements regarding **mandatory reporting** of abuse as the law then exists. The organization will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. The insurance company will be notified, and the organization will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. The organization will designate a spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of the organization should refrain from speaking to the media.
6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it. This should be for the purpose of providing pastoral support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be permanently removed from their position working with children or youth and may stand for church discipline.