



**Miller Heights**  
BAPTIST CHURCH

# **Child Protection Policy**

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**Approved August 2015**

**For the use of Miller Heights Baptist Church Children and Youth Ministries**

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## **Our Vision: Teaching Truth to the Next Generation**

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, ESV)

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3:14-15, ESV)

## **Our Mission: To Glorify God**

The Children’s Ministry of Miller Heights Baptist Church exists to *glorify God* by:

- Maintaining a safe and secure environment for our children.
- Supporting and encouraging parents who are primarily responsible for teaching biblical truths to their children (Ephesians 6:4).
- Making the whole counsel of Scripture known to children with special emphasis on the Gospel (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Romans 1:16-17).
- Praying for the children and relying on the Holy Spirit to regenerate their hearts through the faithful teaching of His Word (Romans 10:17; Ephesians 2:4-10).
- Living faithfully before the children and modeling for them how Christians are called to respond to God, interact with each other, and with the world around us (Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 11:1).
- Encouraging children to learn to serve and to not just be served (Mark 10:43-45).
- Maintaining the highest ethical standards such that Volunteers and Teachers always live and serve above reproach, protecting the reputation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Preparing children to one day walk with God as adults, which means getting them ready to be a part of the public services and Lord willing, one day, a fully participating adult member.

## **General Purpose Statement**

Miller Heights Baptist Church (MHBC) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect children from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our Staff and Volunteers from false accusations. MHBC has zero tolerance for abuse in our programs and ministry activities.

## **Definitions**

For the purpose of this policy:

- The terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.
- “Staff” are the paid employees of the church. All Staff are required to receive a background check regardless of whether or not they have direct contact with children.
- “Volunteers” are adults who work with children and are not in the employment of the church. All Volunteers who serve in the children’s ministry are required to receive a background check and to go through the training and screening procedures before they serve. The term “Volunteer” will be used throughout this policy manual as an all-encompassing term for anyone who serves the children and is not church Staff.

## **Staff and Volunteer Expectations**

All Children’s Ministry Staff and Volunteers share a particular responsibility for:

- Loving the children as Christ loves them.
- Setting an example of proper Christian conduct in the way we live our lives.
- Ministering to the children.
- Understanding that the care of children is not a right, but a privilege, and this privilege embodies responsibilities to God for ministering to and caring for the children.

## **Child Protection**

One of our primary concerns is that children be safe while they are in our care. To this end we:

- Screen and require a background check on all Children’s Ministry Volunteers.
- Perform background checks on all Staff, regardless of whether or not they have direct contact with children.
- Require training for all Children’s Ministry Staff and Volunteers.
- Employ Volunteer/Child ratios that optimize safety.
- Promote and maintain safety in the building.
- Educate our Staff and Volunteers to recognize suspected child abuse and to require them to understand and follow any applicable reporting laws and require them to report suspected abuse to church officials.
- Adhere to a healthy child policy for admittance to the Children’s Ministry.
- Adhere to a two-Volunteer room policy.
- Equip our Volunteers to know how to evacuate children safely in case of an emergency.

# **Protecting the Children Before They Arrive**

Ensuring a safe environment begins long before Sunday or Wednesday services. Every applicant who wishes to serve in the Children's Ministry is required to go through a screening process and attend childcare training.

## **Screening Procedure**

To ensure safe and quality care, MHBC has established a screening procedure to approve all Volunteers to work with our children.

- All Volunteers must be members of MHBC in good standing.<sup>1</sup>
- Children or youth who are at least one grade older than the children they are assisting are welcome to help (subject to the approval and direction of the Children's or Youth Director), but they are always in addition to the adult Volunteers.
- All Volunteers must have completed MHBC's training.
- All Volunteers must have completed the Volunteer application and been recommended by or in consultation with the Children's or Youth Director.
- At least one reference check must be satisfactorily completed prior to beginning of service.
- Criminal record checks and other appropriate screening checks will be completed.
- All completed records of screening procedures will be kept securely along with the original application.
- Volunteers are to be approved by the Children's or Youth Director in consultation with the Pastor.
- All Volunteers must repeat the criminal background checks every five years.

MHBC reserves the right to reject any applicant for Volunteer service or dismiss an existing Volunteer for any reason, including, but not limited to, refusing or failing to complete screening; failing to provide requested information, providing information that is subsequently determined as false or misleading, sin or suffering issues that compromise the applicant or Volunteer's ability to care for children, any criminal report or charge, obtaining information from references or criminal record checks that suggest that the applicant is not suitable to help with children.

Any Volunteer or MHBC member who learns of or has knowledge of misconduct by an applicant must report that knowledge to the Children's or Youth Director and/or the Pastor. He or she also must be personally responsible for any legal obligation that he or she may have to disclose such information to the authorities.

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<sup>1</sup> We may allow a temporary resident (i.e. college student) to volunteer given that: (1) they are members in good standing at a like-minded church, (2) they provide a reference from a ministry leader at the church at which they are a member, (3) they affirm the MHBC Statement of Faith, and (4) they submit to all other procedures for any other Volunteer (spelled out in this document).

# **Protecting the Children As They Arrive and Depart**

## **Arrival and Departure Times**

- Volunteers should be ready to accept children at least 15 minutes prior to the start of any session.
- If parents are picking their children up, they are encouraged to do so immediately after the conclusion of the session. In the event that a child is not picked up within 15 minutes of the end of the session, Volunteers will locate the parents.
- Staff and Volunteers have the right to refuse any child from participating in any activity. Some reasons might include potential illness, behavior that endangers other children, the class being closed because of the adult to child ratio, or anything else that might impair our ability to maintain a safe and secure environment for the children.
- If the child is brought to the class by a parent/guardian, only the parent/guardian who brought the child to the class is authorized to pick up the child. The exceptions to this are:
  1. In the event of an emergency that would result in neither parent/guardian being available to sign out the child at the end of a session, the child will be released to the care of a Volunteer.
  2. The parent may inform Staff or Volunteers that their spouse will pick the child up.
  3. A parent may make prior arrangements with the Children's or Youth Director to allow for someone other than him/herself or his/her spouse to pick up the child at the end of a session.

## **Divorce, Separation or Custody Visitation**

In a situation where the parents are divorced or separated, the Volunteers should only release the child to the parent who brought this child to check-in. If the other parent or anyone else attempts to check out the child, the Volunteer should immediately contact the Children's or Youth Director. If a parent presents a court order for a child, the police must also be present and we are to release the child to police custody. In any of these circumstances, the Volunteer should immediately contact the Children's or Youth Director and the Pastor.

# **Protecting the Children While They Are In Our Care**

## **Two-Volunteer Rule**

- For all children's classes and programs, at least two qualified adult Volunteers must be present in each classroom at all times.
- Volunteers must never leave a child alone in a classroom.
- Volunteers should not have private one-on-one meetings with a child. When a meeting on the church premises is necessary, it should be done with at least one other adult present, and held with the knowledge and consent of the Children's or Youth Director and the parents/guardians.

## **Visibility**

When children's classes or programs are in session, the interior doors and windows should allow for unobstructed views from the outside of everyone inside the room (don't block windows on doors).

## **Appropriate Discipline**

- All Children's Ministry Volunteers are responsible for providing a loving, respectful, and orderly atmosphere in which children can learn, play, and interact with others. This atmosphere should be maintained by preparing beforehand, proactively directing children towards acceptable activities, verbally encouraging positive behavior, and, when necessary, correcting or redirecting inappropriate behavior.
- Acceptable means of redirecting inappropriate behavior may include correcting the child verbally, withholding a certain privilege or activity for a brief time, or separating a child from the situation or problem for a brief time (particularly if his/her behavior is endangering or upsetting other children). Correction should be discrete, and never outside of the sight of others.
- Steps of correction might include (depending on the age of the child): (1) removing the child from the situation or problem; (2) pointing out the problematic behavior; talking to the child about his/her sin and need for Christ; (3) praying for the child and redirecting to a new activity; (4) helping the child to reconcile with the offended children when appropriate. Volunteers should view misbehavior as an opportunity to introduce the child to the gospel.
- Children's Ministry Volunteers are strictly prohibited from using any form of corporal punishment such as slapping, kicking, punching, spanking, or hitting. They should never speak harsh words, insults, belittling comments, threatening words, or any other verbal humiliation to children.
- If a child's behavior is uncontrollable or the child does not respond to the acceptable means of discipline indicated above, a Volunteer should call the parents/guardians. If the child assaults, harasses or bullies other children, misbehaves beyond minor correction, or has a pattern of misbehavior, the parent should be immediately called so the child can be removed. Volunteers are allowed to physically restrain a child if he/she is physically endangering other children. Please report any of these problems (as well as the appropriate response taken to deal with the behavior) to the Children's or Youth Director.
- Once a child is removed from the Children's Ministry, reinstatement is possible at the determination of the Children's or Youth Director. A child may be reinstated if the risk of the re-offense has been adequately reduced.

For further information regarding discipline, please speak with the Children's or Youth Director.

## **Restroom Guideline**

For the protection of all, Volunteers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a bathroom stall with a child. If the child requires assistance, the Volunteer should leave the bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area to try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities. Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another Volunteer or Staff.

## **Physical Touch Policy**

Two types of relationships are important to consider: Volunteer-to-child and child-to-child.

### ***Volunteer-to-Child***

While appropriate physical contact with children can be an effective means of aiding in communication, redirecting attention, calming restlessness, or showing godly love and care, it can also be misinterpreted. Particularly in our interaction with children, we want to be blameless and above reproach. The following will help workers to avoid any compromise or concerns in this area:

- Always remain in open sight of other adults.
- Appropriate touch is positive physical contact that nurtures children and develops a sense of emotional security and maturity in their interaction with adults. Appropriate touch is applied to meet the needs of children and not the adults.
- Appropriate physical contact will vary according to the age of the child. What is appropriate for nursery children (holding, rocking, sitting on laps, etc.) will not be appropriate for grade school children.
- Inappropriate touch involves, but is not limited to coercion or other forms of physical contact which exploits the child's lack of knowledge, satisfies adult physical needs at the expense of the child, violates laws against sexual or physical contact between adult and child, and any attempt to modify child behavior with physical force.
- Sitting on laps is only appropriate for ages 0 to 5.
- In general, a man will need to limit physical contact more than a woman in the same situation, especially when working with older children.
- Volunteers should refrain from rough-housing, wrestling, shoulder or piggy-back rides, rubbing, massaging, or any physical activity that might make a child feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Only touch children in "safe" areas and for a brief time. "Safe" areas generally include hands, arms, shoulders, upper back, or gentle pats on the top of the head. Never touch a child on or near any region that is private or personal, unless when necessary while assisting in a diaper change or restroom visit.
- Never touch a child out of frustration or anger. Physical discipline is not an appropriate means of correcting someone else's child.

### ***Child-to-Child***

- No unrelated male and female under eighteen should ever be alone together while participating in MHBC activities.

- No inappropriate touching (as defined above and in Appendix 1) of any kind will be accepted.
- Fighting will not be tolerated, and any child participating in violent action will be dismissed from a class/program and placed into his or her parent's care.

Further guidelines on appropriate and inappropriate touch can be found in Appendix 1.

## **Other Guidelines**

- Staff and Volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while working with or supervising children.
- Staff and Volunteers must abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products while working with or supervising children.
- Staff and Volunteers should never be nude in the presence of the children in their care.
- Staff and Volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children, and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any child.
- Staff and Volunteers are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, websites, etc.) in the presence of children.
- For overnight activities or retreats each person must have their own bed or sleeping bag. Children and Volunteers must be separated by gender. Two Volunteers must be in each room. Appropriate sleeping attire must be worn.

## **Security and Emergency Response**

### ***Emergency Situations***

In emergency situations, if appropriate, 911 will be called to secure help, or Volunteers will be summoned to assist with the emergency.

### ***Accidents, First Aid, and Medical Emergencies***

In the event of life-threatening injury or illness, 911 will be called immediately and Staff will be informed. Parents will be located and informed as soon as possible. Volunteers should complete an Incident Report Form (located in office) for all injuries, whether major or minor prior to leaving the premises on the day of the accident. Depending on the severity of the situation, someone may call 911.

### ***Evacuation Procedures***

In the event of a fire, a Volunteer should assist all children in immediately evacuating the building and call 911. Parents should meet their children in the designated area outside of the church building.

### ***Live Threat***

A live threat includes a shooting or some other type of security hazard.

#### **Step 1: Volunteers Evacuate Children**

- As soon as a Volunteer is confronted with a threat, he/she responds immediately.
- If it is safe to do so, the first course of action should be to evacuate the building.

#### **Step 2: Volunteers Communicate the Danger**

- When it is safe to do so, whoever sees or hears the live threat should notify the Staff about the problem. The Staff member will then notify the remaining Volunteers about the live threat.
- When it is safe to do so, the Volunteers should call 911. Give the following information:
  - Location and the nature of the threat.
  - If shots have been fired, tell police we have an “active shooter.”

### Step 3: Hide

- If running is not a safe option, hide in as safe a place as possible.
- Close and lock the door.
- Barricade the doors with heavy furniture.
- Close and lock windows and close blinds.
- Turn off the lights.
- Silence all electronic devices.
- Maintain silence.
- Have children lie or sit on the floor away from the door. If possible, stay out of sight of any interior windows.

### Step 4: Volunteers fight the Live Threat

- If neither running nor hiding is a safe option, as a last resort, when confronted by a shooter or some other danger, adults in immediate danger should consider trying to disrupt or incapacitate the shooter by using aggressive force and items in their environment, such as a fire extinguisher or chairs.
- Under no circumstances will a child be allowed to confront the potential danger.

After the area has been made safe and secure by police, Staff will communicate an “all clear” sign to anyone who is in lock-down mode.

### ***Missing Child or Kidnapping***

In the case of a missing child, the Volunteers will first do a thorough check of the building. If the child is not found after a thorough check, the doors will be locked. The Volunteers will continue to search for the child until he/she is found. If the child is not found, Staff will call the police to secure further help.

In the case of a kidnapping, Staff should call 911 to secure help from the police.

# Healthy Child Policy

## Communicable Disease Policy

In order to prevent the spread of communicable disease among the children, several guidelines are in place concerning disease.

1. Children with infectious diseases should be kept home until they are no longer contagious. If a child is exhibiting symptoms of illness such as fever, diarrhea, open skin lesions or blisters (as in chicken pox), or persistent nasal discharge, the parent should keep the child home.
2. Volunteers will use disposable latex gloves and proper hygiene procedures to change diapers, wipe noses, and handle blood spills.
3. Hand washing or use of anti-bacterial hand sanitizer must be a regular habit for both children and Volunteers.
4. Toys and equipment should be washed and disinfected regularly.
5. MHBC is dedicated to preventing the spread of disease among the children. Volunteers have the right to refuse a child on the basis of questionable symptoms. To prevent this, parents are asked to comply with the *Healthy Child Policy* guidelines.

A child should not participate in a class if and when any of the following exist:

- Fever, vomiting, or diarrhea (**Note:** Children should be free of a fever, vomiting, or diarrhea for 24 hours before coming to the Children's Ministry)
- Any symptom of scarlet fever, German measles, mumps, chicken pox, or whooping cough
- Common cold
- Sore throat
- Croup
- Lice
- Any unexplained rash
- Any skin infection such as boils, ringworm, impetigo
- Pink eye or other eye infection
- Thick green, yellow or constant nasal discharge
- Any other communicable disease

Children who appear ill during a class will be kept in the hall with a Volunteer while the Children's or Youth Director locates the parents.

Please inform the Children's or Youth Director if your child appears to have contracted an illness while attending an MHBC event so that other parents may be notified if necessary. If a child contracts an illness and has been in contact with other children while at MHBC, it is the responsibility of parents to notify the Children's or Youth Director.

Medication may be given to a child by a Staff member or Volunteer with a doctor's prescription or note from a parent/guardian if necessary.

Parents of children with special needs are encouraged to contact the Children's or Youth Director *before* signing the child into class. This allows the Volunteers to assess the needs of the child and assist parents in transitioning their child into a classroom setting.

## **Universal Precautions**

Universal precautions are very effective for protecting both the children and Volunteers from illness. These methods are employed such that all human bodily fluids are treated as if they carried infectious diseases. Universal precautions are applicable in any setting and should always be used.

### **Important Points of Universal Precautions**

- Wash hands before and after any contact with bodily fluids, including wiping noses, changing diapers, cleaning vomit, and treating a blood spill.
- Always wear disposable gloves when dealing with any bodily fluids.
- Treat all soiled linen (i.e. sheets, clothing) as potential infectious agents.
- Clean and disinfect toys and supplies.

## **Neglect and Abuse Prevention, Reporting, and Response**

### **Definitions**

What is child neglect and abuse? It is important to define our terms.

- *Child neglect* is failure, whether intentional or not, of the person responsible for the child's care to provide for the child's basic needs such as adequate food, clothing, medical and dental care, supervision, and/or proper education, or the failure to protect the child from harm.
- *Child abuse* is any act or failure to act resulting in imminent risk or serious harm, death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual harm, or exploitation of a child by a parent or a caretaker who is responsible for the child's welfare.
- *Child sexual abuse* is any form of sexual contact with a minor, non-touching offenses, or sexual exploitation of a minor. This is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they cannot be personally, socially, and developmentally ready.
  - *Sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult* is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child and an adult. This includes activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or child. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered to be forced whether or not the child consents to it.
  - *Sexual abuse perpetrated by a child* is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between children, with or without the consent of either child, when one child has power or perceived authority over the other child. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children.
  - *Sexual exploitation includes* forcing a child or soliciting a child for the purposes of prostitution, and using a child to videotape or photograph pornography.
- *Child spiritual abuse* is the use of spiritual authority (the Bible or church authority) to emotionally, physically, and/or sexually abuse a child.

## Prevention

MHBC takes protection against and reporting of neglect and abuse very seriously. In an effort to prevent abuse and neglect, we:

- Educate and equip Volunteers about neglect and abuse.
- Adhere to the procedures and guidelines as set out in this policy manual. Many of the policies are written to protect children, including the two-volunteer rule, visibility guideline, and restroom guideline.
- Train and screen Volunteers prior to contact with any children. Screening includes filling out an application, getting feedback from references, and requiring a criminal background check.
- Require all prospective Staff to submit to a criminal background check prior to joining Staff.
- Repeat criminal background checks for all Staff and Volunteers every five years.
- Require Volunteers to be members prior to serving in the Children's Ministry.<sup>2</sup>

Any instance of suspected or observed abuse or neglect should be handled with the following guidelines.

## Reporting of Neglect & Abuse

### *Point of Contact for Reporting*

Anyone who suspects, witnesses, or has any reason to believe that a child has been or is likely to be neglected and/or harmed or threatened with abuse in any form should contact the Staff. This reporting includes questionable behavior (overly flirtatious behavior, shoulder massages, or other intimate acts, etc.) and/or possible offenses (Volunteers observing actual abuse or possible evidence of abuse, like abrasions, lacerations, etc.).

Any person who serves as the initial point of contact is required to report *all* allegations and/or eye-witness accounts to a Staff member.

### *Guidelines for Mandatory and Permissive Reporters*

In reporting of neglect or abuse to the authorities, it is important to distinguish between permissive and mandatory reporters. A mandatory reporter may include social workers, teachers and other school personnel, physicians and other health care workers, mental health professionals, childcare providers, law enforcement officers, and domestic violence workers. Permissive reporters include anyone who is not a mandatory reporter, which will be the majority of MHBC's Volunteers and Staff.

The church has a moral and ethical obligation to report any neglect and abuse, so if the person suspects or witnessed or has knowledge of neglect or abuse, the person *must* report to a Staff member.

If the person who suspects or witnessed or has knowledge of neglect or abuse is a mandatory reporter, he or she must follow the guidelines and laws set out for mandatory reporters. He or she must fulfill his/her obligations to the law, including reporting to Child Protective Services or the police. At no time will the mandatory reporter be prohibited from reporting, even if their consultation with Staff in the church results in a disagreement. If you are a mandatory reporter, it is important that you know whether

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<sup>2</sup> See footnote on page 5.

you must report only in the context of your professional duties or whether the obligation to report also applies when you're away from your professional duties or functioning as a Volunteer at our church.

If the person who suspects or witnessed or has knowledge of neglect or abuse is a permissive reporter, they should contact a Staff member. If reporting to Child Protective Services or police is deemed as warranted by the Staff member, then that person must report. At all times, this person will be required to fulfill their obligations to the law.

District and federal laws authorize civil or criminal penalties or civil liability for failing to report a reasonable suspicion of child abuse. In addition, obstructing or interfering with an investigation of child abuse can result in criminal charges.

The church will not tolerate any retaliation against a reporter who has a reasonable suspicion of neglect or abuse.

### ***More Guidelines on Reporting***

When available, the following information will be documented and reported when helpful:

- The name, age, gender, and address of the victim(s).
- The name, age, gender, and address of the alleged perpetrator/offender(s).
- The nature, frequency, date(s) and locations(s) of the abuse alleged to have occurred.
- The relationship between the victim and the alleged perpetrator/offender.
- Other evidence that supports the allegations (eyewitness, medical exams, confessions, etc.).

*What should a Volunteer do when they suspect, hear about, or observe what appears to be a sign or symptom of neglect or abuse?* Talk immediately with the Children's or Youth Director. The Volunteer should document this information on the *Child Abuse Reporting Form*, which is available in the church office. After the Children's or Youth Director serve as an initial point of contact, they are required to report *all* allegations and/or eyewitness accounts to the authorities.

*What should the Children's or Youth Director say or do with the child who is allegedly neglected or abused?* Talk with the child and find out how the injury happened, being careful with the level of detail you pursue. Asking for too much detail might be harmful for a child as it causes them to relive the abusive experience. If the child is describing what might be abuse, the objective is to obtain very general information that may help substantiate or alleviate the suspicion. Ask the child open-ended questions and get them to relay the event in their own words. Be careful to not suggest answers to the child and be sensitive to the fact that the child will be scared to tell the story, sometimes out of fear that it will upset adults or will not be believed. Write out a report that should include signs or symptoms observed, notations about bruises or injuries that are visible, a summary of the conversation with the child, and a description of any emotions expressed by the child. Do not ask the child to undress in order to show bruises or injuries that are not visible. Include all of this information on the *Child Abuse Reporting form*, which is available in the church office.

*What should Volunteers report when they hear of a story of abuse?* Note *what* the child said happened, *who* the child was with when it happened, *where* it happened, and *when* it happened. All of this should be documented.

*What should a Volunteer do when they observe an incident that may be abusive?* Immediately intervene to protect the child, follow up immediately with the Children's or Youth Director; write out a

report about the incident; and, act in accordance with all reporting laws. The Volunteer should keep an ongoing log of the suspected person's behavior and anything else that is relevant concerning the person or the child or their relationship.

## **Response to Neglect & Abuse**

MHBC will ensure that a caring response is always provided to any suspicion or witnessing of neglect or abuse. Every allegation of neglect or abuse will be taken seriously. Proper guidelines for handling such complaints will be followed diligently and exhaustively. The victim(s) and victim's family will be cared for by the church in whatever way is available. Situations will be handled forthrightly with due respect for all parties' privacy and confidentiality.

### ***Who Should be Notified?***

Notification will be limited to those who need to know about the allegation and to those who can provide assistance in responding to neglect or abuse.

### ***How Will MHBC Respond to an Allegation, Admission, or Criminal Conviction?***

Allegations of neglect or abuse, admission of child abuse by Staff, Volunteer, or any member of MHBC, or criminal conviction of abuse should:

- Be reported to MHBC's Staff. This disclosure of abuse is to be done regardless of the source of the information and should be conveyed to the Children's or Youth Director within 48 hours of the allegation being made or the admission of child abuse or criminal conviction.
- Immediately result in removal of the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender from any activity or program involving children.
- Result in immediate ineligibility of the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender from being granted approval to participate in any activity or program involving children.

The church will decide on other appropriate responses to allegations, self-admission of guilt, or criminal conviction, some of which may include:

- Contacting police or CPS.
- Notification of Volunteers.
- Reporting allegations, self-admission, or criminal conviction to the congregation.
- Barring from any activities or church programs with children or the Children's Ministry.
- Designated MHBC Members or Staff will accompany the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender at all times while he or she is on MHBC's property or anywhere in MHBC's buildings. The alleged perpetrator will be notified of this requirement immediately after allegations are made known to Staff.
- Disciplining (removal from membership) of alleged perpetrator or criminal offender in a public members' meeting by the congregation.
- Barring alleged perpetrator or criminal offender from any and all church property.
- Suspension or termination of a paid Staff member or Volunteer position.

If the church learns from CPS or police that allegations of neglect or abuse are being investigated or criminal charges have been filed, the church should:

- Be careful to not interfere with the investigation by police or CPS;
- Prevent contact between the accused and the accuser if appropriate;
- Remove the accused from activities or programs involving children, pending the outcome of the investigation;
- Appoint a member of the church to be a liaison with CPS and the police.

If an adult alleges an incident of neglect or abuse that happened when he/she was a child in an MHBC program, then:

- MHBC may hire a trained mental health professional (preferably who is not associated with the church) who can provide the church with an assessment. The victim will have to provide consent for such an interview and to have the assessment released to the church in confidence.
- If the accused is no longer a part of MHBC then the Pastor should consult with the Deacons and legal counsel to determine legal and moral need to report to police or CPS or any another other organization that the accused may be a part of since his/her departure from MHBC.
- Even if government officials are no longer bound to investigate due to a statute of limitations, MHBC should respond to *all* allegations with the care and diligence traced out in this policy manual.

### ***Confidentiality***

The church, as well as permissive or mandatory reporters, will maintain confidentiality to the extent that it deems appropriate for the care of its members and consistent with applicable law. Allegations and suspicion should be reported only to the persons specified in this policy manual.

### ***Response to Media***

If appropriate, a designated MHBC member will respond to the media on behalf of the church. A written statement should be distributed at the time of media disclosure. Great care should be taken to disclose only facts and not suspicion. Disclosed facts might include the nature of the abuse allegation and when the alleged abuse happened. Great care should be taken to protect the identity of all parties involved (the alleged abuser and victim). Alerting the media lets the alleged victim know that allegations will be taken seriously and gives other vulnerable members of the community a chance to be protected.

## **Sexual Offenders in the Church**

### ***When an Alleged or Convicted Offender Attends MHBC or an MHBC Related Activity***

If MHBC learns *in advance* that an alleged or convicted sexual offender is wanting to attend a service:

A Staff member will assess the situation and contact the offender to discuss the guidelines set out by this policy. They will be notified that they will be accompanied at all times while on MHBC property. They will not be allowed to attend any children's activities or programs.

The sexual offender should provide the Staff with the name of his /her probation officer. Someone will contact the probation officer and find out 1) more about the underlying offense (offenders tend to

minimize their offenses), and 2) the specific terms of the probation in order to make sure the offender stays in compliance while at the church.

### ***When a Sexual Offender Seeks Membership at MHBC***

If the offender seeks membership at MHBC, the church retains the right to refuse membership. If the church offers membership to an offender, it will be conditional on his or her agreement to:

- Verify the history of offenses, convictions, and adjudication of sexual offenses and disclose them to the MHBC Staff.
- A designated Staff member will contact his/her probation officer to find out the underlying offense and the specific terms of probation.
- The Staff will do a thorough criminal background check. If the information provided by the offender differs from the information given by the probation officer or gathered by the background check, that will be grounds for denying membership.
- Disclosure of information to parents and the congregation. The information released to the church is at the discretion of the Children's Director and the Pastor. A letter detailing this information will be sent directly to all member parents.
- Refrain from any form of communication (including phone, IM, texting, email, social media, or any type of technology), social fellowship, physical contact, mentoring, babysitting, or coaching with children or youth or participate in any activities or programs related to children or youth both inside and outside of the church.
- A warning that any violation of the code of conduct (including allegations or suspicion of abusive behavior) can result in discipline and banning from the church facilities or any church related programs and activities.
- Sign a written document that details all of these items, plus any other restrictions that the church determines.

### ***Other Guidelines About Sexual Offenders***

If a convicted sexual offender applies for a Volunteer or Staff position, he or she will be denied by the church. Exceptions may only be made by congregational vote.

If a sexual offender does not disclose a former allegation, conviction or adjudication, and it is revealed later, the offender will be removed from any paid or Volunteer position immediately and may be removed from membership as well.

If a sexual offender is a minor, the church reserves the right to bar that minor from any children or youth activities, and will follow the guidelines set out above for any sexual offender who seeks participation in church-related public services, programs or activities.

If a sexual offender leaves MHBC (as a member or a regular attender) and begins attending another church, the Staff will disclose allegations or self-admission or criminal conviction of neglect or abuse to the leadership at the next church.

# **APPENDIX 1**

## **Inappropriate and Appropriate Touch**

### **Inappropriate Touching**

- Shoving, hair pulling, shaking, slapping, pinching, biting, kicking, hitting, or spanking a child for any reason.
- Squeezing of arm, neck, face, or any parts of the body.
- Tickling children over 5 years old. It is over stimulating and is considered by some professionals to be a deceptive device that could lead to inappropriate touching.
- Children sitting on laps of adults is inappropriate for children older than 5 years old.
- Holding or restraining children on the lap. However, holding a child 5 years and younger is appropriate for short time spans when comfort is needed by the child or the child's behavior is out-of-control or endangering other children.
- Touching a child in the genital areas except for younger and developmentally delayed children requiring a diaper change, bathing/washing and assistance with toileting procedures. Otherwise, touch in the genital area is only permitted by medical personnel in case of injury or suspected injury.
- Kissing a child on the lips, neck, or anywhere else. A child should never be allowed to kiss a Volunteer or other child on the lips, neck, or anywhere else. Children are also not allowed to kiss one another.
- Slapping a child on the behind, even when playing.
- Fondling children, even in non-private areas.
- Carrying a child on the back unless the child is unable to walk.

### **Appropriate Touching**

- A comforting pat on the shoulder and back, or allowing an emotionally distressed child to lean their head on your shoulder is appropriate.
- Back rub to help comfort, or put an irritable child to sleep is appropriate.
- High-Fives, handshakes, or the touching of two fists are appropriate and recommended touch, especially when interacting with older children.
- Holding hands is permitted with children 10 years and under when initiated by the child, or when helping a child to walk, climb stairs, etc.
- Holding a child firmly with your hands to restrain him/her is appropriate when it is used to prevent a child from an accident, injury, hurting self, others, or you.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Child Abuse Reporting Form**

**Instructions:** *If a Volunteer or Staff suspect, hear about, or observe signs or symptoms of abuse, please: (1) Contact police or CPS; (2) Talk immediately with the Children's or Youth Director; and (3) Document any relevant information on this form.*

*This report should include signs or symptoms observed, notations about bruises or injuries that are visible, a summary of what the child said, and a description of any emotions expressed by the child. Do not go back and interview the child. Fill this form out based on whatever information has already been obtained.*

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Volunteer: \_\_\_\_\_

**Signs or Symptoms of Abuse Observed:**

**Bruises or Injuries that are Visible:**

**Emotions expressed by the Child:**

**Summary of the Conversation with the Child:**

**Anything Else that is Relevant:**

**Child Protection Policy**  
**Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement**

I have received and read a copy of Miller Heights Baptist Church's Child Protection Policy and understand the importance of the material. I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving or working at Miller Heights Baptist Church.

I understand the Policy may be modified, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated by Miller Heights Baptist Church.

I understand it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which may be created and distributed.

I acknowledge receipt and agreement to the Child Protection Policy. I will fulfill these responsibilities to the best of my ability.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

[This page to remain attached to the Child Protection Policy.]

**Child Protection Policy**  
**Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement**

I have received and read a copy of Miller Heights Baptist Church's Child Protection Policy and understand the importance of the material. I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving or working at Miller Heights Baptist Church.

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I acknowledge receipt and agreement to the Child Protection Policy. I will fulfill these responsibilities to the best of my ability.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

[This page to be detached and included in the employment/volunteer file in the church office.]