

## Martinsburg Grace Brethren Church

### Children and Youth Ministry

### Protection Guidelines

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**To maintain Godly standards of contact with children (age 18 and under) and to always remain above reproach, all volunteers and staff will follow these basic practices.**

- Always remain in open sight of other adults.
- If you are alone with a group of children, leave the classroom door open.
- Never be alone with only one child.
- Appropriate physical contact will vary with the age of the child. For nursery children, this may include holding, sitting on lap, diapering, and assisting in bathroom. This type of contact will not be appropriate for school age children.
- When changing a diaper, make sure that another adult is in the room. We do not change diapers of children age 5+.
- When assisting a nursery child in the restroom, the door to the stall should remain open.
- Adults should not enter the restroom with school age children. The adult in charge should stand at the entrance to the restroom to monitor behavior.
- In some situations, a man will need to limit physical contact more than a woman in the same situation, especially when working with older children.
- Sitting on laps is only appropriate for nursery children. In most situations, it is not appropriate to pick up or hold a child older than pre-k. If a situation arises where you need to pick up or hold an older child, be sure that another adult is present.
- Use care and discernment when hugging a child. Brief side-hugs when greeting or comforting a child are generally appropriate. Prolonged, frequent, or frontal hugs are not appropriate. In older classes, volunteers should not initiate hugs, particularly towards children of the opposite sex. If an older child initiates a hug, redirect them to a more appropriate contact such as a side hug.
- All volunteers should refrain from the following activities: roughhousing, wrestling, or giving shoulder or piggy back rides to children. Physical contact in group activities such as ultimate Frisbee, football, freeze tag, etc., is reasonable and understandable, but be above reproach in all physical contact.
- Only touch a child in "safe" areas and for brief times, with no rubbing or massaging. "Safe" areas generally include hands, arms, shoulders, upper back, or gentle pats on the child's head. Never touch a child on or near any region that is considered private or personal (on any part that a swimsuit covers) unless changing diapers or assisting a nursery child in the bathroom.
- Never touch a child out of frustration or anger. Physical discipline is not an appropriate means of correcting someone else's child.

#### **What happens if a child touches me inappropriately?**

- Remain calm. Ask yourself if this was accidental or on purpose.
- Redirect appropriately.
- If repeated, take the child aside and explain good/bad touch. Take into account the age of the child. You should be able to talk about appropriate touching with children older than age 3. ("We do not touch others in areas covered by your bathing suit.")
- Notify the director or a pastor if the touching continues.

## **What do I do if I suspect that a child has been abused?**

- Contact a pastor or director immediately.
- Contact Childline ASAP either at 800-932-0313 or make a written report online at <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis>.
- It is not the responsibility of the reporting adult to determine if abuse has actually occurred. We will cooperate fully with all investigations and maintain complete confidentiality.
- If a child is disclosing that a parent or another adult is causing harm, DO NOT talk with the parent or that adult. This could cause additional abuse, shame, etc. Contact a pastor or director immediately and report the abuse appropriately.

## **How do I know if something is reportable or not?**

The term “child abuse” shall mean any of the following:

- (i) Any recent act or failure to act by a perpetrator that causes non-accidental serious physical injury to a child under 18 years of age.
- (ii) An act or failure to act by a perpetrator that causes non-accidental serious mental injury to or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under 18 years of age.
- (iii) Any recent act, failure to act or series of such acts or failures to act by a perpetrator which creates an imminent risk of serious physical injury to or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under 18 years of age.
- (iv) Serious physical neglect by a perpetrator constituting prolonged or repeated lack of supervision or the failure to provide essentials of life, including adequate medical care, which endangers a child's life or development or impairs the child's functioning.

PA Law: 23 Pa.C.S. § 6303(b)(1)(i)-(iv)

**There are many signs of child abuse. Any one sign may not mean anything, but if there are a number of signs, or if they occur frequently, you may suspect maltreatment. Some signs are...**

### **Physical**

- Unusual bruises, welts, burns, fractures, or bite marks
- Frequent injuries, always explained as accidental
- Wears concealing clothing to hide injuries
- Child seems frightened
- Child seeks affection from any adult
- Unpleasant, hard to get along with, demanding, often does not obey.

### **Emotional**

- Apathetic, depressed, withdrawn, passive
- Seems overly anxious when faced with new situations, people.
- Disorganized, distrustful, or rigidly compulsive.
- Takes on adult or parent roles and responsibilities.
- Throws tantrums, seems impulsive, defiant, antisocial, aggressive, self-destructive
- Fearful, hyper-alert, lack of creativity and exploration.

### **Sexual**

- Has torn, stained, or bloody underclothing.
- Experiences pain or itching in genital areas
- Has an STD or venereal disease
- Appears withdrawn or engages in fantasy or baby-like behavior.
- Has a poor relationship with other children.
- Is unwilling to participate with other children.
- States that he or she has been sexually assaulted
- Acts like an adult, not a child.