

# *Mount Zion Baptist Church*

*Huntsville, Alabama*

## **Child Protection Policy Manual**

(Church Photo)

**Date Approved:**

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## *Huntsville, Alabama*

### **Child Protection Policy Manual**

**Purpose:** It is the purpose and intent of this manual to provide a safe, secure environment to teach and care for all minors on campus during church sponsored activities and events, or during off campus trips.

**Goal:** It is the goal and intent of this manual to provide a safe, well protected environment for the well being of all minors attending church activities. To fulfill the goal, this manual communicates the beliefs and practices of prevention to follow, lowering the risk of unhealthy and abusive behavior by anyone working with minors. Also included is the will to protect employees and volunteers from false and unfounded accusations.

#### **Definition of Terms:**

**Policy** – a high level overall plan embracing a set of rules and beliefs to be followed; “What we believe”.

**Procedure** – a set of instructions/steps for accomplishing an established standard; “How we fulfill what we believe, with the Minister in charge using discernment in each individual situation”.

**Minor** - A minor is any individual under the age of 18 years.

**Preschool** – birth through kindergarten.

**Children** – 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Kids** – a generic term used to identify a number of preschoolers or children.

**Students** – 7<sup>th</sup> grade up to, but not including 18 year olds.

**Volunteers, Workers, Teachers, Leaders** – generic terms used to describe people working with minors.

#### **The Nature and Divine Authority of Protecting Minors**

Few things are more heartbreaking than the sexual or physical abuse of a minor. Unfortunately, they are being victimized with alarming frequency across our country. No longer do we just have to worry about the scary stranger. Wherever minors are present, there is the potential for abusers to be present as well. Therefore, it is imperative that Mount Zion Baptist Church present and pass a Child Protection Policy and a Procedure Manual to protect minors in our care.

## **Theological and Practical Support**

- **Minors Were a Priority for Jesus** - Most are familiar with the account of Jesus' interaction with children and His sharp rebuke of His disciples as he says, "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matt 19:14 (NAS). This paints a vivid picture of Jesus' tender heart for the innocence and simplicity of children.
- **The Church's Responsibility to Protect** – Based on this innocence and general trustworthy nature of children, we must take the responsibility to implement measures to protect minors. There are bad people who prey on minors and they can come to our church. To fail to acknowledge this and take action is to leave the door open for minors to be violated, and also to leave the church open to tremendous civil liability. Churches are sued, not only for what they have done, but for what they have failed to do.

\*\*\* The manual applies to all individuals who give supervision to or have custody of minors, or who by virtue of their position have opportunity to have contact with minors on campus during church sponsored activities and events, or during off campus trips.

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## **Child Protection Policy**

This policy will address five areas that are critical for the protection of minors, volunteers, and employees of Mount Zion Baptist Church: **The Selection Process, The Protection Policy, Reporting Procedures, Responses to Allegations, and Resolution of Disputes.**

### **I. The Selection Process (choosing who will serve)**

- A. **Employees** – this policy includes anyone who is paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis, whether or not they work directly with preschoolers, children or students.

**Requirement:**

- Complete a Confidential Application Form
  - Sign an Authorization for a National Background Check
  - Have no record of arrest or convictions for child abuse or any crime dealing with the welfare of a minor, and be free of any and all credible accusations or allegations of child abuse.
- B. **Adult Volunteers** – anyone who is not paid by the church and is serving in any capacity involving the supervision or custody of minors.

## **Requirements:**

- Complete a Confidential Application Form
  - Sign an Authorization for a National Background Check
  
  - Have no record of arrest or convictions for child abuse or any crime dealing with the welfare of a minor, and be free of any and all credible accusations or allegations of child abuse.
- C. **Minor Volunteers** – In addition to the above requirements, a minor who is an employee or volunteer must also submit a separate certification from his or her parent or guardian that the parent or guardian knows no reason why the minor should not be allowed to work directly or indirectly with other minors.
- D. All application forms, signed authorization forms, and any other documents used in the evaluation process will be turned in to the appropriate minister, either the Preschool/Children’s Minister or the Student Minister. The minister will process the applicant’s documents and either approve the applicant, or in confidence, take any areas of question to the other minister who receives applications to gain insight and help. However, the applicant must be approved by the minister overseeing the area of potential service. All records, forms and reports will be kept in a confidential file by the minister.

## **II. The Protection Policy**

### **A. Safe Supervision**

For Preschoolers (birth – kindergarten), normal policy will be to have two adult workers present during church activities (or while under supervision). For 1<sup>st</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> graders, normal policy will be to have at least one adult worker in each area where minors are present. An age group minister, program director, or other adult leader will be present in each area where minors are present.

### **B. View Windows/Open Doors**

All minors will be in rooms with view windows or open doors for all activities.

### **C. Overnight or In/Off-Campus Activities**

All employees and volunteers will be required to comply with all of the Mount Zion Child Protection Policies.

#### **D. Parental or Guardian Responsibility**

All participants must have written parental consent, a notarized medical release form, and a copy of parent's insurance card. The notarized medical release form and copy of insurance card must be completed for each school year period and must be renewed annually. If medical or insurance information changes over the course of the year, it is the responsibility of a parent or guardian to complete an updated information sheet.

#### **E. Minor's Security Policies and Age-Specific Guidelines**

Mount Zion Baptist Church has a procedures section included in this manual for preschool, children, and students.

#### **F. Weekday Program**

Due to the professional relationship of the teacher and student, parents understand that only one teacher may be present in certain learning programs. All workers shall meet the same requirements listed in this Child Protection Policy and follow the same procedures as Mount Zion Baptist Church.

##### **Requirements:**

- Complete a Confidential Application Form
- Sign an Authorization for a National Background Check
- Have no record of arrest or convictions for child abuse or any crime dealing with the welfare of a minor, and be free of any and all credible accusations or allegations of child abuse.

### **III. Reporting Procedures**

Observed or reported child abuse must be communicated immediately and only to the appropriate age group minister and the Senior Pastor. Reporting abuse can precipitate severe consequences to a family, so it must be done confidentially, and never done casually, thoughtlessly, and certainly not for malicious purposes. At the same time, failing to report abuse can have severe consequences to a child at risk. Therefore, if there is reasonable cause to suspect abuse, conversation should occur with the appropriate minister and Senior Pastor to see what steps need to be taken to protect the child and help the family.

#### **IV. Responses To Allegations**

- A. All allegations will be taken seriously and church staff will take appropriate action in accordance with the laws of the State of Alabama, insurance policy requirements, and advice of legal counsel when necessary.
- B. The official spokesperson for the church in any of these matters will be the Senior Pastor or his appointee(s). No other staff members or church members shall speak to the media in any official capacity.
- C. The age group minister or Senior Pastor will draft written documents with dates and signatures specifying all efforts in the handling of incident.
- D. The church staff will not deny, minimize, or blame any individual involved in allegations. In the midst of allegations, Mount Zion Baptist Church will be open to minister as needed when counsel deems appropriate.

#### **V. Resolution of Disputes**

Given the above legal obligations of the protection of minors, Mount Zion Baptist Church also believes that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the church (see Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8). Consequently, designated leadership will address all concerns regarding minors, keeping both biblical and legal mandates in mind.

\*\*\* All church staff will have a copy of this manual on file available to all church prospects and members; however, it is restricted to stay within Mount Zion Baptist Church 'hands' unless permission is given by the Senior Pastor to do otherwise.

**Amendments to this Manual:** A member of Mount Zion Baptist Church may present a request to amend this manual to the Senior Pastor. It is the responsibility of the member bringing the request to see that it is signed and dated by the Senior Pastor 30 days prior to a church quarterly business meeting.

**Child Protection Policy Manual Approved:**

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Church Moderator's Signature	Date Approved
_____	_____.
Church Clerk's Signature	Date Approved