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## **Children's Ministry Policy Manual**

## **Purpose**

South Side Baptist Church's purpose for establishing this child abuse prevention policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth. The purpose of this policy is to protect the children who participate in our ministries from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior, to protect our staff and volunteers from false allegations of abuse, and to limit the extent of legal liability of our church. This plan will include the following areas: Screening, Supervision, Reporting Procedures, and a Response plan. Everyone who teaches, helps, or cares for children under the sponsorship of South Side Baptist Church is to follow these policies and procedures.

## **Definitions**

Child – any person under the age of 18.

Youth/Teen – 7<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> graders

Volunteer – any person who works with children or youth and is not paid by the church

Staff – any person who works with children or youth and is paid by the church

Child abuse or neglect - Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm (CAPTA) (42 U.S.C.A. § 5106g)

Sexual abuse - Sexual interaction or contact between an adult and a child or adolescent, even if the child gives consent. It can be touching or non-touching (indecent exposure, showing pornography, and more).

## **Selection of Workers**

All workers who desire to work with the children at South Side Baptist Church will go through the following screening process.

- **Six-month rule** - Any volunteer who works in the children's area must have regularly attended South Side Baptist Church for at least 6 months and joined the membership (or at the pastor's discretion).
- **Background check** – All children's workers are required to have a limited criminal history check (paid for by the church) that will be renewed at least once every three years. The information will be filed on a secured server that will have limited access.
- **Read training of the service position**
- **Read copy of Child Protection Policy and sign record each year**
- **Written application**

## **Teenage Workers**

The goal of teen involvement in the nurseries is for teens to learn how to deal with young children and to serve in the church. The teen's responsibilities are limited to rocking/holding babies, sitting on the floor to play with older babies and toddlers, coloring/playing with play dough, etc. Teens are not to change diapers or to take toddlers to the bathroom. There is also to be no rough play with the babies/toddlers (flipping upside down, holding on their shoulders, swinging, etc.).

## Policies

### Supervision of Classes

- **Two Adult Rule** - It is our goal that at least two approved adults or one adult and one teen helper should be in the classroom at all times. Adults should avoid being alone with a minor out of view or in a secluded place.
- If a class (6<sup>th</sup> grade or under) is very small or only one teacher is available, the teacher should inform parents if possible.
- Children of the teachers and helpers are not allowed in the baby nursery or toddler nursery unless it is the nursery in which the child regularly attends. This is due to safety of the young children, concerns of other parents, and limited space.
- Classrooms for children ages 0-4 must be staffed with at least one female worker to change diapers and help with restroom needs.

### Check-in procedure

At check-in, each child in baby nursery through kindergarten will receive a security tag with his/her name on it. A name tag for a baby or toddler will be placed on his/her back. Children in 1<sup>st</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> do not need a parent to check them in or check them out.

### Proper Display of Affection

Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate.

- Hugs: A one-arm side hug is a positive contact. Avoid initiating full body contact, body-to-body hugs, or kisses.
- Lap sitting: Appropriate sitting on laps may occur with children five and younger. Discourage lap sitting with school age children. Instead, encourage them to sit next to you.
- Casual touch: Gentle contact (such as on children's heads, shoulders, arms, and hands) is appropriate during activities.
- Back Rubs: Anyone working with children should refrain from giving back rubs.
- Tickling: Anyone working with children should refrain from tickling.

For youth (7<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade), there should be no physical contact such as hugging, lap sitting, back rubbing, tickling, or any inappropriate casual touch between a youth leader and a teen of the opposite gender.

### Bathroom Supervision Policies

- For children in the toddler nursery area, bathroom visits will require that one female teacher takes the child to the bathroom in the toddler nursery. Ask if child needs help, and go in to assist as needed.
- For other classes up to kindergarten, bathroom visits will require that one female teacher take the child to the bathroom located in the children's wing.
  - Stand outside the stall door, but be prepared to assist the child with getting on or off the toilet and with wiping. Keep the stall door open at all times if you are in it.
  - Go in a group if at all possible.
- 1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers will use discretion on allowing children to walk to the bathroom in the children's area on their own or to walk them to the door. If teacher escorts a student, she should wait outside the door.
- 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade students will be released to use the bathroom on their own.

### **Sick Child Policy**

The following are signs of an infectious illness. Please watch carefully for signs of these in the children. If you find these signs, ask the parent/guardian if the child has been ill or if they have allergies, etc. A sick child who shows these symptoms should sit with a parent in service or return home until all signs have been absent for at least 24 hours or the child has been on antibiotics for at least 24 hours. By doing this, we can prevent an epidemic from occurring in our classes.

- Fever of over 100 degrees
- Non-stop runny nose – yellow and/or green mucus; runny noses due to teething and clear mucus are fine
- Signs of a rash
- Vomiting or diarrhea in the past 24 hours
- Eyes that are pink around the rim, full of mucus, and swollen (pink eye)
- Lice
- Staph Infection

### **Medication Policy**

Please do not give medicine of any kind to a child in the classroom. If a child requires medicine, the teacher should request that the parent return to give it to the child. If an exception is made in a rare case, such as an overnight trip or Vacation Bible School, the prescribed medication should come in a package labeled with the child's name and dosage. A permission slip to give the medication should be filled out and signed by a parent/guardian. Exceptions may be granted for potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents should talk to the teacher to develop a plan of action for potentially life-threatening conditions.

### **First Aid/Injuries**

For minor injuries (scrapes, bruises, etc.), workers will provide first aid such as a Band-aid as appropriate and notify the parent at the pick-up time. First aid kits are located above the children's wing coat rack, in the usher's closet in lobby, and above the coat rack behind the sanctuary. Tell the parent about the minor injury at the time of pick-up.

For serious injury more than a small scrape or bump, consult with parents as soon as possible to make sure they are involved in any treatment. Notify security, as they are trained to assist. If needed, call 911. If anything more than minor first aid is required, the pastor or a member of the children's ministry team should be notified of the incident.

### **Food Allergies and Snacks**

All volunteers should be aware of allergy warnings for their classroom. An allergy warning notice is posted in each classroom (6<sup>th</sup> and under) for regular attenders, identifying the child and their allergy. Children that are checked in will have an allergy notice on their name tags if they have one. The teacher in the classroom should communicate with the parent/guardian when the child is dropped off, as needed, so that an appropriate snack can be given. We work to make our children's area nut-free. Nurseries should be stocked with milk-free and nut-free snacks.

## **Allergic Reaction**

In case of a severe reaction, immediately give Epi-pen if provided. If you are uncomfortable administering it, get a security team member or other volunteer to give it. If Epi-pen is administered or if medication is not available, call 911 in either case.

If there is a minor reaction, get child's parent immediately. Security can help with this, as well, if parent does not have a pager.

## **Outside Activities**

- Children (anyone 6<sup>th</sup> grade and under) should not leave church property unless permission is obtained in advance from a pastor or children's ministry team leader, as well as the parent. Parental notification and a completed parental permission slip are required. Teens should not leave the premises except for a planned youth activity.
- Any outdoor activities conducted on the church campus should be supervised by at least two adult volunteers.
- When transporting children under the age of 18, a leader may never be alone in a vehicle with a child of the opposite sex.
- Teens may NOT drive to any outside activity leaving from the church, nor is another teen allowed in their car, unless they are a sibling or the youth staff has approval from the parent/guardian.

## **Classroom Discipline**

Our purpose is not to punish but to provide positive instruction, which leads children to make the right choices. Physical punishment (spanking, grabbing, and hitting, etc.) are not permitted. Language that shames or tears down the child's self esteem, yelling, or threats are not appropriate.

## **Discipline ideas in baby nursery and toddler nursery**

- Speak firmly and simply. For example, say "No, no, Timothy. Pinching hurts Amy. Use nice hands." Then demonstrate or model what that means. Notify parents if behavior is ongoing.
- Divert child's attention. Redirect him to another safe activity. Give him another interesting and safe object to hold to gain his attention.
- Remove child from danger.
- If a child is biting others, more than likely he/she is teething. Remove him from others; give some one on one attention and a cold teether to chew on if possible. Notify parents of behavior. A known biter should be watched carefully. It is the teacher's responsibility to do the following:
  - Inform the parents when a child is bitten.
  - Inform parents that their child has bitten another child.
  - Inform the nursery team leader of the incident.
- Toy time out may be used if the toy is a source of continued quarreling.
- If two particular children continuously fight, put them in separate activities or locations.
- Sitting in a chair for a time out may be used for one to three minutes only for toddlers. This tool can create a buffer for the child and help to redirect his behavior.

### **Discipline ideas for elementary classrooms**

- Classroom rules are to include the following:
  - Talk only when called upon and use only appropriate language.
  - Keep hands and feet to yourself.
  - Obey the teacher.
- If children are engaged in inappropriate or dangerous behavior, please remain firm and consistent. Teachers can use redirection of behaviors whenever possible.
  - Redirect child to another safe activity or play zone.
  - Sitting in a chair for a time out may be used for three to four minutes only. This tool can create a buffer for the child and help to redirect their behavior.
- Every effort should be made to engage each child in the class, keeping in mind learning styles and talents. However, if a child is repeatedly breaking the classroom rules, then a warning system may be instituted for the entire class. How this system is explained and activated is left to the teacher's discretion; however, the following guidelines should be followed:
  - Clearly explain the warning system to the class and allow one warning.
  - The consequence of not heeding the warning, of continued disobeying, or of disrupting the class will be to leave the classroom and sit with parent.
  - This may require a teacher or volunteer to leave the room to get the parent or a children's ministry team member. A classroom with children should never be left unattended by an adult. Our goal is to have at least two teachers in every class at all times. If a classroom has only one adult teacher, and it is necessary for that teacher to leave, the teacher should first secure another adult to supervise the room before leaving. A security team member may be available to help in this case.

### **Response Procedure to Suspected Abuse**

If a worker should see something that would lead you to believe a child or youth is being subjected to abuse of any kind, please do the following:

- Keep it confidential.
- Upon receiving information of abuse, report immediately to the pastor or leader assigned for that program. That leader will make a decision regarding the appropriate next steps. A quick, compassionate, and unified response to an alleged incident of child abuse will be initiated. All allegations will be taken seriously, and nothing will be covered up.
- By law, we are required to report any physical injury that has the appearance of physical abuse.
- If the abuse happened on church property by church volunteers or staff, they shall immediately be removed from contact with children until the incident reported has been resolved. This should be handled in a discreet manner, and they shall not be banned from other church ministries.
- The pastor is the only person authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements should be directed to the Pastor or his designee.
- Pastoral support will be available to all persons involved in the incident as indicated.

## Emergency Procedures

### Fire

1. Remain calm.
2. Take a class headcount.
3. Teacher will guide class to the nearest exit. Move away from the building and parking lot.
4. Last person exiting the classroom should close the door. This will more than likely be the helper.
5. Students should remain silent.
6. Take a headcount once you are outside.
7. Signify to security or ministry leader that all are accounted for.
8. Inform security or ministry leader if a child is unaccounted for. Do not go in yourself.
9. Do not re-enter building until all clear is given by security or ministry leader.

### Tornado

1. Take a headcount and move class to the appropriate location.
2. Nursery children should be placed in playpens in nursing room.
3. Have children sit, facing the wall, and covering heads.
4. Wait for all clear signal from security or leader to return to class.
5. Locations to go:
  - Baby nursery – nursing room
  - Toddler nursery – toddler bathroom
  - Preschool – Kindergarten – Fruit of the Spirit room, C102
  - 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> - Fruit of the Spirit room, C102
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> - boys' bathroom in children's wing
  - 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> – girls' bathroom in children's wing
  - Youth – youth lounge/kitchen
  - Jr. church – boys' and girls' bathrooms in children's wing
  
  - Puggles – nursing room
  - Cubbies – Fruit of the Spirit room, C102
  - Sparks – Fruit of the Spirit room, C102
  - T & T – boys' and girls' bathrooms in children' wing

### Internal Building Emergency (gas leak, explosion, collapse, hazardous materials)

1. Sound the fire alarm – everyone evacuates.
2. Follow fire drill procedures.
3. Take headcount before you go out and again outside.
4. Remain with students until further notice.

### **Lock Down**

1. Security or a ministry leader will announce a lockdown.
2. Immediately lock your classroom door.
3. Create a barrier to the entrance of the classroom.
4. Turn lights off.
5. Close blinds.
6. Move students away from windows, doors, and view of windows.
7. Do not allow anyone to enter or leave the room or open the door.
8. Keep children quiet and calm.
9. Stay in place until security member, ministry leader, or law enforcement gives the all clear.

### **Hostage/Security Threat**

1. If you are directly involved in responding to the threat:
  - a. Remain calm and do your best to keep children calm.
  - b. Avoid quick movements.
  - c. Follow all instructions of the captor.
  - d. Do not try to disarm the captor.
  - e. Be aware of any missing or absent students.
  - f. Follow instructions of security team or law enforcement.
2. If you observe a security threat:
  - a. Make no personal intervention.
  - b. Remain out of sight and get class out of sight.
  - c. Immediately notify security if possible.
  - d. Lock classroom door and barricade.
3. If you are informed of a security threat:
  - a. Remain in your room. Do not go after a child in bathroom or other part of the building.
  - b. Lock your door and allow no student movement.
  - c. Wait for instructions from security or law enforcement.
  - d. Keep students away from doors and windows.
  - e. Keep children calm and quiet.
  - f. Stay in position until you get the all clear from a leader, security, or law enforcement.