

Reporting Guidelines

If an individual makes an allegation, please follow these guidelines:

1. React calmly. You need to be a source of stability for the individual, his or her family, and others involved in the situation.
2. Reassure the child or youth. The individual needs to know that he or she was right to inform you about the situation. Take all allegations seriously. The Ministry Leader or member of the Pastoral Staff must follow up on all allegations.
3. Treat the accused with dignity and support. The accused worker will be temporarily relieved of his or her duties by the Ministry Leader and Pastoral Staff until the investigation is complete and further appropriate action is taken pending the outcome of the investigation.
4. Report the suspected abuse to the Ministry Leader or a member of the Pastoral Staff.
5. Document all your efforts in handling the incident. Complete an Incident Reporting Form¹² immediately. Collect in writing all relevant information concerning the allegation. This form should be returned to the Ministry Leader or a member of the Pastoral Staff.
6. Avoid interrogation. Leave the in-depth investigation and questioning to the proper secular authorities.
7. Upon receipt of an allegation of abuse, the Pastoral Staff will contact the parent or caregiver of the child or youth unless otherwise instructed by the secular authorities.
8. Confidentiality is very important. Information regarding the accusation should be shared only with the Pastoral Staff and/or Ministry Leader or the secular authorities handling the case. Be careful to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.
9. To fulfill any New Hampshire state reporting obligations¹³ concerning the alleged child abuse, the Pastoral Staff will notify the secular authorities with confirmation from the Senior Pastor. They will contact

the Department of Health and Human Services and the Division for Children, Youth and Families at 800-894-5533.

10. Upon learning of the allegations of abuse, the Pastoral Staff will promptly contact legal counsel and the insurance carrier.
11. **Do not contact the media.** Only the church's designated spokesperson will speak on behalf of Merrimack Valley Baptist Church to the news media (print, TV, radio, or internet) using the text of a prepared public statement approved by the Pastoral Staff. All volunteers and members are asked to refer all questions to the designated spokesperson. Do not reveal any names of those involved in the incident.

¹² Please contact the church office or Ministry Leader to obtain an Incident Reporting Form.

¹³ Please see Title XII Public Safety and Welfare Chapter 169-C Child Protection Act at <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/xii/169-c/169-c-mrg.htm>.

Merrimack Valley Baptist Church takes great joy in zealously and fervently serving our Lord and Savior through the Children's Ministry. We recognize that every church employee and volunteer plays a vital role in fostering the spiritual development of individuals and families in our community. We take seriously the stewardship responsibility to provide a safe environment for those who participate in the Children's Ministries. Holding firm to our commitment to excellence, this Protection Policy is to be used in the Children's Ministries to strive for safety and well-being for children and youth in our care.

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CHILDREN
&
YOUTH

protection
policy



Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God.

Mark 10:14



MERRIMACK VALLEY
BAPTIST CHURCH
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Protection Policy and Procedures



1. All adult workers (18+) desiring to minister to children¹ and youth² in Children's Ministries must meet all of the following qualifications to become a "certified worker":³
 - a. Be an attendee in good standing⁴ at Merrimack Valley Baptist Church for at least 6 months.
 - b. Be 18 years of age or older.
 - c. Complete a Children and Youth Volunteer Worker Application⁵ provided by Merrimack Valley Baptist Church. All applications are confidential and will be properly stored and retained in a secure location.
 - d. Submit to an interview by Pastoral Staff.
 - e. Submit to a background check by authorities or background check service.⁶ A person who has been previously convicted of abuse or mistreatment of children or youth will be disqualified from working with children and youth in Children's Ministries at Merrimack Valley Baptist Church. All background information obtained on workers is confidential and will be properly stored and retained in a secure location.
 - f. Periodically participate in training on child protection policies and procedures.
2. A Child Information Form⁷ providing information on each child and youth (under 18) who will be participating in the ministry, is to be completed annually by a parent or caregiver. Parents or caregivers should notify the Ministry Leader or worker if there are any mid-year changes. A check in/check out process will be followed for children up to and including grade 6.
3. A child or youth should not be left in an individual's care behind closed doors or in an isolated or private

location. The Pastoral Staff and/or Ministry Leader will attempt to evaluate every activity in order to determine the level of risk⁸ for sexual misconduct situations to occur. When the risk level is high (i.e., overnight activities, assisting children in the bathroom, etc.), every effort should be made to increase supervision and accountability for the activity and/or program. When appropriate, the Pastoral Staff and/or Ministry Leader may insist that two certified workers be present at all times during the activity.

4. Teens involved in working with children and youth are to be supervised by an adult who is a certified worker. Teens should periodically attend the child safety training session that is age appropriate.
5. Children and youth should not be left alone to wander the halls or go into areas of the church and school unsupervised. Parents assume responsibility when children are released to them from the ministry or event.
7. Leaders,⁹ teachers, or workers¹⁰ may not date or be romantically involved with youth^{1,2} participants.
8. In the event an allegation of abuse of a child or youth is made, it will be reported immediately to the Ministry Leader or member of the Pastoral Staff.¹¹
9. Parents or caregivers of children and youth who are participating in a particular MVBC event that are chaperoning should complete the Child Safety Training, submit to a background check prior to the event, and adhere to the Protection Policies and procedures¹².
10. Permission slips will be utilized for all off-site activities.



¹ Children are infants through grade 6.

² Youth are grades 7-12.

³ Under certain circumstances, the requirements in this section may be waived by the Pastoral Staff. It is recommended that the volunteer complete an application and background check regardless of the waiver of any of the requirements. It is also recommended that the Pastoral Staff obtain a pastoral reference about the individual from his/her previous church. An exception form will be completed and retained in a secure location.

⁴ Not under church discipline and have an active working relationship with Pastoral Staff.

⁵ Please contact the church office or Ministry Leader to obtain an Application.

⁶ This can include the FBI, local police, state police, etc.

⁷ Please contact the church office or Ministry Leader for a Child Information Form.

⁸ Risk factors that would call for increased supervision include:

- a. The opportunity for isolation of children, youth, and/or workers during an activity.
- b. A decrease in accountability.
- c. The imbalance of power, authority, influence, and control among children, youth, and/or workers.

⁹ "Leaders," include Ministry Leaders, Directors, Leaders, and Teachers.

¹⁰ "Workers" include chaperones and teen helpers.

¹¹ See Reporting Guidelines.

¹² Some of this policy does not apply to South Merrimack Christian Academy activities. Please contact the SMCA office at 603-880-6832 for a copy of their Child Protection Policy.