



# Working with Children & Students

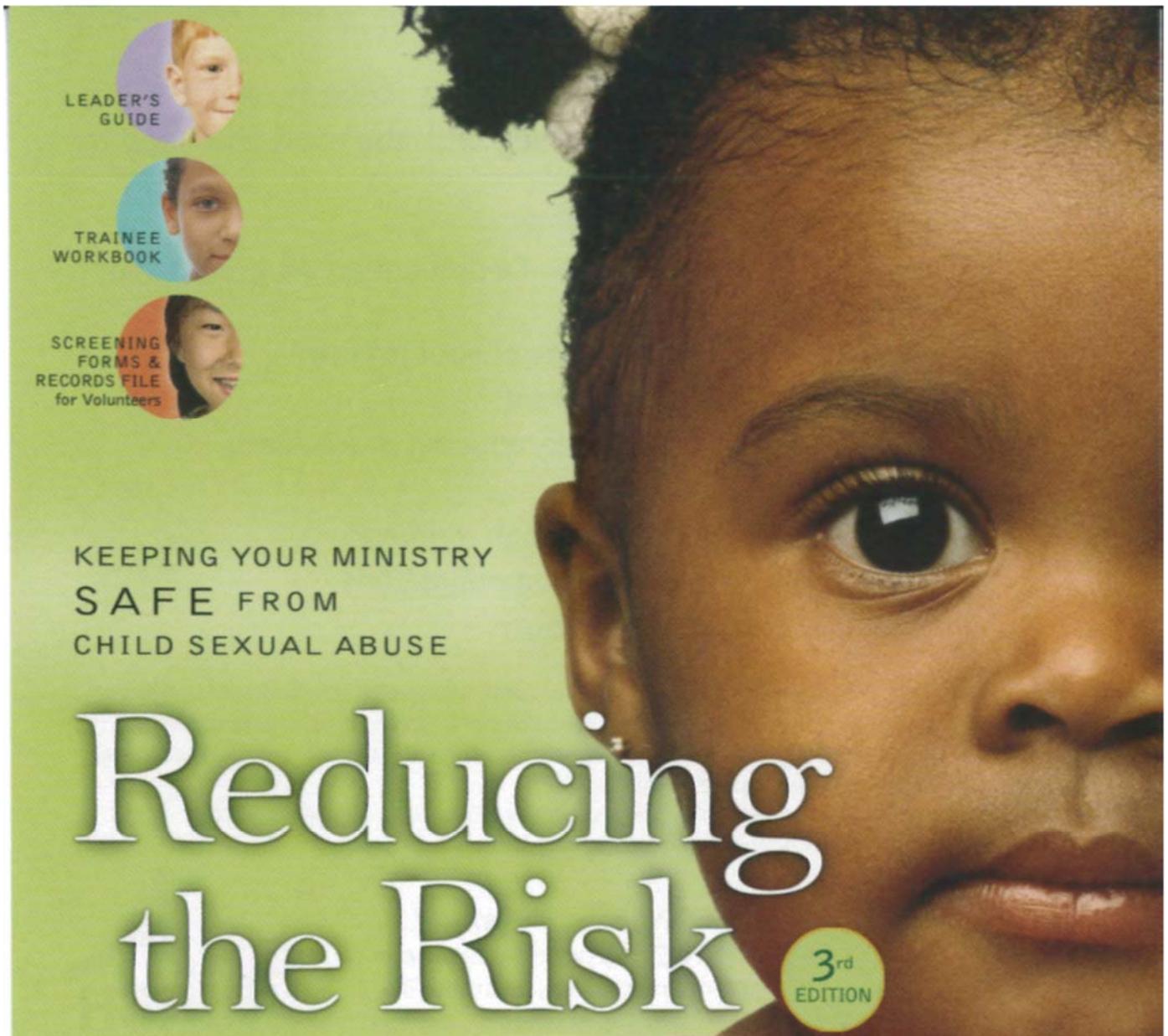
Policy & Procedure

Effective: February 15, 2011

Reviewed: August 19, 2014

**Purpose:**

To protect children, students, families, church volunteers, church leaders, and the church community by reducing the risk of child abuse. We are dedicated to providing a safe place where children can experience the abiding love of God and fellowship in the community of faith.



# What We Believe

We believe it is our responsibility to protect the children in our care. Children, students and parents need to know we have taken every reasonable step to ensure their child's safety in our ministry.

We believe it is our responsibility to protect staff and volunteer workers in our ministry from being exposed to false accusations of sexual misconduct. To this end, we have screening and supervision policies in place to protect our ministry workers

We believe it is our responsibility to protect our ministry. By requiring child protection training, as well as implementing screening and supervision policies, we are modeling good safety procedures to others who look to our ministry as an example of a well-run ministry to children and students.

# What We Require

It is the responsibility of the Family Ministry Teams to interview and screen each individual considered to work with children and students at Ridgedale Baptist Church. The following procedures will be followed to provide protective care for all participants, children, students and adults, in any church-sponsored activity.

## Six-month Rule -

All volunteer workers should be a part of our congregation for at least six months prior to the time they begin serving with children or students. Exceptions must meet either of the following two requirements:

- a) The person asked to serve has been in ministry with children or students for at least six months in their prior church.
- b) The person can provide a reference(s) from a staff member with whom they worked at the prior church.

If an exception is granted, a personal interview with either one or all pastors will be necessary. Additional references may be needed.

## Application -

All workers, whether they are compensated or volunteer, must complete the following forms:

- a) Employment and Volunteer Application.
- b) Provide (3) Personal References— (1) from a family member and (2) from non-family members. (References *may not* include pastors, ministers, employees, or paid personnel of the church.)
- c) Permission to Obtain a Background Check (form) —all employees and/or volunteers will be screened using Lexius Nexius as a third party investigator.\* †

## Personal Interview -

The interview time is used to explore more fully why a candidate wants to work with children or students. We also use this time to review our ministry policies and procedures regarding the supervision of children.

## Training -

All employees and volunteers are required to attend a training in "Working with Children and Students Policy and Procedures" and a reorientation once every three (3) years.

\*All original documentation will be kept securely on file at Ridgedale Baptist Church. Applications and the results of all forms of screenings will be kept strictly confidential by authorized staff. Access to said documentation will be controlled by the Administrative/Family Pastor and Senior Pastor. No information will be given about any person without the proper release form or legal documentation.

† Background checks will be repeated every three (3) years.

# Supervision Policies

The following basic procedures will be followed to provide for the best protective care for all children and students as well as adult workers in any church-sponsored activity.

- 1) A minimum of two adult workers should be present with each group of children or students. An acceptance can be made with a sign posted on the door or by notifying parents verbally that only one worker is available today. At this time the door will be left open/cracked open at all times. The general rule is that for every five children there should be one adult providing supervision. (1:5 Adult:Child ratio) No leaders under the age of 18 will be counted in the adult:child ratio.
- 2) It is recommended that Ministry Leaders, Team Leaders, Captains, and Supervisors should not be supervising children/students with immediate family members (husband and wife or mother and daughter). Family members are welcome to work together; however, they should have another leader present when supervising children/students.
- 3) Counseling and/or discipline will take place in an open door setting. Should this not be possible, two adults must be present during counseling or disciplining. No physical punishment of any kind is permitted.
- 5) Touching and hugging is appropriate only when at least two adults are present. The wishes of a child must be respected regarding hugging or touching. Children should never be touched on the breasts, buttocks, or genital area (except for diaper changing). Men may not change diapers (exception; their own child). It is recommended men should not take children to the restroom; however, a man may stand outside of the restroom but should not enter while a child is using the restroom. Always ask for help in these situations.
- 6) All workers with children or students shall be five years older than those they are supervising. Leaders or volunteers for Middle School and High School groups must be at least five years older than the students they are supervising. Ex. Student is age 15 the leader or volunteer would need to be age 20 to "supervise" them directly.
- 7) Advance notice/permission must be obtained from parents for any off-site church-sponsored function/activity. Non-church-sponsored activities may not use church property or vehicles.
- 8) Overnight trips require additional adult supervision. At minimal one adult male will stay with boys and one adult female will stay with girls and an additional adult will float and or stay in the commons area (three adults required). We prefer two adult females with girls and two adult males with boys.
- 9) Educational resources will be provided for parents, family and church members. This will include, but not be limited to, manuals, teaching resources and annual orientation.
- 10) Any person to our knowledge who has been convicted of abuse and wanting to work must meet with the Administrative/Family Pastor and other pastors as needed. No person convicted of child abuse will work with children or students.
- 11) The church will provide adequate insurance coverage for the children, students and workers. Adequate insurance will be determined in consultation with the board of directors.

It should be noted that the safety and welfare of our young people is our utmost concern. The above are basic procedures, and it should be noted that it is our duty to protect the children and students. All of us should be prudent and use common sense in all church activities.

**Parent Obligation:** we encourage our parents, when on the premises with their children, to know at all times where their children are, who they are with, and what they are doing. It is strongly encouraged that children 10 or under do not play in unsupervised areas.

# Definitions

Child abuse and neglect occurs when a child is mistreated, resulting in injury or risk of harm. Abuse can be physical, verbal, emotional or sexual.

**Physical Abuse** is non-accidental physical trauma or injury inflicted by a parent or caretaker on a child. It also includes a parent's or a caretaker's failure to protect a child from another person who perpetrated physical abuse on a child. In its most severe form, physical abuse is likely to cause great bodily harm or death.

**Physical Neglect** is the failure to provide for a child's physical survival needs to the extent that there is harm or risk of harm to the child's health or safety. This may include, but is not limited to abandonment, lack of supervision, life endangering physical hygiene, lack of adequate nutrition that places the child below the normal growth curve, lack of shelter, lack of medical or dental that results in health threatening conditions, and the inability to meet basic clothing needs of a child. In its most severe form, physical neglect may result in great bodily harm or death.

**Sexual Abuse** includes penetration or external touching of a child's intimate parts, oral sex with a child, indecent exposure or any other sexual act performed in a child's presence for sexual gratification, sexual use of a child for prostitution, and the manufacturing of child pornography. Child sexual abuse is also the willful failure of the parent or the child's caretaker to make a reasonable effort to stop child sexual abuse by another person.

**Emotional Abuse** includes verbal assaults, ignoring and indifference or constant family conflict. If a child is degraded enough, the child will begin to live up to the image communicated by the abusing parent or caretaker.

Child abuse can happen anywhere -- in poor, middle-class or well-to-do homes, in rural or urban areas.

The above information was taken from TN DCS web-site.

**Sexting** is the act of sending sexually explicit messages or photographs, primarily between mobile phones. The term was first popularized around 2005, and is a portmanteau of **sex** and **texting**, where the latter is meant in the wide sense of sending a text possibly with images. Sexting that involves people sending explicit photographs of themselves to their peers has led to a legal gray area in countries that have strict anti-child pornography laws, such as the United States. Some teenagers who have texted photographs of themselves, or of their friends or partners, have been charged with distribution of child pornography, while those who have received the images have been charged with possession of child pornography; in some cases, the possession charge has been applied to school administrators who have investigated sexting incidents as well. The images involved in sexting are usually different in both nature and motivation from the type of content that anti-child pornography laws were created to address.

**Ritual abuse:** is the infliction of any of the above in an intentional, regular and stylized way.

**Worker/volunteer:** is any person in a position of authority or leadership or a person who during the course of their duties comes into contact with the children, students or other members of the church. Workers can be compensated or volunteer. Examples of compensated workers would be pastor or church secretary. Examples of volunteers would be Sunday School teacher, student group leader or vacation bible school teacher.

**Board of Directors:** is the established leadership of the church.

**Floater:** is a worker who "visits" or "floats" from room to room during an event such as Sunday School, breakout groups, summer programming, or worship service.

**Ministry Leader:** is one who is responsible for a group of individuals in which the ministry leader will supervise.

**Administrative and Family Pastor and Student Minister:** are responsible for ensuring the safety of our children and students.

# Reporting Suspected Child Abuse (Official and non-Official Church Event)

Should it become necessary to report suspected child abuse, the protection of our children and students must be the most immediate concern. It is the moral, ethical and legal obligation of any person with the responsibility of care taking of children and students to report any case or sign of abuse they may observed. Failure to report could lead to liability, both criminal and civil, on the part of the church, the observer or both. The phrase "*reasonable suspicion*" is very important in these proceedings. A report based on reasonable suspicion does not require proof that abuse has occurred, or was directly witnessed by the reporter. Reporting is not a determination that abuse has occurred; it is a *request for* an assessment of the condition of the child or student.

\*Urgent sense of **Confidentiality** will be maintained at all times in the event of suspecting or observing abuse.

- 1) Upon observing or suspecting abuse, the worker will immediately make certain of the child or students safety.
- 2) The worker will notify the Tennessee State Hotline and request an assessment (1-877-237-0004).^^
- 3) The Worker will contact the Administrative and Family Pastor immediately after reporting to the Tennessee State Hotline.
- 4) Administrative and Family Pastor and leader/volunteer/worker will document the incident using the proper church documentation.
- 5) Administrative and Family Pastor will notify the pastor or chairman of the board of directors.
- 6) Pastor will notify board of directors.

## ***In the event of media, we will follow these guidelines below:***

The pastor and/or chairman of the board of directors will counsel with the victim, victims family, family of the accused and to the congregation. It is recommended that the pastor and/or chairman of the board of directors appoint one (1) spokesperson to communicate with the congregation and the media. It is further recommended that only a prepared statement be given to the members of the media. Any questions, whether from inside the congregation or from without, be directed to the spokesperson. It is also recommended that the pastor and/or chairman of the board of directors contact an outside pastor for counseling to the accused.

^^The procedures listed above were taken from the TCA § 37-1-403.

# What We Expect

## *Training*

- We expect all staff and volunteers to successfully complete our training “Working with Children and Students Policy and Procedures.”

## *Appropriate Physical Contact*

- No one should ever feel uncomfortable in the way they are being touched. Appropriate touching means offering a gentle touch on the shoulders, hands, arms, head, or back.
- Inappropriate touching would include kissing, demanding kissing or hugs, touching the chest, waist, stomach, bottom, or private areas, or any physical contact that feels uncomfortable or violating. Toddlers and older children should never be allowed to sit in your lap, covering your private area. Instead, have a child sit beside you.

## *Responding to Inappropriate or Suspicious Behavior -*

- All employees and volunteers should report any inappropriate or suspicious behavior to a ministry staff leader immediately. This included reporting any suspected abuse being committed by another employee/volunteer, as well as any child who presents signs of abuse. No one will ever be in trouble for reporting suspected abuse.

## *Following Supervision Policies*

- Our policies are designed to reduce isolation, increase accountability, and reduce the disparity of power between an employee/volunteer and a child in our program. We expect all children/student workers to follow the supervision polices we have in place to accomplish these goals.

I have read and understand the “Working with Children and Students Policies and Procedures” and I will abide by them when working with children or students of Ridgedale Baptist Church.

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Name

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Date

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Signature