

Child Protection Policy Training Guide



HILLENDALE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Biblical Foundation and Purpose

Jesus teaches explicitly that children are of much value in Kingdom terms, and that to cause one to sin has the gravest of consequences (Matthew 18:1-6, NIV). As Christian adults we are called to establish a **secure environment** where the perfect love of God works to cast out all fear (1 John 4:18) and the nurture and love of God are made known to all, and in particular to our children and youth. In this way we can fulfill the biblical mandate to train up our children in the way they should go (Proverbs 22:6). The purpose of our Child Safety Policy is to give instruction to our Church that will inform our decisions and methods with regard to safeguarding the children and youth entrusted to us.

Child Safety Committee

A committee of **members** was formed to develop our church's child safety policy. In consultation with legal counsel, our policy was created. The committee will from time to time update and revise the policy as necessary, in light of practical experiences, medical and other scholarly research, legal developments, and other relevant considerations.

Responsibility for this Policy

The pastoral leadership (including the Senior and Assistant Pastors) has overall responsibility for the administration of this policy within the Church.

Child Abuse Policy (What We Believe)

- (1) We believe it is our responsibility to protect the children in our care. Parents and children need to know that we have taken **every reasonable step** to ensure children's safety in our ministry. Hillendale will not tolerate any form of child abuse involving our pastors, deacons, staff, volunteers, or other persons. Everyone who serves the Church through educational, pastoral, recreational or other activities is expected to maintain the highest biblical standards in relationships with those to whom they minister, avoiding any form of misconduct against children. That commitment extends to sexual behavior. No one in the employ or volunteer service of the Church who has a civil or criminal record of child abuse, or who has admitted committing prior sexual abuse of a child, will be permitted to serve with children or youth.
- (2) We believe it is our responsibility to protect staff and volunteer workers in our children's ministry from being exposed to **false** accusations of sexual misconduct. To this end, we have screening and supervision policies in place to protect our ministry workers.



- (3) We believe it is our responsibility to set a Godly example for our **community**. By requiring child protection training, as well as implementing screening and supervision policies, we are modeling good safety procedures to others who look to our ministry as an example of a well-run ministry to children and youth.

Child Abuse Defined

Child abuse, in practical terms, refers to an act committed by a parent, caregiver or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is **not accidental** and which harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare.

Virginia law ([Code of Virginia § 63.2 -100](#)) establishes five (5) categories of abuse and neglect, which include:

- **Physical abuse**
- **Physical neglect**
- **Medical neglect**
- **Mental abuse/neglect**
- **Sexual abuse/exploitation**

Minimum Standards (What We Require)

1. **Screening.** One effective means of reducing the incidence of child abuse is to screen carefully all paid and volunteer children and youth ministry workers. Hillendale requires the following screening and background checks for all employees and volunteers who work with children:
 - a. **Membership (six month rule).** We require that any person who wants to serve in our children's and youth ministry be a member of Hillendale for at least six months prior to serving. The purpose of the six-month rule is to prevent child predators from gaining **quick access**. In some cases, this length of time is reduced – at the discretion of the Senior Pastor and in consultation with the Child Safety Committee – based on a person's ability to provide positive character references from other youth-serving organizations and from our ministry leaders, and a person's prior history working with children in a previous faith community.
 - b. **Written application.** We require all employees and volunteers working with children and youth to complete a written application. The application will be reviewed, updated, and certified **annually**.
 - c. **Reference checks.** Once the written application is complete, we conduct personal, professional, and/or other appropriate reference checks.
 - d. **Personal interview.** We conduct face-to-face interviews and use it as time to explore more fully why a candidate wants to work with children and youth.
 - e. **Background checks.** We conduct National Sex Offender Registry and Criminal Background checks for all paid and volunteer workers who serve with minors. If



your role requires driving as part of your ministry service with minors, we will require you to submit additional information and conduct a driving records check.

- 2. Training.** Training is also an important deterrent to child abuse. Those who work with children or youth must be trained to become familiar with **safe practices** specific to our Church designed to reduce the potential of abuse occurring, as well as learn the procedures for **reporting** suspected abuse. Hillendale requires the following training:

- a. Reading requirement.** All pastoral staff and other paid staff members with direct supervision over youth or children must certify that they have read, understood, and accepted the Child Protection Policy Manual.
- b. Workshop attendance.** Those staff and volunteers who have contact with youth and children must attend our Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Training workshop and submit an acknowledgement form at the end of that training. A certificate of completion will be provided to each person at the end of the Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Training workshop.

- 3. Interacting.** These procedures help children and adults feel safe in ministry.

- a. Communication.** Verbal interactions between staff or volunteers and children should be **positive** and **uplifting**. Staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children. To this end, staff and volunteers should avoid talking to children or parents in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children. Concerns about children should be directed to parents, legal guardians, the appropriate ministry leader, or the pastors. Staff and volunteers should avoid engaging in any sexually-oriented communications with children, (except as noted in the following section in educational or abuse- reporting contexts), and should refrain from discussing any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating, or sexual activities with any child in the ministry. Staff and volunteers should report any sexually-oriented communications involving a child to the appropriate ministry leader or pastor.
- b. Substances.** Staff and volunteers who serve our children and youth should refrain from the use, possession, or being under the influence of **tobacco** products, **alcohol**, or any illegal **drugs** while on church grounds, while traveling with or in the presence of children or their parents, during church-sponsored activities, or while working with or supervising children.
- c. Sexually-oriented material (for Christian instruction).** Staff members and volunteers may employ **age**-appropriate materials when leading discussions dealing with human sexuality/sexual abuse prevention/sexual purity. This includes discussions that may arise from study of **Bible** passages. Any prospective material should first be submitted to the **Senior Pastor** for approval,



and then (after approval) be made available for the parents of participants. Prior to introducing these materials, **notice** should be provided to parents in order to allow an opt-out should there be concerns or objections.

d. **Social media.** Social media avenues (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.) are important ways for youth ministry staff and volunteer leaders to connect with students. Their world is often constructed around social media, for better or worse. Having personal interactions in this venue allows adults to model **appropriate** behavior in social media, and it forms valuable connections with students. To that end, it is strongly recommended that all children's ministry staff and volunteers refrain from posting any information on social media outlets that might be embarrassing, inappropriate, compromising, or offensive, no matter who can view it. This includes your use of language, your posting of (or tagging of) photographs, and your recounting of stories and experiences. Additionally, children's and youth ministry workers, whether paid or volunteer, should not **connect** with students on social media when students are younger than the minimum age as established by each social media outlet (for example, Facebook's minimum age is currently 13).

e. **Physical contact.** Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer. No child should ever feel uncomfortable in the way they are being touched. It is the Church policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children. Any form of **physical discipline** is **unacceptable**. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. **Parents** are to be notified immediately if their child is exhibiting inappropriate behavior.

Those who serve, whether paid or volunteer, maintain a powerful relationship of authority and trust with the people to whom they minister. Betrayal of that trust through violation of sexual boundaries causes great emotional and spiritual harm. Such misconduct is a denial of our calling as Christians and may be a violation of the law. We must take every step to prevent it, and to respond with swift justice should misconduct occur.

The following standards of interaction with children shall be carefully followed at all times:

- Appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children is important for children's **development**, and is generally suitable in the church setting. Appropriate physical affection means offering a gentle touch on the shoulders, hands, arms, head, or back, and includes (but is not limited to):
 - high-fives
 - handshakes



- fist bumps
- thumbs up
- head pat
- side hug
- smiling
- pats on the back
- Inappropriate physical affection includes (but is not limited to):
 - wrestling
 - tickling
 - kissing on the lips
 - sitting on laps (toddlers and older children should never be allowed to sit in your lap, covering your private area; instead, have a child sit beside you)
 - **demanding** kisses or hugs
 - touching of the chest, waist, stomach, bottom or private areas
 - full frontal hugs
 - commenting on children's bodies
 - forcing unwanted affection
- Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden.
- Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or **misinterpreted** when physical contact is open to observation.
- Physical contact in any form should not give even the **appearance** of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in our children's and youth ministry must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
- Do not force physical contact, touch, or affection on a **reluctant** child. A child's preference not to be touched must be **respected** at all times.
- Children's staff members and volunteers are responsible for **protecting** children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.

4. **Check In/Check Out.** Parents who desire to utilize our children's and youth ministry services on Sundays will have **one** designated location for their children to check in and out of those services. Children's and youth ministry staff members or volunteers are responsible for checking to ensure that children who enter their rooms have the appropriate **wristbands** that denote they have been properly checked in. Following care/instruction, staff members and volunteers shall escort children to their next destination for either further instruction or check out/pick up. Staff members and volunteers at the check out location shall ensure that at the close of services or activities, children are released only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons **designated** by parents or legal guardians.



1
2 **5. Supervision.** Our supervision policies are designed to reduce **isolation**, increase
3 **accountability**, and reduce the disparity of **power** between a worker and a child in our
4 program. We expect all children's and youth workers to follow the supervision policies
5 we have in place to accomplish these goals.

6 **a. Ratios.** The following recommendations must be adhered to for either on or off-
7 site services/activities involving the children's and youth ministry:

- 8 • **Infants/Toddlers (birth to 2/3 years old):** 2 adults for up to **8**
9 infants/toddlers; 1 additional adult for every additional 1-4 infants/toddlers
- 10 • **Preschool/Kindergarten (3/4 years old to 5/6 years old):** 2 adults for up to
11 **16** children; 1 additional adult for every additional 1-8 children
- 12 • **School-aged (1st-12th grades):** 1 adult for up to **15** children (albeit, no one
13 adult should be **alone** with just one child); 1 additional adult for every
14 additional 1-20 children
- 15 • **Mixed-Age:** ratio for the **youngest** child in the group

16 **b. Teen volunteers.** Teens (13-years of age and older) may volunteer with our
17 Church's children's and youth ministry at the **permission** of their
18 parent(s)/guardian(s). They shall be **required** to complete the same screening
19 and training process. Teen volunteers shall not be permitted to provide one-on-
20 one supervision and no teen volunteer(s) should ever be placed in a position to
21 watch children without an **adult** present. Where a teen, under the age of 18
22 years old, volunteers, he/she shall be counted as another **child** for supervision
23 ratio purposes.

24 **c. General Guidelines**

- 25 • Staff members and volunteers should take steps to avoid being **alone** with
26 one child.
- 27 • Staff members and volunteers should be in place **before** students are
28 allowed to enter classrooms. Under no circumstance should a child be
29 permitted to wait in a **classroom** alone before instruction/activity begins.
30 Should a child arrive prior to the staff member and/or volunteer assigned,
31 parents should be asked to wait until his/her arrival.
- 32 • All classes should begin at a set time and end at a set time. At the least all
33 classes should **end** at a set time to avoid early dismissals and subsequent
34 unsupervised activities. Staff and volunteers must **escort** children to their
35 drop-off location or next activity (e.g. from Children's Church to Sunday
36 School or from Sunday School to the parent pick-up point).

37 **d. Restroom use.** All staff members and volunteers will observe the following
38 general policies (note: specific policies for diapering, toilet training, and
39 accompanying children to the restroom will be given based on room
40 assignment):

- 41 • Parents/guardians should be asked to take their child to the **restroom** before
42 they leave their child in a ministry worker's care.



- When children are **assisted** in bathrooms the stall door will be left partially open.
- Staff members and volunteers should take steps to **avoid** being alone with one child in the restroom.
- Children should receive the **minimum** amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities.

e. **Monitoring.** Monitoring helps detect problems before they turn into an incident of abuse and helps adults avoid wrongful allegations of abuse where none has occurred. Staff and volunteers must be diligent in monitoring and supervising children's and youth activities in all settings at all times. Monitoring practices include, but are not limited to, the following:

- All children's and youth ministry activities shall be designed to be supervised by screened and trained individuals.
- No child will ever be left unattended in the building or on the property during or following a church activity.
- In a discipleship or mentoring relationship, the interactions should take place in a public place or where other persons are present.
- Staff and volunteers should watch for policy violations.
- All staff and volunteers shall adhere to an open door policy for parents and guardians. Parents should have an **open invitation** to visit at any time, unannounced.
- The Senior Pastor (in conjunction with the Child Safety Committee) should conduct a careful review of any new or proposed program involving children and youth. A similar review should be conducted when significant changes are proposed to an existing ministry program.
- Staff and volunteers shall keep interaction with children in full view of others at all times.
- Unused rooms shall remain locked when possible.
- Children and youth should be kept in **supervised areas** within the church building.

f. **First aid/medication.** If possible, the child's **parent** should administer medication. A staff member or volunteer, as **authorized** by the parent, may give medication to a child. When medically necessary, medication or first aid may be given to a child by a staff member or volunteer. Parents should be notified whenever medication or first aid has been administered.

6. **Responding and Reporting.** All staff and volunteers should report any inappropriate or suspicious behavior to a ministry staff leader immediately. This includes reporting any suspected abuse being committed by another worker, as well as any child who presents signs of abuse. No one will ever be in trouble for reporting suspected abuse. The following is the proper procedure if someone comes forward with an **allegation** of child abuse:



- a. **Provide a caring response.** It is important that ministry leaders respond with care and concern to the person making the report, according to the best practices outlined in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1: RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT		
Focus of Conversation	Appropriate Responses	Inappropriate Responses
The initial sharing of the sexual misconduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Thank you for sharing. ■ I know how hard this must be for you. ■ You've done the right thing in sharing this. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ I can't believe it. ■ This seems impossible. ■ You're not making this up, are you?
Identification of the alleged perpetrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ I want you to know that we take your allegation seriously. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Are you sure this isn't a case of mistaken identity? ■ I know him; I can't believe he would do such a thing.
Facts about the misconduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ I'm very sorry about what has happened. ■ We want to do everything within our power to help and support you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ It doesn't sound like that much happened. ■ Don't you feel like you share some of the blame? ■ Why didn't you tell someone earlier? ■ You should have stopped him.
What next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ We have procedures in place to respond to allegations, and we want to make certain that nothing like this ever happens again. ■ You have taken a courageous step today. ■ I know it has been difficult, but you've done the right thing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ This is going to ruin our church. ■ Have you thought through the implications of this allegation? ■ You must forgive and forget. ■ You've put me in a difficult spot.

- b. **Report the allegation immediately.** Alleged incidents of child abuse must be reported to the **Senior Pastor** immediately. The pastor will document the allegation, contact authorities (the church is required to alert the authorities about all allegations of abuse within 24 hours), and assure the victim and the victim's family that:
- The ministry takes very seriously any allegations of sexual misconduct.
 - The ministry does not tolerate incidents of sexual misconduct and considers such incidents to be an affront to the gospel, subjecting the perpetrator to discipline.
 - The complaint will be investigated immediately and thoroughly.
 - The ministry will not tolerate any retaliation against a victim (or family) for filing a complaint, no matter how it is resolved.



Hillendale Baptist Church

- 1
- 2
- 3



Workshop Attendance Acknowledgment Form

I, _____, certify that on _____ I
(name) (date)
attended the Child Abuse Prevention Training workshop at Hillendale Baptist Church.

I further certify that:

- ☐ I have completed and understood the Child Protection Policy and/or the Child Protection Policy Manual.
- ☐ I will abide by the provisions of this policy as long as I am an employee/volunteer of the church.

Sign

Date

