

Child Protection Policy & Procedures for

**Cumberland Homesteads Baptist Church
(CHBC)**

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Child Protection Policy

Cumberland Homesteads Baptist Church

Crossville, TN

I. INTRODUCTION

"People were bringing little children to Him in order that He might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, 'Let the children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly, I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them."

Mark 10:13-16

This incident from the ministry of Jesus speaks of the value our Lord placed on children and the example of faith that they provide for the rest of us. As followers of Jesus, we understand that children/youth are inherently valuable members of Christ's community.

Jesus highlighted not only the faith and openness of children, but also their vulnerability. This vulnerability puts children at risk, but it also places them close to God. Their dependence on God may be what Jesus was trying to get His disciples to see as a model for their own faith. This vulnerability and dependence makes the protection and support of the community of faith even more important. Jesus was teaching that, within the community of believers, there must be protection for each of us in our dependence on God and on each other. AS followers of Christ we resolve to protect children in their vulnerability and also to learn from them as we all grow in the faith.

Our culture appears to be experiencing an increase in the incidence of child abuse and neglect. As much as we do not like to think about abusive and hurtful things happening in the church, it is clear that it is our duty as the Church to guard and protect the children, youth, church staff, and volunteers who participate in our ministries.

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation, and ritual abuse occur in churches, both large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural, and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation in their churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members, adult survivors of early sexual trauma.

Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church, and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Child Protection Policy of Cumberland Homesteads Baptist Church is to:

1. Provide procedures specifically designed to protect children, youth, church staff, and volunteers associated with the ministries of the church.
2. Establish appropriate ways of responding to alleged, reported, or suspected incidents of abuse.
3. Be in a compassionate ministry with all affected persons - the alleged victim, the alleged victim's family, the accused, the accused's family, and the church family.

We hereby resolve to put into practice the procedures set forth herein with the intent to:

1. Safeguard the children/youth of our church from abuse and neglect.
2. Respond to all allegations in a fair and compassionate manner.
3. Protect church staff and volunteers from potential false allegations of abuse.
4. Limit the extent of our church's legal risk and liability.
5. Strengthen our Christian educational children/youth ministries.

PROCEDURES TO SUPPORT THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

I. DEFINITION OF ABUSE

1. Engaging in any sexual activity with a child
2. Endangering a child
3. Denial, as a means of punishment, of proper necessary subsistence, education, medical care, other care necessary to a child for the child's health.
4. Use of restraint procedures on a child that cause injury or pain
5. Administration of prescription drugs to a child without the written approval and ongoing supervision of a licensed physician
6. Providing alcoholic beverages or controlled substances to a child
7. Commission of any intentional act that results in any injury or death to a child

8. Infliction of physical or mental injury that threatens to harm a child's health, welfare, or safety.

II. SELECTION AND SCREENING OF CHURCH STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Although our Christian concern for children/youth leads us to be saddened when any form of child abuse takes place anywhere, our major policy need is to be certain that abuse does not occur within the framework of any CHBC program or ministry with children/youth. This policy is intended to help our congregation make CHBC a truly safe and caring place.

In an effort to create a safe environment within our church, each church staff person and volunteer who works with the church's children/youth programs either regularly or occasionally, on or beyond the church grounds, will be screened and will be trained on child protection issues.

The procedure for selecting and screening is as follows. (The Pastor/Personnel Team may set additional screening, such as a police background check, and performance standards for paid staff):

1. Each person being considered to work with children/youth in any church program, whether as a volunteer or paid staff person, shall fill out an application form.
2. Before placing the applicant in a position of responsibility, the pastor, church staff member, or lay person responsible for the ministry will review the written application and determine if the applicant will be interviewed. Indications that an interview should take place include:
 - A. The person is a newcomer to CHBC and/or Crossville, Tennessee
 - B. The person wants to work alone.
 - C. The person has indicated that they have been charged with a crime against children or youth. (Persons who have been previously convicted or plead guilty or no contest to a crime against children or youth will not be placed in a position involving access to children or youth.)
 - D. Upon checking references, issues are raised which require clarification.

Interviews will follow the interview guidelines provided as an attachment to this policy (see attachment) and be conducted by the pastor, church staff member or layperson responsible for the ministry or through the use of a designated person(s). The results of the interview, especially when sensitive areas have been discussed, should be kept confidential and only disclosed to those persons requiring this information in order to make a decision as to whether the applicant should be accepted as a volunteer.

3. Whether or not an interview is conducted, the pastor, church staff member, or layperson responsible for the ministry may contact references provided on the application form. A written record of such contact will be retained with the application form.

4. Each person applying to work with children and/or youth shall authorize the church to conduct a criminal records check. (See attached Authorization Form.)

5. Before beginning work with either children or youth, each volunteer will sign a statement that they have read, understand, and agree to abide by this Child Protection Policy and Procedures. (Such a statement is a part of the Application Form.)

In the unfortunate situation where it has been determined that an applicant should not work with children/youth, the church will handle such a decision in a confidential manner which is sensitive to that person.

III. SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

"Adult" is defined in this document as a person of at least 18 years of age and at least five years older than those being supervised.

While recognizing the important role of youth volunteers in children/youth ministries, all activities involving children and youth will be supervised by at least one person who is at least 18 years of age and at least five years older than those who they are supervising.

Supervision of Classroom Activities

It is preferable that at least two adults be present for all classroom activities involving children and youth. When two adults are not available, a designated person will periodically check the rooms and be aware of the children/youth's whereabouts if they leave the classroom area. Even when two adults are available per classroom, it is advisable to have periodic classroom checks. No adult should ever be alone with one child in a room. While recognizing the important role of youth volunteers in children/youth ministries, in an effort to assure a safe environment, all activities involving children and youth will be supervised by at least one person who is at least 18 years of age and at least five years older than those whom they are supervising.

Male Supervision of Classroom Activities

Male volunteers are never allowed to be alone in a room with children. They must be paired with another female volunteer.

Restroom & Diaper Policy

If a child needs to go to the restroom, they are to be escorted by a female, screened volunteer. If the child does not need assistance, the volunteer will stand outside the door making sure that no adults enter the restroom while a child is alone. If the child does need assistance, the screened volunteer must prop the door open while assisting the child. No males may escort children to the restroom. A screened female volunteer should change diapers. The door to the changing must remain open at all times.

Open Door Policy

Parents, volunteers, or staff of the church may visit and observe the program at any time. Adults who have not had a background check may not be alone with children. Parents who are visiting but have not been screened as volunteers, must be supervised by a screened volunteer or staff member during their visit.

Sign-in/Sign-out Procedure

Persons responsible for children who are infant through sixth grade will sign in their child and indicate the pre-authorized person(s) to whom the child may be signed out for both Sunday School and other children's activities. No child should ever be left unattended. Children must wear their security tag for the duration of the classroom activities. If the adult picking up the child does not have the corresponding sticker and is not the adult that dropped the child off in the classroom, they may not pick the child up without consent from a staff member.

Record Retention

All children/youth activities should have a written record of the names of participants and supervisors. Records shall be kept for three years.

Supervision of Non-Classroom Activities

With the exception of the circumstances identified under Special Rules for Supervision of Specific Activities, at least two adults will be present for all non-classroom activities involving children/youth.

Special Rules for Supervision of Specific Activities

1. Youth Counseling: In instances of youth counseling where circumstances dictate that counseling is most effective on a one-on-one basis, a church staff person or volunteer may meet individually with a child or youth with the awareness and previous consent of that individual's parent or legal guardian. Exceptions to consent may be made for

emergencies.

2. In group events, it may be inevitable that one child or youth's transportation for the event arrives after all other children/youth's transportation has arrived. In those circumstances, a child/youth may unavoidably be in the individual presence of an adult. Because this circumstance may be simply unavoidable, the general rule which requires the presence of two adults is suspended and the adult is responsible for exercising his/her best judgment for the child or youth's well-being.

Trip and Retreat Supervision

There shall be at least two adults present for all trips, retreats, and other times children/youth gather at or away from the church building. (Please note that at least three adults are preferable so that in the event of an emergency, there will be adequate supervision.)

There shall be at least one adult of each gender present at co-ed overnight events. At single gender overnight events at least one of the two or more adults present will be of the same gender as the children/youth.

In situations where two adults are not available per room where children/youth are staying overnight, then no adult should stay alone in a specific room with the children/youth. In those circumstances where adults are not staying in the rooms with children/youth, special measures should be taken to assure the children/youth's safety and supervision, such as adult hall monitors, "taping" doors, and periodic room checks by two adults of the same gender as those being checked. Parents should be made aware of housing accommodations.

Permission slips including permission for emergency medical care shall be carried by the person in charge of each trip and/or retreat. (See attached form.)

Rules for providing transportation for church events:

- Driver must be known to the designated leader of the event;
- Driver must be at least 21 years old;
- Driver must have a valid state driver's license for the vehicle being operated;
- Driver must have proof of insurance;
- Driver must be accompanied by at least two children or youth; and
- Driver must have read and signed an acknowledgment form indicating that the policy has been read and will be followed. (See attached form.)
- All children must have written consent to be transported.

IV. RESPONSE BY CHURCH WORKERS TO INJURIES AND ACCIDENTS

In order to assure proper attention was given to an injury or accident, an incident report must be completed by the adult supervisor within 24 hours of the incident whenever a child/youth is injured. (See attached form.)

V. RESPONSE BY CHURCH WORKERS TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

As caring Christians, we are committed to protect and advocate for children/youth participating in the life of the Church. The Church is entrusted to provide an emotionally safe, spiritually grounded, healthy environment for children, youth, and adults in which they are protected from abuse. It is our legal and moral responsibility to report suspected abuse whenever it comes to our attention regardless of where that abuse takes place.

If abuse is suspected by, observed by, or disclosed to a volunteer and/or paid staff member of the church, that person shall report the incident immediately to the pastor and Children's Ministry Director. (If the accused is the pastor or children's ministry director, see information below.) Be prepared to do the following:

Please note: many steps should be done simultaneously.

- **IMMEDIATELY** notify the proper authorities (Department of Children's services (DCS), Local Law Authority.) This is a requirement of the law. Do not attempt an investigation. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases.
- Simultaneously notify the parents of the victim and the staff. Take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety of the child/youth until the parent(s) arrives. It is important to emphasize that the proper authorities must be notified even if the parent(s) does not wish the incident to be reported.
 - Note: If one or both of the parents is the alleged abuser, contact the proper authorities. Follow their advice about the notification of the parents.
- After having reported the suspected abuse to the proper authorities, the incident is to be reported immediately to the church's attorney and the church's insurance company by the personnel team or appropriate laymen (chairmen of the deacons, chairmen of the personnel team).
- A written report of the basic information shall be kept for victims and others involved. The report shall be brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation. It shall be filed in a secure place in order to ensure confidentiality.
- Immediately, yet with dignity and respect for the accused, remove the accused from further involvement with children and/or youth.
- Once the proper authorities have been contacted and the safety of the child or youth is secured, the pastor or other designated person may tell the accused that a report has been made. If the accused is a volunteer or paid staff of the church, that

person shall be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished. If the accused is a staff person of the church, the personnel team will handle the situation until the investigation is complete.

- Note: Reports made to DCS are confidential.

VI. EDUCATION OF PERSONS WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Volunteers working with children and youth are required to attend one Child Protection Policy training per year in order to continue serving with children and youth.

The training may include:

1. The definition and recognition of abuse.
2. The Church's policies on reporting abuse and appropriate forms.
3. The purposes of the policy as protection for children/youth and for church staff/volunteer workers.
4. The meaning and importance of confidentiality.
5. The maintenance of a positive learning classroom environment, including appropriate discipline and age-level characteristics.
6. The appropriate behavior for teachers and leaders.