

Baptist Church in the Great Valley

Policy for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse

Purpose: Members and staff of the Baptist Church in the Great Valley need and want to provide a safe and secure environment for preschoolers, children, and youth entrusted to their care. In so doing, those in our care and their families are encouraged to grow in their relationship with God and one another.

A safe and secure environment includes a formal, written policy to help prevent the occurrence of child abuse. The following policy and procedures are for the protection of our pre-school youngsters, children, youth, employees, volunteers, and our entire church family at the Baptist Church in the Great Valley.

Standard of Conduct: Everyone given the responsibility of working with or caring for minors at the Baptist Church in the Great Valley is expected to comply with this policy. Any actions contrary to this policy will be dealt with swiftly and may include disciplinary measures up to and including termination, as well as legal ramifications when applicable.

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions apply:

1. An "Adult" is any individual at least eighteen (18) years of age.
2. A "Worker" is any adult who serves as a volunteer and/or paid person given the responsibility of working with or caring for minors.
3. A "Guest/Visitor" is any person who is in a church building or on church property for a specific time or a specific event and who is not working with or caring for minors.
4. "Child Abuse" is any verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of a preschooler, child, youth, or minor.
5. "Criminal Background Check" is the procedure compliant with the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law that requires a check on the background of Workers. It includes the following background checks and clearances:
 - a. PA State Police Criminal History Record Information
 - b. PA Department of Human Services Child Abuse Clearance
 - c. Federal Criminal History Record Information
6. The "Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law" is Act 153 of 2014, as it may be amended at any time.
7. The "Church" is the Baptist Church in the Great Valley.

Pre-screening of Workers

1. All paid Workers, part-time and full-time, will fill out an employment application and a primary screening for Workers application. These applications will be retained in the Worker's file.
2. All volunteer Workers will fill out a primary screening for Workers application. These applications will be retained in the Worker's file.

3. All Workers, volunteer, paid, full-time and part-time, will be interviewed by a member of the Board of Christian Education.
4. All Workers, volunteer, paid, full-time and part-time, will provide a valid form of ID (i.e., state driver's license, social security card, or other acceptable form of ID).
5. All Workers, volunteer, paid, full-time and part-time, will provide at least two (2) professional/personal references. These references will be contacted by a member of the Board of Christian Education. Reference checks may be conducted in writing or by telephone. A written memorandum must be made of the contents of those telephone conversations.
6. Except as provide in section 7, a Criminal Background Check must be performed on each Worker applicant, whether the Worker is volunteer, paid, full-time or part-time. The Worker applicant must sign the authorization/waiver/indemnity/release for the Criminal Background Check prior to being enlisted as a Worker. In addition, Criminal Background Checks will be performed on current Workers, as required by law.
 - 6.1. Only the Pastor and the Chair of the Board of Christian Education of the Church will have access to the Criminal Background Check report.
 - 6.2. The Church may use a third party to conduct these Criminal Background Checks.
7. Exceptions to Criminal Background Check Requirements:
 - 7.1. Any volunteer Worker is exempt from the requirement for a Criminal Background Check under section 6 if he or she swears in writing that he or she (1) has been a resident of Pennsylvania for the last ten years and (2) has not been convicted, in another state, of an offense similar to those that disqualify employment under the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law.
 - 7.2. Teenagers under eighteen wanting to serve as teen Workers in any capacity must complete the primary screening for Workers application and go through the training described below. However, teenagers are exempt from the Criminal Background Check requirement in section 6.
 - 7.3. A Guest/Visitor is exempt from the requirement for a Criminal Background Check but must always be in the presence of a Worker who has a valid background check on file. A Guest/Visitor must not be left alone with children.
8. Whether disclosed voluntarily or as a result of the Criminal Background Check, a Worker is disqualified from employment and from participating in any activities or programs with minors at the Church if the Worker would be disqualified under the provisions of the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law, including for the following reasons:
 - 8.1. The Worker applicant is named in the statewide database maintained by the Department of Human Services (formerly Department of Public Welfare) as the perpetrator of a founded child abuse report committed within the five-year period immediately preceding verification.
 - 8.2. The Worker applicant has been convicted of one or more of the following offenses under Pennsylvania Title 18 (relating to crimes and offenses) or an equivalent crime under Federal law or the law of another state:
 - Chapter 25 (relating to criminal homicide).
 - Section 2702 (relating to aggravated assault).
 - Section 2709.1 (relating to stalking).
 - Section 2901 (relating to kidnapping).
 - Section 2902 (relating to unlawful restraint).

Section 3121 (relating to rape).
 Section 3122.1 (relating to statutory sexual assault).
 Section 3123 (relating to involuntary deviate sexual intercourse).
 Section 3124.1 (relating to sexual assault).
 Section 3125 (relating to aggravated indecent assault).
 Section 3126 (relating to indecent assault).
 Section 3127 (relating to indecent exposure).
 Section 4302 (relating to incest).
 Section 4303 (relating to concealing death of child).
 Section 4304 (relating to endangering welfare of children).
 Section 4305 (relating to dealing in infant children).
 A felony offense under section 5902(b) (relating to prostitution and related offenses).
 Section 5903(c) or (d) (relating to obscene and other sexual materials and performances).
 Section 6301 (relating to corruption of minors).
 Section 6312 (relating to sexual abuse of children).
 The attempt, solicitation or conspiracy to commit any of the offenses set forth in this paragraph.

8.3. The Worker applicant has been convicted of a felony offense under the act of April 14, 1972 (P.L.233, No.64), known as The Controlled Substance, Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act, committed within the five-year period immediately preceding verification.

9. No volunteer Worker will be allowed to work with minors until the volunteer has been a member of the church for a minimum of six (6) months, or as a regular attendee for a minimum of one (1) year.

Training

Each new Worker will be given the legal definition of child abuse in writing (as found in Appendix A) as well as the policy of the Church on prevention and reporting of child sexual abuse. New Workers will also be required to participate in a training program to help Workers prevent child abuse and identify child abuse in the future if they see signs of it. The Church may use a third party to conduct this training program.

Supervision

1. No adult without a valid background check shall be left alone with a child unless a parent of the minor child gives written permission for an adult to be alone with a child, such as for a counseling session described in #3 below.
2. All windows in the doors or walls of rooms must be unobstructed and uncovered. Windows may be temporarily covered in rooms leased or rented to outside counselors during their sessions with adults, but coverage must be removed if children are present. With the exception of bathrooms, doors without windows should remain open when children are in the room.
3. A minister may only meet privately with a minor for counseling sessions with the minor if the minor's parent has given prior written permission
4. Church staff and volunteer leaders will supervise programs on an ongoing basis and make unannounced visits into classes or other program sites from time to time. These supervisors shall complete a log to show which rooms, activities, time, and date the classes or activity was visited.

5. Any supervisor is responsible to address suspicious behavior or any behavior that may be contrary to church policy and to document and report such occurrences to the proper authorities.

Reporting Procedures

1. Any person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare have been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect shall report the person's belief in accordance with this policy.
2. This person shall report the suspected abuse or neglect (whether or not the individual responsible for the abuse or neglect is known) to the local or state law enforcement agency by calling 911 or 610-647-1440.
3. In addition, this person shall report the suspected abuse or neglect to the minister, the Chairperson of the Board of Christian Education, or the Moderator.
4. All members of the Church shall cooperate fully with law enforcement officials.
5. The Chairperson of the Board of Christian Education or the minister shall take the appropriate steps to make sure that any person accused under this policy is suspended from the performance of duties involving children until the investigation is complete.
6. The Church should also immediately notify the church's insurance company to report the occurrence and also should contact its attorney.
7. Anyone in the Church with knowledge of the report shall maintain confidentiality about the investigation as much as possible, discussing the investigation only with the proper authorities and any Church officer or board member who needs to be involved in the investigation.
8. In instances where child abuse is confirmed, the Church will immediately dismiss the Worker from that position.
9. In instances where the evidence is inconclusive, the Church may take action depending on the strength of the evidence available and after consideration of the victim's family's request.

Insurance

The Church shall obtain a sufficient level of liability insurance coverage that would cover child abuse and sexual misconduct claims.

Appendix A

WHAT IS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?

"Any sexual activity with a child, whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day care situation, a foster/residential setting, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child, provided the child is four years older than the victim."

Child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent. All child sexual abuse is an exploitation of a child's vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the action.

Child sexual abuse is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially, and developmentally ready.

Child sexual abuse includes behaviors that involve touching and non-touching aspects.