



GraceChurch of Columbia

Children's Ministry and Youth Program
Worker Screening and Monitoring
Policies and Procedures

03/01/2017

Some of the content of the material provided in these Policies and Procedures are extremely sensitive but are necessary to adequately protect our children and youth as well as our church.

READER DISCRETION IS ADVISED.

Due to the sensitive nature of the content in this report, THIS REPORT HAS BEEN PREPARED AND IS INTENDED FOR ADULT USE ONLY.

Policies and Procedures

GraceChurch of Columbia's mission statement is "to love God, love people, and live an authentic Christian life through the transforming power and grace of Jesus Christ." It is in that spirit that these Policies and Procedures are presented and adopted. These Policies and Procedures are not intended to discourage the nurturing of our children but to encourage a loving and safe environment where they can grow spiritually and learn about God's grace and his plan for their Salvation.

Proverbs 22:6 Train a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not turn from it.

These Policies and Procedures are based on a fourfold strategy:

- Worker Selection
- Worker Supervision
- Reporting Obligations and
- Response to Allegations

Definitions:

Authorized Adults are Volunteer Workers, or staff (paid or unpaid, full-time or part-time), who have been screened, interviewed and authorized to work with GraceChurch of Columbia's children's and youth ministries in accordance with these Policies and Procedures.

Floaters are Authorized Adults who are charged with the responsibility to regularly monitor classes/groups through a window or open door where children and youth are left in the care of one Authorized Adult during activities at Grace Church of Columbia.

Children's and Youth Activities are those church ministry activities including nursery and Bible Study where minors are left in the supervised care of GraceChurch of Columbia Authorized Adults.

Minors are children and youth who attend GraceChurch of Columbia Children's or Youth Activities and are under eighteen years of age.

Children's and Youth Ministry volunteer applicants are defined as those volunteer worker applicants whose church ministry work or responsibilities require or encourage them to have any direct ministry activity with GraceChurch of Columbia's minors or assist as an "adult chaperon" for an out-of-town or over-night function with the minors of GraceChurch of Columbia.

Definition of Sexual Abuse for the purpose of these Policies and Procedures:

These Policies and Procedures will use the definitions provided by the "Church Law & Tax Report" provided for the manual "Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in Your Church" by Richard Hammer, Stephen Klipowicz, and James Cobble distributed to GraceChurch of Columbia by Guide-One Insurance. According to the afore-mentioned manual, "there are two forms of sexual abuse: Touching and Non-Touching

- Touching includes fondling, inappropriate kissing on the mouth, oral, genital or anal penetration, intercourse, and rape
- Non-Touching includes sexually oriented verbal comments, the viewing of pornographic material, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism and allowing children to witness some form of sexual activity."

Worker Selection Process:

The Worker Selection Process Policies and Procedures are broken into two broad subsections. They are: Confidentiality Policies and Procedures and the Screening Process for Authorized Adults.

Confidentiality:

It will be necessary to generate a number of highly confidential documents during the use of these Policies and Procedures. It is absolutely critical that these documents and forms be maintained in a confidential manner. All persons authorized to process screening form of a volunteer worker or staff member in accordance with these Policies and Procedures will sign a confidentially statement which states that any information attained about a person interviewed will be maintained in a confidential manner.

Grace Church of Columbia can be sued if information contained in these confidential documents is intentionally or inadvertently disclosed or is accessed by persons without proper authorization.

All confidential material will be stamped "Confidential" in red ink in the top left or right hand corner of the document. All folders containing confidential material will have a label attached, which reads:

Warning – Confidential Information

These documents contain confidential information that once completed shall only be viewed by the applicant or authorized individuals for the sole purpose of implementing these Policies and Procedures. Unauthorized review, or persons who duplicate, distribute or disclose any portion of any of these documents contained herein without authorization may face one or more of the following consequences: (1) Termination of employment (2) Dismissal from any official position within the church (3) Possible criminal liability (4) Possible civil liability.

All confidential information must be maintained in a locked in a file or other secure online location. **All personnel should be warned that unauthorized access to confidential material would be grounds for immediate dismissal.** Any person authorized to view any portion of any of these confidential documents must sign a document promising not to disclose to ANY person any confidential information obtained while viewing these documents.

Screening Process for Children and Youth Workers (Employees and Volunteers):

These screening procedures are to be used for all applicants for church staff and Children's and Youth Ministry volunteer applicants.

For all Staff and Volunteer Workers with Children's and Youth Ministries:

If the church uses a childcare agency for working with minors, then the childcare agency must provide a statement in writing that it adheres to all applicable Federal, State and Local childcare screening laws and it must adhere to minimally the same procedures set forth below.

Unless using a childcare agency, the applicant must have been a member of GraceChurch of Columbia for at least six months or have actively attended GraceChurch for a period of one year. Active attendance shall be established through Grace Group attendance and/or recorded contributions. The adult must be at least eighteen years of age.

1. An application form must be filled out at protectmyministry.com which gives permission for a background check and provides other necessary information. (link available at Gracechurchcolumbia.org/get-involved)
2. The online Video Training at Protectmyministry.com concerning child safety must be completed.
3. The GraceChurch Children's and Youth Worker Screening video training must be viewed. (Located on the Gracechurchcolumbia.org website) Additional training sessions may also be conducted at church.

A criminal conviction for a sexual offense or a charge of a sexual offense of any kind immediately disqualifies permanently an applicant for working with the minors of GraceChurch of Columbia either as a staff worker or volunteer worker with children's or youth ministries. This does not disqualify the applicant for other ministry opportunities in the church that would not place the applicant in direct contact with minors. Other criminal convictions that would immediately disqualify a worker from working with minors would be: murder, kidnapping, child pornography, criminal domestic violence, and the physical abuse of a minor. Other offenses should be consulted with the senior pastor as to whether that crime and the circumstances associated with it would pose a threat to the church's children's and youth ministry.

Worker Supervision:

- A. GraceChurch of Columbia adopts the two-person rule as a principle guideline for all children and youth activities. What this means is that during children's and youth activities there must always be one adult at least eighteen years of age and who is considered an Authorized Adult to be scheduled for each class/group. Additionally if only one approved adult is scheduled for a class/group there must be a Floater who regularly monitors the class through a window or open door to ensure the safety of our children and youth. If a class or group has two Authorized Adults scheduled to attend the Floater is not required. Common sense should apply to this rule to allow temporary and unavoidable exceptions. Therefore, except in an emergency or when a temporary and unavoidable exception occurs, minors of GraceChurch of Columbia will be in the presence of at least one Authorized Adults with the presence of a Floater or two Authorized Adults during all children's and youth activities. If a children's or youth activity is scheduled and the two-person Authorized Adult rule cannot be adhered to, then the event should be rescheduled or canceled. When acting in the capacity of a church ministry, and when transporting minors, there should always be more than one minor in the vehicle with an authorized adult. The two-person rule policy should not be used to prohibit parents from carpooling children to and from church activities regardless of their responsibilities within the church. When two members of the same family (ex. Husband and Wife) have been declared "Authorized Adults" through the screening process they are treated as two individual Authorized Adults for the purposes of the two-person rule.

- B. In a case where there is a legitimate reason for one Authorized Adult to be alone with a minor, then the worker should obtain Parental and Church Office Permission using the form provided (Appendix A). Workers shall notify the church office and get approval of such meeting prior to unsupervised activity with the minor.
- C. A parent or guardian must sign a permission slip annually for each minor for out-of-town (outside of the metropolitan area of Columbia) or overnight activities (Appendix B). If the guardian or parent has not signed a permission slip for that annual year, then the minor will not be permitted to participate in that out-of-town or overnight activity. Permission slips will not be considered valid unless the appropriate parent or guardian has signed the slip.

Reporting Obligations of Abuse:

All Allegations should be Taken seriously and Handled in a Sensitive and Confidential Manner!

In the case of an allegation of sexual misconduct with a child, the Senior Pastor or the most Senior Pastor available will immediately be notified. The accused worker will immediately be suspended from working with children and youth activities until a complete and thorough investigation is completed. The Senior Pastor, or if a staff member is accused, the Chairman of the Personnel Committee should immediately take the following steps while maintaining sensitivity and confidentiality:

- A. Ensure the safety of the child and notify the parents
- B. Meet with each of the parties separately and document clearly the allegations and circumstances. Do not begin an investigation of the case. Let the proper authorities investigate the case.
- C. Decide if there is reasonable cause to believe that an abuse has occurred (this should be done as soon as possible)
- D. If there is reasonable cause that an unlawful abuse may have occurred, file an official report with state and/or local authorities for their review, immediately notify the church's attorney, and refer to the next section "Responding to Allegations of Sexual Abuse"
- E. If some form of sexual abuse as defined within these Policies and Procedures is deemed to have occurred, but along with the church's professionals a recommendation is made that the church is not required to report the incident to state or local authorities (ex. some non-threatening form of sexually oriented comment by a volunteer with a member of the youth group), then the worker will immediately and permanently be disqualified from further direct ministry activity with minors and the pastor will counsel with the accused
- F. Document the incident thoroughly and file with the worker's permanent confidential file

Responding to Allegations of Unlawful Sexual Abuse

Should a sexual abuse allegation be made against a youth worker of the church, the church should follow these guidelines:

- A. Document in detail all of the church's efforts in handling the situation
- B. Follow the direction of church's professionals
- C. Do not attempt a thorough investigation of the incident by the church. Let the proper authorities who are familiar with these cases do the investigation
- D. Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously. The pastor should recommend a qualified, licensed professional counselor in the field of child abuse. Also treat the accused with dignity and support and the pastor should counsel all parties as needed.
- E. The Senior Pastor will be the single spokesperson for the church unless the Pastor or most senior Pastor should designate such other single spokesperson as he chooses. This single spokesperson, or the church's attorney, should be the only spokesperson meeting with the media concerning the incident. The media may single out other church leaders for their comments. These church leaders should refer any questions to the chosen spokesperson.
- F. The spokesperson should refer to a previously prepared public statement that is similar to the text as follows: **"GraceChurch of Columbia has taken steps to try to keep our children safe. The church has adopted a very stringent set of Policies and Procedures that we hoped would keep this sort of allegation from occurring and would keep our children safe. These Policies and Procedures include the proper screening of all applicants who desire to work with our children. We make sure that anyone who works with our children has been a member of our church in good standing for at least six months and we try to make sure that two adults are with our children at all times. Our attorney and our insurance company have reviewed our Policies and Procedures so that we can be certain that we are providing adequate protection for all of our children. Unfortunately, in today's society, even with significant safeguards in place, there are still some risks to our children that make it almost impossible for us to completely protect them. GraceChurch of Columbia is working with all of the state and local authorities to make sure that all of the facts are known so that everyone who needs help can get the help they need. It is important to know without a doubt, that God's grace through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ can cover all sin if we just ask for forgiveness, no matter how great the sin. In our great country, we have to remember that we are innocent until found guilty. However, our church's first and foremost concern with our youth program is the protection of its children and as such we have temporarily suspended the accused person from working with the youth ministry until this investigation is completed. Even though we know that the media and the families in our local community would like more information, the detail of the investigation is on going and confidential in nature and any information will be forth-coming from the proper authorities or from our attorneys. We have no other comments at this time. Thank You"**

PARENTAL PERMISSION FOR UNSUPERVISED ACTIVITY WITH A MINOR

MUST HAVE ALL THREE SIGNATURES PRIOR TO UNSUPERVISED ACTIVITY WITH A MINOR

Parent's Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

Parent(s) home phone # _____ Business phone # _____ Cell phone # _____

To whom it may concern:

The undersigned does hereby give permission for our (my) Child, _____

_____, to work unsupervised with

_____ for the purpose or purposes of

_____ during the date(s) of _____

through _____. Further, I give authorization for the church staff member or authorized volunteer worker ("Authorized Adult") identified above to provide transportation to and from this unsupervised activity. I understand that the church office has been notified of the unsupervised activity with my child and that the Authorized Adult has been screened and approved to work with GraceChurch of Columbia's Children's and/or Youth Programs.

Parent or Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Volunteer Worker or Staff Worker Signature: _____

Date: _____

Church Office Signature: _____

Date: _____

PARENTAL PERMISSION / MEDICAL RELEASE FORM

Child's Name _____ Age _____ Birth date _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

Parent(s) home phone # _____ Business phone # _____ Cell phone # _____

To whom it may concern:

The undersigned does hereby give permission for our (my) child,

_____, to attend and participate in
(Name of child)

all activities sponsored by GraceChurch of Columbia Youth Ministries Program during the annual year beginning January 1, _____ and ending December 31, _____. We (I) understand that these activities will require transportation to and from the church, further, I consent for him/her to take advantage of the transportation provided by church.

We (I) authorize an adult, in whose care the minor has been entrusted, to consent to any X-ray examination, anesthetic, medical, surgical or dental diagnosis or treatments, and hospital care, to be rendered to the minor under the general or special supervision and on the advice of any physician or dentist licensed under the provisions of the Medical Practice Act on the medical staff of a licensed hospital, whether such diagnosis or treatment is rendered at the office of said physician or at said hospital.

The undersigned shall be liable and agree(s) to pay all costs and expenses incurred in connection with such medical and dental services rendered to the aforementioned child pursuant to this authorization.

The undersigned does also hereby give permission for our (my) child to ride in any vehicle designated by the adult in whose care the minor has been entrusted while participating in youth trips sponsored by GraceChurch of Columbia Youth Ministries Program .

Hospital Insurance Yes No

Insurance Company _____

Policy # _____

Emergency phone numbers:

_____	Participant	_____	Date
_____	Father	_____	Date
_____	Mother	_____	Date
_____	Legal guardian	_____	Date

On the reverse side of this page, please list any allergies or special medical problems your child may have. Thank you.