



THAXTON BAPTIST CHURCH

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Our Vision: Generations of Godliness

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, ESV)

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3:14-15, ESV)

Our Mission: To Glorify God

The children’s ministry of Thaxton Baptist Church exists *to glorify God* by:

- Maintaining a safe and secure environment for our children.
- Supporting and encouraging parents who are primarily responsible for teaching biblical truths to their children (Ephesians 6:4)
- Making the whole counsel of Scripture known to children with special emphasis on the Gospel (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Romans 1:16-17)
- Praying for the children and relying on the Holy Spirit to regenerate their hearts through the faithful teaching of His Word (Romans 10:17; Ephesians 2:4-10)
- Living faithfully before the children and modeling for them how Christians are called to respond to God, interact with each other, and with the world around us (Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 11:1)
- Encouraging children to learn to serve and to not just be served (Mark 10:43-45).
- Maintaining the highest ethical standards such that volunteers always live and serve above reproach, protecting the reputation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Preparing children to one day walk with God as adults, which means getting them ready to be a part of the public services and Lord willing, one day, a fully participating adult member.

Staff and Volunteer Expectations

All children's ministry staff and volunteers share a particular responsibility for:

- Loving the children as Christ loves them
- Setting an example of proper Christian conduct in the way we live our lives
- Ministering to the children
- Understanding that the care of children is not a right, but a privilege; and this privilege embodies responsibilities to God for ministering to and caring for the children

Child Protection

Our first concern is that children be safe while they are in our care. To this end we:

- Screen all children's ministry volunteers
- Perform background checks on all full-time church staff, regardless of whether or not they have direct contact with children
- Require training for all children's ministry staff and volunteers
- Use parent authentication identification system
- Employ scheduling procedures and volunteer/child ratios that optimize safety
- Employ hall monitors to promote and maintain safety in the building
- Equip each room with a first aid kit
- Educate our staff and volunteers to recognize suspected child abuse and to require them to understand and follow any applicable reporting laws and to encourage them to report suspected abuse to church officials
- Adhere to a healthy child policy for admittance to children's ministry
- Adhere to a two-volunteer room policy
- Equip our volunteers to know how to evacuate children safely in case of an emergency

Parameters for the Child Protection Policy

This child protection policy applies to children (from birth to 5th grade) who are voluntarily placed by parents under the responsibility of the church for the church's public worship services or specific children's ministry-related church-sponsored activities (parenting and marriage classes, bible studies held at the church with accompanying childcare, Vacation Bible School etc.). Any form of abuse, harm, neglect or other problems related to children at home, school, or in any bible-study, activity, or venue not directly related to children's ministry at TBC is not covered by this policy.

Personnel Summary

Adults are individuals eighteen years or older.

Minors are individuals under eighteen years of age (under VA law and for most state laws).

Staff are the paid employees of the church. All full-time church staff are required to receive a background check regardless of whether or not they have direct contact with children.

Volunteers are adults who work with children and are not in the employment of the church. All volunteers who serve in children's ministry are required to go through *both* the children's ministry training and screening procedures before they serve. Volunteers include childcare workers, hall monitors, teachers, coaches, coordinators, and anyone else who serves the children. The term 'volunteer' will be used throughout this policy manual as an all-encompassing term for anyone who serves the children and is not church staff.

Helpers are minors who are at least one grade older than the children they are assisting and are assisting in some area of children's ministry alongside an adult. Helpers do not count towards the adult-to-child ratios. Helpers must be children of members; may or may not themselves be a member the church; will not go through childcare training, but will be vetted by the children's ministry staff. Helpers will be supervised by the adult volunteers in the same room.

Pastors/elders are elected officers of the church who serve the church by providing teaching and leadership to the congregational as a whole. They must go through both the children's ministry training and screening procedures if they are to serve in children's ministry, just like any other volunteer.

Protecting the Children Before They Arrive

Ensuring a safe environment begins long before Sunday or Wednesday services. Every applicant who wishes to serve in children's ministry is required to go through a screening process and attend childcare training.

Screening Procedure

To ensure safe and quality care, TBC has established a screening procedure to approve all volunteers to work with our children:

- All volunteers must be members of TBC or a regular attendee.
- All volunteers must be eighteen years of age or older.
- Children or youth who are at least one grade older than the children they are assisting are welcome to help (subject to the approval and direction of the Children's Ministry Pastor), but they are always in addition to the adult volunteers.
- All volunteers must have completed TBC's childcare training.
- All volunteers must have completed the volunteer application and been recommended by or in consultation with the Children's Ministry Pastor.

- At least one reference check must be satisfactorily completed prior to beginning of service. Criminal records checks and other appropriate screening checks will be completed.
- All completed records of screening procedures will be kept securely along with the original application.
- Volunteers are to be approved by the Children's Ministry Pastor in consultation with one of the pastors.
- All volunteers must repeat the screening procedures and criminal background checks every five years.

TBC reserves the right to reject any applicant for volunteer service or dismiss an existing volunteer for any reason, including, but not limited to, refusing or failing to complete screening; failing to provide requested information; providing information that is subsequently determined as false or misleading; sin or suffering issues that compromise the applicant or volunteer's ability to care for children; any criminal report or charge; obtaining information from references or criminal record checks that suggest that the applicant is not suitable to help with children.

Any volunteer, helper, deacon, staff or elder (or any TBC member) who learns of or has knowledge of misconduct by an applicant must report that knowledge to the Children's Ministry Pastor. He or she also must be personally responsible for any legal obligation that he or she may have to disclose such information to the authorities.

Training

All children's ministry volunteers must attend TBC's childcare training before they are allowed to work with the children. Additional training sessions will be scheduled for existing volunteers to update them on policies and procedures. Full-time staff who do not have direct contact with children will receive training on child protection policies. Parents with questions about childcare training are welcome to attend these sessions.

Protecting the Children As They Arrive and Depart

Arrival and Departure Times

Volunteers should be ready to accept children 15 minutes prior to the start of any session, so that parents have enough time to transition their children before the session begins.

Parents are encouraged to pick up their children immediately after the conclusion of the session. In the event that a child is not picked up within 15 minutes of the end of the session, volunteers will ask the Children's Pastor to locate the parents.

Signing a Child in to Children's Ministry

Any parent who would like his/her child to participate in a children's ministry program will sign the child in to the appropriate classroom, nursery, or activity when he/she arrives, granting permission for the child to participate in that TBC event or program. The parent should also use this opportunity to note any allergies or special needs the child may have. For more details on our procedures for caring for children with allergies, please see the "Snacks and Food" section below. Check-in and check-out of children applies to all children birth through 5th grade.

The Children's Ministry Pastor has the right to refuse any child at check-in. Some reasons might include potential illness, behavior that endangers other children, the room being closed because of the adult child ratio, or anything else that might impair our ability to maintain a safe and secure environment for the children.

A parent or designated guardian must be in the church building at all times while their children are checked-in.

Parental Authentication Identification System

In order to protect the children in our care, each child must be signed into his/her class by a parent or guardian.

Upon signing the child in, the child will receive a label with the child-specific identification code. The parent/guardian will receive a separate label with the same identification code. The intent is for the child label to be used to match the parent with the child.

At the end of the session when the parent/guardian comes to pick up the child:

1. The children's ministry volunteer will bring the child to the door, where they will, obtain the parents identification label and be sure it is a perfect match with the label the child is wearing. Upon confirming the matching labels, the volunteer may then remove the child's label and release the child to the parent. If upon pickup, the parent cannot present the label matching their child, the parent or legal guardian will be asked to present their drivers license to confirm their identity.
2. Volunteers will REMOVE & DESTROY child labels before children leave their hallway. This will prevent strangers from referring to the child by name and potentially luring them away from their parents.

Only the parents/guardians who signed the child into the class is authorized to pick up the child. The exceptions to this are:

1. In the event of an emergency that would result in neither parent/guardian being available to sign out the child at the end of a session, the child will be released to the care of an elder, deacon, or staff member of TBC.

2. A member can send their spouse to pick up their children with the child specific identification code.
3. A member parent may make prior arrangements with the Children's Ministry Pastor to allow for someone other than him/herself or his/her spouse to pick up the child at the end of a session.

Divorce, Separation or Custody Visitation

In a situation where the parents are divorced or separated, the volunteers should only release the child to the parent who brought this child to check-in. If the other parent or anyone else attempts to check-out the child, the volunteer or staff should immediately contact the Children's Ministry Pastor. If a parent presents a court order for a child, the police must also be present and we are to release the child to police custody. In any of these circumstances, the volunteer or staff should immediately contact the Children's Ministry Pastor and an elder.

Protecting the Children While They Are In Our Care

Two Volunteer Rule

For all children's classes and programs, at least two qualified, adult volunteers must be present in each classroom at all times.

Helpers are always in addition to and supervised by the two adults. Helpers are never to be left alone at any time with children without the presence of the two adult volunteers.

Staff and volunteers must never leave a child alone in a classroom.

Two male volunteers may not serve together in the same room without a female volunteer also being present.

A staff member, deacon or volunteer may take children out of the nursery or classroom only for a compelling reason, such as to use the bathroom or in cases of illness, emergency, or evacuation.

Staff or volunteers should not have private one-on-one meetings with a child. When a meeting on the church premises is necessary, it should be done with at least one other adult present, and held with the knowledge and consent of the staff and the parents.

Visibility

When children's classes or programs are in session, the interior doors and windows should allow for unobstructed views from the outside of everyone inside the room.

Hall Monitors

The Hall Monitor is a qualified female volunteer whose duties are not limited to any one classroom. Hall Monitors generally move about the hallways and buildings during scheduled session times to observe any unusual activity and be of service to volunteers (e.g., locating parents or substituting temporarily for another volunteer.) A Hall Monitor is on duty during Sunday morning and evening services.

Child-to-Volunteer Ratios

In addition to always having at least two volunteers present, the following ratios are maintained during the three regularly scheduled weekly meetings of the church:

- Children 0-11 months: One adult for every three children
- Children 12 – 35 months: One adult for every four children
- Children ages 3-5: One adult for every eight children
- Children ages 6-12: One adult for every twelve children

Once a ratio is met, additional children should not be accepted into a classroom if doing so would exceed the ratio unless and until additional volunteers are added. If for any reason the ratio is exceeded, the Children's Ministry Pastor or the Hall Monitor should be notified and ask for more volunteers in order to maintain these ratios. Whenever age-groups are combined, the ratio is determined by the age of the youngest child.

Diaper Changing and Rest Room Procedure

0 Months through 2 Years Old

Parents of children with dirty diapers are asked to change their children *prior to* signing them into the classroom. Volunteers will change diapers at least once or as need during service. Only women are allowed to change diapers. Diapers must be changed in the presence of at least one other volunteers.

2 Years Old through Pre-K

Parents should take their children to the restroom prior to signing them into a class.

At check-in and drop-off, parents should let the volunteers know if their child is potty training. In the event that a child needs to use the rest room, the volunteers will call the Hall Monitor. The female Hall Monitor takes the child to the rest room. The Hall Monitor should wait outside the closed restroom stall door unless the child requires assistance. The child and the Hall Monitor must wash their hands with soap and water (or anti-bacterial hand sanitizer) before returning to the classroom.

K to 5th Grade

For all other classes up to 5th grade, any child needing to use the rest room shall go with the Hall Monitor who will accompany the child to the rest room and wait outside the closed bathroom door until the children are finished. The children must wash their hands with soap and water (or anti-bacterial sanitizer) and return with the Hall Monitor to their classroom.

Appropriate Discipline

All children's ministry volunteers are responsible for providing a loving, respectful, and orderly atmosphere in which children can learn, play, and interact with others. This atmosphere should be maintained by preparing beforehand, proactively directing children towards acceptable activities, verbally encouraging positive behavior, and, when necessary, correcting or redirecting inappropriate behavior.

Acceptable means of redirecting inappropriate behavior may include correcting the child verbally, withholding a certain privilege or activity for a brief time, or separating a child from the situation or problem for a brief time (particularly if his behavior is endangering or upsetting other children). During correction, a child should never be removed from the classroom. Correction should be discrete; in the classroom (not in the hallway); and never out of the sight of others.

Steps of correction might include (depending on the age of the child): (1) removing the child from the situation or problem; (2) pointing out the problematic behavior; talking to the child about his/her sin and need for Christ; (3) praying for and with the child and redirecting to a new activity; (4) helping the child to reconcile with the offended children when appropriate. Volunteers should view misbehavior as an opportunity to introduce children to the gospel.

Children's ministry volunteers and staff members are strictly prohibited from using any form of corporal punishment such as slapping, kicking, punching, spanking, or hitting. They should never speak harsh words, insults, belittling comments, threatening words, or any other verbal humiliation to children.

If a child's behavior is uncontrollable or the child does not respond to the acceptable means of discipline indicated above, volunteer or staff should ask the Hall Monitor to call the parents. If the child assaults, harasses or bullies other children, misbehaves beyond minor correction, or has a pattern of misbehavior, the parents should be immediately called so the child can be removed. Volunteers and staff are allowed to physically restrain a child if he/she is physically endangering other children. Please report any of these problems (as well as the appropriate response taken to deal with the behavior) to the Children's Ministry Pastor. Once a child is removed from children's ministry, reinstatement is possible at the determination the Children's Ministry Pastor. A child may be reinstated if the risk of re-offense has been adequately reduced.

For further information regarding discipline, please speak with the Children's Ministry Pastor.

Physical Touch Policy

Two types of relationships are important to consider: volunteer-to-child and child/teen-to-child.

Volunteer-to-Child

While appropriate physical contact with children can be an effective means of aiding in communication, redirecting attention, calming restlessness, or showing godly love and care, it can also be misinterpreted. Particularly in our interaction with children, we want to be blameless and above reproach. The following will help volunteers to avoid any compromise or concerns in this area.

- Always remain in open sight of other adults.
- Appropriate touch is positive physical contact that nurtures children and develops a sense of emotional security and maturity in their interactions with adults. Appropriate touch is applied to meet the needs of children and not the adults.
- Appropriate physical contact will vary according to the age of the child. What is appropriate for nursery children (holding, rocking, sitting on laps, etc.) will not be appropriate for grade school children.
- Inappropriate touch involves, but is not limited to coercion or other forms of physical contact which exploits the child's lack of knowledge, satisfies adult physical needs at the expense of the child, violates laws against sexual or physical contact between adult and child, and any attempt to modify child behavior with physical force.
- For all ages, only women can take children to the restroom.
- Sitting on laps is only appropriate for ages 0 to 5.
- In general, a man will need to limit physical contact more than a woman in the same situation, especially when working with older children.
- Volunteers should refrain from rough-housing, wrestling, shoulder or piggy-back rides, rubbing, massaging, or any physical activity that might make a child feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Only touch children in "safe" areas and for brief time. "Safe" areas generally include hands, arms, shoulders, upper back, or gentle pats on the top of the head. Never touch a child on or near any region that is private or personal, unless when necessary while assisting in a diaper change or restroom visit.
- Never touch a child out of frustration or anger. Physical discipline is not an appropriate means of correcting someone else's child.

Child/Teen-to-Child

- No male or female under eighteen should ever be alone together while in children's ministry.
- No inappropriate touching (as defined above and in the appendix) of any kind will be accepted.
- Fighting will not be tolerated and any child participating in violent action will be dismissed from a class/program and placed into his or her parent's care.

Further guidelines on appropriate and inappropriate touch can be found in Appendix 1.

Parents in the Classroom

If a child would feel more at ease with a parent in the classroom, this is allowed temporarily (for a few minutes), especially for visitors or children who are going through separation anxiety. If this goes beyond a few minutes and the child cannot remain without the parents, the parents should remove the child from the classroom. While accompanying their children, a parent should be kindly but firmly dismissed if the parent is causing difficulty or presenting concerns for the welfare of the class.

Food and Drink Policy

The primary mission of Children's Ministry at TBC is to provide a safe and loving environment for the children entrusted to our care so that their parents may be fed spiritually without undue concern. No food or drink by volunteers or parents will be allowed in the children's classrooms that has not been approved by the Children's Ministry Pastor.

One of the ways we protect children is to limit the food and drink allowed in classrooms. Volunteers may not bring food or drink with them when they serve.

In most classrooms, cereal or crackers and water are supplied for snack time. We may provide story-related snacks as part of the children's curriculum. Outside of these three things (cereal or crackers and water, or a curriculum related snack), volunteers will not provide any food to children EVEN with parental consent.

Why do we do this? The nature of childcare is very hectic and dynamic so we cannot guarantee that:

- (1) a child's bag will be properly marked at all times
- (2) the childcare volunteer will reach into the correct bag
- (3) another child won't grab food/drink and eat it
- (4) a child won't share his food/drink with other children

Also, some children will struggle with allergies or react adversely even to mere exposure to certain foods (like peanuts). So we need to limit the types of foods and drinks used in the children's ministry hallway.

Why don't we allow children to bring their own food with them and feed themselves? For the same reasons: we can't guarantee that volunteers will find/give the right food to the right child or that a child won't grab and eat another child's food or that a child won't share his food with other children.

So what do we do? If a parent wants to feed their child something other than cereal or crackers, water, or a curriculum related snack, that parent may check out their child, feed him outside the room then return him to the childcare room. This is the policy throughout the building.

Administering Snacks and Food

Ages 0-17 Month-Olds

Staff and volunteers will not serve food (other than milk in a bottle) to children while they are in the care of our Infant and Crawler nurseries. If a parent desires to feed their child at a certain time during the services, we ask that the parent administer the food personally to their individual child. Parents who would like to feed their children while they are in our care should alert the Hall Monitor that they are temporarily checking their child out of class. Parents who would like their infant child to be given a bottle during services must leave explicit preparation instructions with the classroom volunteer. The volunteer receiving the child into nursery should make written notes about proper feeding times, volume, mixing and preparation of the bottle. These written instructions should be carefully discussed with any new volunteer who enters the nursery. No one under 18 years old should feed an infant a bottle. Parents who would like, are welcome to make use of the Cafe and kitchen to feed their children.

Nursing Mothers

Mothers of nursing babies who grow fussy or hungry during services will be notified by the Hall Monitor of your babies needs. Nursing mothers who need to feed their babies may use the restroom located by the cafe, where they will find a bench and privacy curtain for their convenience and comfort. Audio from the worship service can be heard in this restroom and will allow the nursing mother to not miss the content of the service.

12-17 Month –Olds

Volunteers will offer properly labeled sippy cups ***containing only water***, as provided in the classrooms. Cereal or crackers maybe be administered at this age with parent or guardian approval upon check-in.

18 - 23 Month-Olds to 5 Years-Old

Cereal or crackers and water will be offered to the children 18 Months-Old thru pre-kindergarten (4s/5s classroom).

If a child should not be given a snack of this nature, the parent should do the following:

- Verbally notify the Hall Monitor on duty
- Note the nature of the allergy and how to respond to an allergic reaction in the appropriate spot in the check-in system

Volunteers may offer properly labeled sippy cups containing only water, as provided in the classrooms.

Ongoing Care for Children with Allergies

Parents of children with allergies should talk with the Children's Ministry Pastor about how to handle any allergic reactions. Upon parental request, allergy information about children of members may be posted in the child's classroom.

No food except for the church-supplied cereal or crackers and water will be permitted to be eaten anywhere in the classrooms.

If a parent desires to feed their child anything other than the provided snack at any time during the services, we ask that they administer the food personally to their individual child in designated locations.

Serving Snacks

Volunteers should always check each child's label for allergy information before serving a snack. If instructions are not clear, no food should be given to the child without clarification from the parent/guardian. The volunteer may be sent to clarify with the child's parent or guardian.

Normally snacks will be offered to the children in Sunday School classes or Children's Worship for grades K and above.

Snacks of various kinds may be offered as part of curriculum during the Sunday evening and Wednesday evening children's classes. Parents should verbally notify teachers upon check-in about the nature of any allergy or food limitations.

Security and Emergency Response

Emergency Situations

In emergency situations, if appropriate, 911 will be called, and the Hall Monitor will summon staff and medical volunteers to the children's ministry hallway to assist with the emergency.

Accidents, First Aid and Medical Emergencies

All classrooms are equipped with basic first aid kits. In the event of life-threatening injury or illness, emergency medical services will be called and parents should be located and informed immediately. Volunteers should complete an Accident Report Form for all injuries, whether major or minor prior to leaving the premises on the day of the accident. Depending the severity of the situation, someone may also call 911.

Evacuation Procedures

A team of key responders has been recruited by the Children's Ministry Pastor. The team practices evacuation procedures at least once a year.

In the event of a fire, a deacon, staff, or volunteer should call 911 and also assist all children in immediately evacuating the building. Staff and key responders will help keep parents away from the children's hallway. Parents should not report to the children's hallway because they risk creating chaos and blocking the exit paths for children. Instead, parents will meet their children in the designated areas outside of the church building. Evacuation information is located on all of the floors. Volunteers and parents should familiarize themselves with this information.

A Live Threat

A live threat includes a shooting or some other type of security hazard.

Step 1: Volunteers and Staff Evacuate Children

- As soon as staff, deacon or a volunteer is confronted with a real threat, they respond immediately.
- If it is safe to do so, the first course of action should be to evacuate the building.

Step 2: Volunteers and Staff Communicate the Danger

- When it is safe to do so, whoever sees or hears the live threat should notify a deacon, Hall Monitor, or staff about the problem. Staff, the Hall Monitor or deacon will then notify the remaining volunteers about the live threat.
- When it is safe to do so, staff, deacon or volunteer should call 911. Give the following information:
 - Location and the nature of the threat.
 - If shots have been fired tell police we have an "active shooter." VA Police are trained specifically to respond to an active shooter.

Step 3: Hide.

- If running is not a safe option, hide in as safe a place as possible.
- Close the door, including the top portion of each door and pull the latch down.
- Barricade the doors with heavy furniture.
- Close and lock windows and close blinds.
- Turn off the lights.
- Silence all electronic devices.
- Maintain silence.
- Have children lie or sit on the floor away from the door. If possible, stay out of sight of any interior windows.

Step 4: Staff or Volunteers fight the Live Threat

- If neither running or hiding is a safe option, as a last resort, when confronted by a shooter or some other danger, adults in immediate danger should consider trying to disrupt or incapacitate the shooter by using aggressive force and items in their environment, such as a fire extinguisher or chairs.
- Under no circumstances will a child be allowed to confront the potential danger.

After the area has been made safe and secure by police, the Children's Ministry Pastor or staff will communicate an "all clear" sign to anyone who is in lock-down mode.

Missing Child or Kidnapping

In the case of a missing or kidnapped child, the staff will first do a thorough check of the children's ministry hallway to make sure the child is not in another part of the building. If the child is not found after a thorough check of the children's ministry hallway then summon a deacon, Hall Monitor, or staff member to block exit doors until otherwise notified by staff or the Children's Ministry Pastor. Hall monitors and other volunteers will continue to search for the child until they are found. If the child is not found, the staff or elders will call police to secure further help.

Parent involvement in Emergency Procedures

The Children's Ministry Pastor will decide how and when to notify parents about security or emergency situations. Involving parents too early might cause unnecessary fears or panic. If an emergency does happen, parents will need guidance, pastoral care and counseling, so we rely on an elder or staff to walk with parents through difficult situations.

Healthy Child Policy

Communicable Disease Policy

In order to prevent the spread of communicable diseases among the children, several guidelines are in place concerning disease.

1. Children with infectious diseases should be kept home until they are no longer contagious. If a child is exhibiting symptoms of illness such as fever, diarrhea, open skin lesions or blisters (as in chicken pox), or persistent nasal discharge, the parent should keep the child home.
2. Volunteers will use disposable latex gloves and proper hygiene procedures to change diapers, wipe noses, and handle blood spills.
3. Hand washing or use of anti-bacterial hand sanitizer must be a regular habit for both children and Volunteers.
4. Toys and equipment will be washed and disinfected every season by a volunteer.
5. TBC is dedicated to preventing the spread of disease among the children. The Children's Ministry Pastor has the right to refuse a child on the basis of questionable symptoms. To prevent this, parents are asked to comply with the *Healthy Child Policy* guidelines.

A child should not participate in a class if and when any of the following exist:

- Fever, vomiting or diarrhea (Note: Children should be free of a fever, vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours before coming to children's ministry.)
- Any symptom of scarlet fever, German measles, mumps, chicken pox, or whooping cough
- Common cold – from onset of symptoms and one week thereafter
- Sore throat
- Croup
- Lice
- Any unexplained rash
- Any skin infection such as boils, ringworm, impetigo
- Pink eye or other eye infection
- Thick green, yellow or constant nasal discharge
- Any other communicable disease

Children who appear ill during a class will be kept in the hallway with a volunteer while the Hall Monitor locates the parents.

Please inform the Children's Ministry Pastor if your child appears to have contracted an illness while attending a TBC event so that other parents may be notified if necessary. If a child contracts an illness and has been in contact with other children while at TBC, it is the responsibility of parents to notify the Children Ministry Pastor.

Neither volunteers nor church staff may give any medication to any child.

Special Needs

Parents of children with special needs are encouraged to contact the Children's Ministry Pastor *before* signing the child into class. This allows the staff to assess the needs of the child and assist parents in transitioning their child into a classroom setting. The Children's Ministry Pastor will work closely with properly trained volunteers and the parents of the child to make each child feel comfortable and secure during each service.

Universal Precautions

Universal precautions are very effective for protecting both the children and volunteers from illness. These methods are employed such that all human bodily fluids are treated as if they carried infectious diseases. Universal precautions are applicable in any setting and should always be used.

Important Points of Universal Precautions:

- Wash hands before and after any contact with bodily fluids, including wiping noses, changing diapers, cleaning vomit, and treating a blood spill.
- Always wear disposable gloves when dealing with any bodily fluids.
- Treat all soiled linen (i.e. sheets, clothing) as potential infectious agents.
- In rooms with children ages 23 months and below, remove toys that children have mouthed from the general play area. Set them in the container by the sink and wash.
- At the end of the day, disinfect the room with Lysol disinfectant spray.

Neglect & Abuse Prevention, Reporting & Response

Definitions

What is child neglect and abuse? It is important to define our terms.

Child neglect is failure, whether intentional or not, of the person responsible for the child's care to provide for the child's basic needs such as adequate feed, clothing, medical and dental care, supervision, and/or proper education, or the failure to protect the child from harm.

Child abuse is any recent act or failure to act resulting in imminent risk or serious harm, death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual harm or exploitation of a child by a parent or a caretaker who is responsible for the child's welfare.

Sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child and an adult. This includes activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or child. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered to be forced whether or not the child consents to it.

Sexual abuse perpetrated by a child is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between children, with or without the consent of either child, when one child has power or perceived authority over the other child. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children.

Sexual exploitation includes forcing a child or soliciting a child for the purposes of prostitution, and using a child to videotape or photograph pornography.

Child sexual abuse is any form of sexual contact with a minor, non-touching offenses, or sexual exploitation of a minor. This is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they cannot be personally, socially, and developmentally ready.

Child spiritual abuse the use of spiritual authority (the Bible or church authority) to emotionally, physically, and/or sexually abuse a child.

Prevention

TBC takes protection against and reporting of neglect and abuse very seriously. In an effort to prevent abuse and neglect, we:

- Educate and equip staff, deacons and volunteers about neglect and abuse
- Adhere to the procedures and guidelines as set out in this policy manual. Many of the policies are written to protect children, including the two adult rule, visibility guidelines, and diaper and bathroom policy.
- Train and screen volunteers prior to contact with any children. Screening includes filling out an application, getting feedback from references and requiring a criminal background check.
- Require all full-time staff to submit to a criminal background check within a month of joining staff.
- Repeat screening procedures and criminal background checks for full-time staff and volunteers every five years.
- Require volunteers and staff to be members or faithfully attending for at least six months prior to serving in children's ministry.

Any instance of suspected or observed abuse or neglect should be handled with the following guidelines.

Reporting of Neglect & Abuse

Point of Contact for Reporting

Anyone who suspects, witnesses, or has any reason to believe that a child has been or is likely to be neglected and/or harmed or threatened with abuse in any form should contact the Children's Ministry Pastor or any elder at TBC. This reporting includes questionable behavior (overly flirtatious behavior, shoulder massages or other intimate acts, etc.) and/or possible offenses (volunteers observing actual abuse or possible evidence of abuse, like abrasions, lacerations, etc.). Any person who serves as the initial point of contact is required to report *all* allegations and/or eye-witness accounts to the Children's Ministry Pastor.

Guidelines for Mandatory and Permissive Reporters

In reporting of neglect or abuse to the authorities, it is important to distinguish between permissive and mandatory reporters. A mandatory reporter may include social workers, teachers and other school personnel, physicians and other health care workers, mental health professionals, childcare providers, law enforcement officers, and domestic violence workers. Permissive reporters include anyone who is not a mandatory reporter, which will be the majority of TBC's volunteers and staff.

The church has a moral and ethical obligation to report any neglect and abuse, so if the person suspects or witnessed or has knowledge of neglect or abuse, the person *must* talk to the point of contact for reporting—the Children's Ministry Pastor or any elder at TBC.

The person who suspects or witnessed or has knowledge of neglect or abuse is a mandatory reporter, he or she must follow the guidelines and laws set out for mandatory reporters. He or she must fulfill his/her obligations to the law, including reporting to Child Protective Services or the police. At no time will the mandatory reporter be prohibited from reporting, even if their consultation with staff or leadership in the church results in a disagreement. If you are a mandatory reporter, it is important that you know whether you must report only in the context of your professional duties or whether the obligation to report also applies when you're away from your professional duties or functioning as a volunteer at our church.

If the person who suspects or witnessed or has knowledge of neglect or abuse is a permissive reporter, they should contact the Children's Ministry Pastor or any TBC elder. Because permissive reporters do not have professional training or experience in recognizing abuse, they are required to report first to the Children's Ministry Pastor or any TBC elder. If reporting to Child Protective Services or police is deemed as warranted by an elder of TBC then this person who suspects or witnessed abuse must report. At all times, this person will be required to fulfill their obligations to the law.

State and federal laws authorize civil or criminal penalties or civil liability for failing to report a reasonable suspicion of child abuse. In addition, obstructing or interfering with an investigation of child abuse can result in criminal charges. The church will not tolerate any retaliation against a reporter who has a reasonable suspicion of neglect or abuse.

More Guidelines on Reporting

When available, the following information will be documented and reported when helpful:

- The name, age, gender and address of the victim(s).
- The name, age, gender and address of the alleged perpetrator/offender(s).
- The nature, frequency, date(s) and location(s) of the abuse alleged to have occurred.
- The relationship between the victim and the alleged perpetrator/offender.
- Other evidence that supports the allegations (eyewitness, medical exams, confessions, etc.)

What should a volunteer, staff, deacon or elder do when they suspect, hear about or observe what appears to be a sign or symptom of neglect or abuse? Talk immediately with the Children's Ministry Pastor. The volunteer, staff, deacon or elder should document this information on the *Child Abuse Reporting* form, which is available in every classroom and are required to provide a copy to the the Children's Ministry Pastor immediately.

What should the Children's Ministry Pastor do with the child who is allegedly neglected or abused? Talk with the child and find out how the injury happened, though be careful of the level of detail you pursue. Asking for too much detail might be harmful for a child as it causes them to relive the abusive experience. If the child is describing what might be abuse, the objective is to obtain very general information that may help substantiate or alleviate the suspicion. Ask the

child open-ended questions and get them to relay the event in their own words. Be careful to not suggest answers to the child and be sensitive to the fact that the child will be scared to tell the story, sometimes out of fear that it will upset adults or will not be believed. Write out a report that should include signs or symptoms observed, notations about bruises or injuries that are visible, a summary of the conversation with the child, and a description of any emotions expressed by the child. Do not ask the child to undress in order to show bruises or injuries that are not visible. Include all of this information on the *Child Abuse Reporting* form, which is available in every classroom.

What should volunteers or staff report when they hear of a story of abuse? Note *what* the child said happened, *who* the child was with when it happened, *where* it happened, and *when* it happened. All of this should be documented.

What should a volunteer or staff do when they observe an incident that may be abusive? Immediately intervene to protect the child; follow-up immediately with Children's Ministry Pastor; write out a report about the incident; and act in accordance with all reporting laws. The volunteer or staff should keep an on-going log of the suspected person's behavior and anything else that is relevant concerning the person or the child or their relationship.

How Can We Learn About the Different Laws, Regulations, and Guidelines in Virginia?

Laws, regulations, and guidelines for reporting child neglect and abuse differ from state to state. For general information on guidelines for mandatory or permissive reporters in Virginia, review the summary page entitled *Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting Guidelines in VA*. For specific questions regarding your legal obligation under one or more of these laws, please consult with an attorney.

Response to Neglect & Abuse

TBC will ensure that a caring response is always provided to any suspicion or witnessing of neglect or abuse. Every allegation of neglect or abuse will be taken seriously. Proper guidelines for handling such complaints will be followed diligently and exhaustively. The victim(s) and victim's family will be cared for by the church in whatever way is available. Situations will be handled forthrightly with due respect for all parties' privacy and confidentiality.

Who Should be Notified?

The church will seek professional assistance when deemed appropriate by the Children's Ministry Pastor and the elders of TBC. Notification will be limited to those who need to know about the allegation and to those who can provide assistance in responding to neglect or abuse. The church may:

- Report suspicions or firsthand accounts or any knowledge of abuse to civil authorities. Full cooperation must be given to civil authorities.
- Notify church staff, counselors or medical personnel in order to obtain ongoing care for the victim(s) and victim's families.
- Notify an insurance agent, denominational leaders, or any other outside officials.

- Notify and consult with a church attorney.

How Will TBC Respond to Allegations, Admission or Criminal Conviction?

Allegations of neglect or abuse, admission of child abuse by staff, elder, deacon, volunteer, helper, or any member of TBC, or criminal conviction of abuse should:

- be reported to TBC's elders. This disclosure of abuse is to be done regardless of the source of the information and should be conveyed to the elders within 48 hours of the allegation being made or the admission of child abuse or criminal conviction.
- immediately result in removal of the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender from any activity or program involving children;
- result in immediate ineligibility of the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender from being granted approval to participate in any activity or program involving children.

The Children's Ministry Pastor and the elders of TBC will decide on other appropriate responses to allegations, self-admission of guilt, or criminal conviction, some of which may include:

- Contacting police or CPS.
- Notification of staff, deacons and any volunteers.
- Reporting allegations, self-admission or criminal conviction to the congregation during TBC's public services or members' meeting.
- Barring from any activities or church programs with children or the children's ministry floors at the church building.
- The Children's Ministry Pastor will designate TBC members or staff who will accompany the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender at all times while he or she is on TBC's property or anywhere in TBC's buildings. The alleged perpetrator will be notified of this requirement immediately after allegations are made known to staff or elders.
- Disciplining (removal from membership) of the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender in a public members' meeting by the congregation.
- Barring the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender from any and all church property.
- Suspension or termination of a paid staff member or volunteer position.
- Acknowledging to another organization about allegations against or termination of staff, an elder, deacon, volunteer, helper, or any member of TBC for misconduct or abuse against children.

If staff, TBC elders, or the Children's Ministry Pastor learns from CPS or police that allegations of neglect or abuse are being investigated or criminal charges have been filed, the TBC elders should:

- Be careful to not interfere with the investigation by police or CPS;
- Prevent contact between the accused and the accuser if appropriate;
- Remove the accused from activities or programs involving children, pending the outcome of the investigation.
- Appoint the Children's Ministry Pastor or a member of the elders to be a liaison with CPS and the police.

If an adult alleges an incident of neglect or abuse that happened when he was a child in a TBC program, then:

- The Children's Ministry Pastor or elders will hire a trained mental health professional (preferably who is not associated with the church) who can provide an assessment. The victim will have to provide consent for such an interview and to have the assessment released to the Children's Ministry Pastor or elders in confidence.
- If the accused is no longer a part of TBC then the Children's Ministry Pastor should consult with the elders and legal counsel to determine legal and moral need to report to police or CPS and any other organization that the accused may be a part of since his departure from TBC.
- Even if government officials are no longer bound to investigate due to a statute of limitations, TBC should respond to *all* allegations with the care and diligence traced out in this policy manual.

Confidentiality

The church, as well as permissive or mandatory reporters, will maintain confidentiality to the extent that it deems appropriate for the care of its members and consistent with applicable law. Allegations and suspicion should be reported only to the persons specified in this policy manual.

Response to Media

If appropriate, the TBC elders will respond to the media. Normally, one elder or member will be designated by the elders to speak to the media on behalf of the church. A written statement should be distributed at the time of media disclosure. Great care should be taken to disclose only facts and not suspicion. Disclosed facts might include the nature of the abuse allegation and when the alleged abuse happened. Great care should be taken to protect the identity of all parties involved (the alleged abuser and victim). Alerting the media lets the alleged victim know that allegations will be taken seriously and gives other vulnerable members of the community a chance to be protected.

Response to Child Pornography

If an elder, staff member, deacon, volunteer, helper or any member of TBC is suspected of or admits viewing, producing or distributing child pornography:

- He or she will be immediately removed from all children's ministry related activities or programs;
- Allegations or self-admission will be immediately reported to the Children's Ministry Pastor or any elder of TBC;
- Appropriate response steps will be outlined and implemented by the Child Protection Committee and the Elders at TBC.

Sexual Offenders in the Church

When An Alleged or Convicted Offender Attends TBC or a TBC Related Activity

If TBC's elders or children's ministry staff learn *in advance* that an alleged or convicted sexual offender is wanting to attend a TBC service:

- The Children's Ministry Pastor must decide whether to admit him or her to church services or TBC related activities. Admission of the offender will be based on factors such as extent of prior convictions, and his or her willingness to follow guidelines set out by this policy. This is not a comprehensive list of admission criteria.
- The Children's Ministry Pastor (or a designated member of TBC) will contact the offender letting him or her know that he or she must be accompanied at all time while on TBC's property or anywhere in TBC's buildings.

If an alleged or convicted sexual offender participates in any TBC related activity or public service that has the possibility of children being present:

- The Children's Ministry Pastor should be notified.
- The Children's Ministry Pastor will designate TBC members or staff, who will accompany the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender at all times while he or she is on TBC's property or anywhere in TBC's buildings.
- He or she will not be allowed in the children hallway of the church. He or she must stay away from the hallway where the nursery and children's classes meet.
- The Children's Ministry Pastor will work with members to come up with guidelines for TBC related activities that are not on church property, but elsewhere.

When An Alleged or Convicted Offender Attends Regularly

If he/she chooses to attend regularly:

- The elders will be notified.
- The congregation will be notified in a public service of the church, most likely the members' meeting. TBC reserves the right to forbid someone from coming to the church for worship services, programs or activities. When participating in church activities outside of the church building, the same guidelines apply.
- The sexual offender should provide the Children's Ministry Pastor with the name of his/her probation officer. The Children's Ministry Pastor will contact the probation officer and find out 1) more about the underlying offense – offenders tend to minimize their offenses, and 2) the specific terms of the probation in order to make sure the offender stays in compliance while at the church.

When A Sexual Offender Seeks Membership at TBC

If the offender seeks membership at TBC, the congregation retains a right to refuse membership.

If the congregation offers membership to an offender, it will be conditional on his or her agreement to:

- Verify the history of offenses, convictions, and adjudication of sexual offenses and disclose them to the TBC elders and the Children's Ministry Pastor.
- The Children's Ministry Pastor contacting his/her probation officer to find out the underlying offense and the specific terms of probation.
- The Children's Ministry Pastor doing a thorough criminal background check.

- Disclosure of information to parents and the congregation. The information released to the church is at the discretion of the elders. A letter detailing this information will be sent directly to all member parents.
- Refrain from any form of communication (including phone, IM, texting, email, social media or any type of technology), social fellowship, physical contact, mentoring, baby-sitting, or coaching with children or youth or participate in any activities or programs related to children or youth both inside and outside of the church.
- The Children's Ministry Pastor will designate TBC members or staff, who will accompany the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender at all times while he or she is on TBC's property or anywhere in TBC's buildings or in attendance at any church related services, activities or gatherings that has the possibility of children being present.
- Any restrictions that elders determine.
- Permission to notify the leadership, congregation, and parents of anything that the elders deem significant for these groups to know.
- A warning that the church will report any suspected activity to civil authorities.
- A warning that any violation of the code of conduct (including allegations or suspicion of abusive behavior) can result in discipline and banning from the church facilities or any church related programs and activities.
- Sign a written document that details all of these items, plus anything else that the elders or the Children's Ministry Pastor deems important to include.

Other Guidelines About Sexual Offenders

If a convicted sexual offender applies for a volunteer or staff position, he or she will be denied by the church. Exceptions may only be made upon the approval of the elders, full-disclosure to the congregation and a congregational vote.

If a sexual offender does not disclose a former allegation, conviction or adjudication, and it is revealed later, the offender will be removed from any paid or volunteer position immediately and may be removed from membership as well.

If a sexual offender is a minor, the church reserves the right to bar that minor from any children or youth activities, and will follow the guidelines set out above for any sexual offender who seeks participation in church-related public services, programs or activities.

If a sexual offender leaves TBC (as a member or regular attender) and begins attending another church, the elders will disclose allegations or self-admission or criminal conviction of neglect or abuse to the leadership at the next church.

APPENDIX 1:

Inappropriate and Appropriate Touch

Inappropriate Touching

- Shoving, hair pulling, shaking, slapping, pinching, biting, kicking, hitting, or spanking a child for any reasons.
- Squeezing of arm, neck, face, or any parts of the body.
- Tickling children over 5 years old. It is over stimulating and is considered by some professionals to be a deceptive device that could lead to inappropriate touching.
- Children sitting on laps of adults is inappropriate for ages 6 and older.
- Holding or restraining children on the lap. However, holding a child 5 years and younger is appropriate for short time spans when comfort is needed by the child or the child's behavior is out-of-control or endangering other children.
- Touching a child in the genital areas except for younger and developmentally delayed children requiring a diaper change, bathing/washing and assistance with hygiene procedures. Otherwise, touch in the genital area is only permitted by medical personnel in case of injury or suspected injury.
- Kissing a child on the lips, neck, or anywhere else. A child should never be allowed to kiss a staff member, volunteer, deacon or another child on the lips, neck, or anywhere else. Children are also not allowed to kiss one another. (Note: A kiss is appropriate on the cheek when it is included in a greeting).
- Slapping a child on the behind, even when playing.
- Fondling children, even in non-private areas.
- Carrying a child on the back unless the child is unable to walk.

Appropriate Touching

- A comforting pat on the shoulder and back, or allowing an emotionally distressed child to lean their head on your shoulder is appropriate.
- Back rub to help comfort, or put an irritable child to sleep is appropriate.
- High-Fives, handshakes, or the touching of two fists are appropriate and recommended touch, especially when interacting with older children.
- Holding hands is permitted with children 10 years and under when initiated by the child, or when helping a child to walk, climb stairs, etc.
- Holding a child firmly with your hands to restrain him/her is appropriate when it is used to prevent a child from an accident, injury, hurting self, others, or you.

APPENDIX 2: **Child Abuse Reporting Form**

Instructions: If a volunteer, staff, deacon or elder suspect, hear about or observe signs or symptoms of abuse, please: (1) Talk immediately with the Children's Ministry Pastor and (2) document any relevant information on this form.

This report should include signs or symptoms observed, notations about bruises or injuries that are visible, a summary of what the child said, and a description of any emotions expressed by the child. Do not go back and interview the child. Fill this form out based on whatever information has already been obtained.

Today's Date: _____

Name of Child: _____

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Name of Volunteer: _____

Check all that apply:

- Children's Pastor
Notified
- Deacon Notified
- Hall Monitor Notified
- TBC Elder Notified

Signs or Symptoms of Abuse Observed:

Bruises or Injuries that are Visible:

Emotions expressed by the Child:

Summary of the Conversation with the Child:

Anything Else that is Relevant:

APPENDIX 3:

Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting Guidelines in VA

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families Administration on Children, Youth and Families Children's Bureau

http://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/manda.cfm

Introduction

The laws and regulations of Virginia may differ on requirements and definitions of persons required and/or permitted to report child abuse and neglect than recorded in this document. Therefore, the following guidelines are only intended to serve general educational purposes, and is not intended as a substitute for competent legal advice from an attorney familiar with the laws and regulations regarding child abuse and neglect in Virginia. Each individual TBC employee and volunteer is responsible for fulfilling his or her personal obligation to comply with the laws and regulations applicable to him or her with respect to reporting child abuse and neglect, and may need to consult with a legal professional in order to understand and comply with applicable laws and regulations. However, in determining any legal obligations that TBC may have with respect to reporting child abuse or neglect, it may need the assistance of a staff person or volunteer to determine relevant facts and circumstances.

Virginia

Professionals Required to Report Ann. Code § 63.2-1509

The following professionals are required to report:

- Persons licensed to practice medicine or any of the healing arts
- Hospital residents, interns, or nurses
- Social workers or probation officers
- Teachers or other persons employed in a public or private school, kindergarten, or nursery school
- Persons providing full-time or part-time child care for pay on a regular basis
- Mental health professionals
- Law enforcement officers, animal control officers, or mediators
- All professional staff persons, not previously enumerated, employed by a private or State-operated hospital, institution, or facility to which children have been committed or where children have been placed for care and treatment
- Persons associated with or employed by any private organization responsible for the care, custody, or control of children
- Court-appointed special advocates
- Persons, over age 18, who have received training approved by the Department of Social Services for the purposes of recognizing and reporting child abuse and neglect
- Any person employed by a local department who determines eligibility for public assistance
- Emergency medical services personnel

Reporting by Other Persons

Ann. Code § 63.2-1510

Any person who suspects that a child is abused or neglected may report.

Standards for Making a Report

Ann. Code § 63.2-1509

A report is required when, in his or her professional or official capacity, a reporter has reason to suspect that a child is abused or neglected. For purposes of this section, 'reason to suspect that a child is abused or neglected' shall include:

- A finding made by an attending physician within 7 days of a child's birth that the results of a blood or urine test conducted within 48 hours of the birth of the child indicate the presence of a controlled substance not prescribed for the mother by a physician
- A finding by an attending physician made within 48 hours of a child's birth that the child was born dependent on a controlled substance that was not prescribed by a physician for the mother and has demonstrated withdrawal symptoms
- A diagnosis by an attending physician made within 7 days of a child's birth that the child has an illness, disease, or condition that, to a reasonable degree of medical certainty, is attributable to in utero exposure to a controlled substance that was not prescribed by a physician for the mother or the child
- A diagnosis by an attending physician made within 7 days of a child's birth that the child has fetal alcohol syndrome attributable to in utero exposure to alcohol

Privileged Communications

Ann. Code §§ 63.2-1509; 63.2-1519

The requirement to report shall not apply to any regular minister, priest, rabbi, imam, or duly accredited practitioner of any religious organization or denomination usually referred to as a church as it relates to information required by the doctrine of the religious organization or denomination to be kept in a confidential manner.

The physician-patient or husband-wife privilege is not permitted.

Inclusion of Reporter's Name in Report

The reporter is not specifically required by statute to provide his or her name in the report.

Disclosure of Reporter Identity

Ann. Code § 63.2-1514

Any person who is the subject of an unfounded report who believes that the report was made in bad faith or with malicious intent may petition the court for the release of the records of the investigation or family assessment. If the court determines that there is a reasonable question of fact as to whether the report was made in bad faith or with malicious intent and that disclosure of the identity of the reporter would not be likely to endanger the life or safety of the reporter, it shall provide to the petitioner a copy of the records of the investigation or family assessment.