



PROTECTION POLICY

***(For children, youth,
persons with intellectual and/or
developmental disabilities, and
those who work with them)***

- Unpaid Ministry Worker Version -

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*College Church, 332 E. Seminary Avenue
Wheaton, IL 60187*

COLLEGE CHURCH PROTECTION POLICY

**(For children, youth, persons with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities,
and those who work with them)**

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The intention of this policy is to provide guidelines for our Paid Staff and Unpaid Ministry Workers in order to promote a safe and nurturing environment for all who lead and participate in College Church Christian Education (CE) Ministries. From Ephesians 4 we learn that the role of the pastor is to equip the saints to do the work of ministry for the purpose of building up the body of Christ so that all will become mature in Christ. Therefore, throughout this policy, we make a distinction between Paid Staff and Unpaid Ministry Workers simply as a way to communicate our belief that every member can and should be encouraged to serve in the various ministries of the church. Everyone who teaches, helps, or cares for children, youth, and persons with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities under the sponsorship of College Church, whether paid or unpaid, must follow these policies and procedures. Those who are unwilling or unable to follow these guidelines will be asked to refrain from serving in these ministries. This document represents minimum requirements. Individual programs may impose additional guidelines as appropriate to their ministry settings after approval by the Pastor/Ministry Director of that particular ministry.

I. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR CHILDREN'S, YOUTH, SPORTS, AND STARS MINISTRIES

A. Definitions

For purposes of this document the following definitions will apply:

Adult Unpaid Ministry Worker: a person 18 years of age or older who is not known to have an intellectual disability.

Child/Children: a person or persons age birth through grade 6.

College Student: a person between the ages of 17 and 24 who attends college and is actively enrolled in at least 8 hours of college classes per semester, excluding the summer months.

Inclusion: a program allowing persons with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities to participate in Christian Education (CE) activities designed for children or youth without disabilities.

Ministry Worker: Paid Staff, Supervisor, and/or Unpaid Ministry Worker

Pastor/Ministry Director: the paid staff member in charge of the particular ministry being addressed.

Program Participants: any child, youth, sports, or STARS participant participating in a College Church CE program designed to benefit persons in their age group or persons with similar special needs.

Regular Attenders: persons who have been attending College Church services/ministries on a regular basis for 6 months or more.

STARS: name of the College Church Disability Program, designed for children and adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

STARS Helper: a person with an intellectual and/or developmental disability who assists the Volunteers and/or Supervisors of Children's, Youth, Sports, or STARS Ministries on an unpaid basis.

STARS Participant: any child, youth, or person with an intellectual and/or developmental disability, who participates in the STARS Ministry.

Student Helpers: persons between the ages of 8 and 15 who assist the Volunteers and Supervisors of Children's, Youth, Sports, and STARS Ministries on an unpaid basis.

Supervisors: Pastors, Ministry Directors, or any other adult so designated by the Christian Education Board or holding a College Church elected position as identified in the College Church Bylaws.

Unpaid Ministry Worker(s): adults and youth age 16 and over involved in supervising, guiding, helping, directing, and teaching in the Children's, Youth, Sports, and STARS Ministries.

Youth: persons in grades 7-12.

B. Screening Process

1. As a general rule, Unpaid Ministry Workers and Student Helpers who work on a regular basis with children, youth, sports, or STARS participants at College Church, should be members, or Regular Attenders of College Church or, in the case of the STARS Program, parents of current STARS participants. College Students may have the membership and Regular Attender requirement waived, though they are subject to all other screening criteria.

Other exceptions to the membership and Regular Attender requirement may be granted on an individual basis by the Christian Education Board.

2. Adult Unpaid Ministry Workers must complete and sign a Release Form and a Profile Form.

3. Adult Unpaid Ministry Workers must submit to a screening process that will always include a background check, and may include (at the discretion of the Pastor/Ministry Director in charge of the ministry), a reference check and/or personal interview.

4. Upon review of the background check and any other information required and received by the Pastor/Ministry Director, each Adult Unpaid Ministry Worker applicant will be approved or declined by the Pastor/Ministry Director.

5. If approved by the Pastor/Ministry Director, the applicant's name will be submitted to the Christian Education Board ("CE Board") for review. If the applicant's name is not selected by a member of the CE Board for further investigation, it will be included in a list of names to be voted on for approval as a group by the CE Board.

6. If an applicant's name is selected for further investigation, the Pastor/Ministry Director shall follow up on the concern and report back to the CE Board.

7. Names of those with exceptions to these requirements must be approved by the CE Board at their next meeting.

8. If the applicant is a relative of the Pastor/Ministry Director in charge of the ministry, the approval will be made by the Pastor of Christian Education and ratified by the CE Board at their next meeting.

9. Previously approved Adult Unpaid Ministry Workers, who continue to serve, will annually complete a Returning Release Form that will be reviewed by a Pastor/Ministry Director. Background checks and follow-up interviews may be performed. If approved by the Pastor/Ministry Director, these names will also be submitted to the CE Board for final approval.

C. Staffing

1. Adequate and appropriate supervision is required to ensure the safety of the program participants and maintain a viable learning environment. **Please note that a minimum of two Adults is always required regardless of the number of program participants present.**

College Church will do its best to follow these preferred staffing ratios for Christian Education programs at College Church:

Nursery	One Ministry Worker per 3-5 children
Pre-School	One Ministry Worker per 6-8 children
Elementary	One Ministry Worker per 10-12 children
Junior High	One Ministry Worker per 15 students
High School	One Ministry Worker per 20 students
Younger STARS (up to age 12)	One Ministry Worker per 2 STARS participants *
Teen STARS (ages 13-21)	One Ministry Worker per 3 STARS participants *
Adult STARS (age 22+)	One Ministry Worker per 4 STARS participants*
Inclusion	One Ministry Worker per 1 child/student

* Some program participants with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities may require one-to-one assistance. These instances will be identified by parents, STARS staff, and ministry staff.

2. For purposes of supervision, staff may be used in place of Unpaid Ministry Workers to accommodate and supplement the guidelines listed above. In that case, the guidelines that apply to Unpaid Ministry Workers will apply to Staff as well.

D. Classroom Supervision

1. Children, youth, sports participants, and persons with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities must be under adult supervision during the scheduled ministry program time. STARS and Children's Ministry Workers will wear nametags while serving.
2. Supervisors will make regular visits to the classrooms and nurseries to ensure that the requirements outlined in this Policy are adhered to.
3. Two-deep supervision is essential: at least two adults must be in the room at all times and at least one must have undergone a background check with satisfactory results and must have been approved by the Pastor/Ministry Director.

Exceptions:

- a. In the rare event that an unusual circumstance arises requiring one Unpaid Ministry Worker to leave the room before a substitute is available, a replacement will be found to assist in that room as soon as is possible.
 - b. Some rooms are divided into smaller areas and are concurrently used by more than one group. Those smaller areas may be staffed by one approved Unpaid Ministry Worker.
 4. College Church encourages family ministry. However, Ministry Workers in one room should not be entirely from the same family. They may work together as long as other Ministry Workers outside of the family are present. Rare exceptions may be made by the Pastor/Ministry Director in charge of that ministry.
 5. If a class does not meet the preferred staffing ratios set forth above, and the Pastor/Ministry Director or Supervisor believes that the safety and/or learning of the program participants would be compromised if the program continued without the preferred staffing, the following steps will be taken:
 - a. **Combining Classes:** Two classes may be combined, if practical, to meet the staffing requirements. When necessary, a notice will be posted at each classroom door alerting everyone to the change.
 - b. **Using Parent Helpers:** If combining classes is not an appropriate option, a parent or other responsible adult may be asked to stay to help meet the preferred staffing ratios before additional students will be admitted to the classroom. An approved Unpaid Ministry Worker will be designated to inform this helper of pertinent policies (example: bathroom policy).
 - c. **Canceling Class:** Programs without adequate staffing will not commence. Additionally, programs which continually experience staffing deficiencies will be subject to review by the Pastor/Ministry Director and the CE Board to determine viability.
6. Every effort will be made to staff rooms for children ages 0 – 4 with at least one female adult Unpaid Ministry Worker.
 7. Any student in grade 3-12 who wants to help in Children's Ministries or STARS Ministries must complete a Guidelines for Student Helpers Form.

E. Proper Display of Affection

While physical contact is essential to nurturing lives, it should be age and developmentally appropriate. Staff, Unpaid Ministry Workers, Student Helpers and anyone else working with Children's, Youth, Sports, and/or STARS Ministries at College Church must be aware of and sensitive to developmental differences, family backgrounds, personalities, and special needs. The following guidelines will help promote pure, genuine, and positive displays of God's love:

1. **Hugs and Kisses:** Younger children are especially affectionate. Use discretion in initiating full contact, body-to-body hugs. Kissing on the lips is never appropriate. One arm side hugs or hand-to-arm hugs are appropriate, especially for older children/youth.
2. **Lap Sitting:** Appropriate sitting on laps may occur with younger children. Lap sitting with older children and youth is not appropriate. Rather, encourage them to sit next to you.
3. **Casual Touch:** **Gentle** contact during activities may be on children's heads, shoulders, arms, and hands. Rough-housing and physical discipline should never be used.

Supervisors should be especially vigilant to ensure there is no improper contact and communicate any concerns to the appropriate Pastor/Ministry Director.

F. Special Events/Overnights

1. Field Trips and Special Events

- a. Church-sponsored off-campus activities **must** be pre-approved by the Pastor/Ministry Director. Parents should be notified at least one week prior to the outing.
- b. Proper **written** consent/medical release forms are required for each student participating in off-campus activities using the Parent/Legal Guardian Consent for Domestic Trip and All-Year Participation Form for Student Ministries. These forms are available from the Pastor/Ministry Director, in the church office or teacher resource room.
- c. Appropriate adult/student ratios will be ensured by the staff member in charge (See Staffing Ratios listed above). Again, two-deep supervision is essential for any excursion. For mixed groups, both male and female Adult Unpaid Ministry Workers are required.
- d. Be aware when transportation is involved in an activity, the Christian Education Board "Transportation Policy" must be followed and Driver/Vehicle Information Form completed.

2. Overnight Policy

- a. Church-sponsored overnight activities must be pre-approved by the appropriate Pastor/Ministry Director.
 - b. No overnight activities for children 3rd grade and younger will be allowed (except for parent/child outings).
 - c. Proper **written** consent/medical release forms are required for each student participating in off-campus activities using the Parent/Legal Guardian Consent for Domestic Trip and All-Year Participation Form for Student Ministries. These forms are available from the Pastor/Ministry Director, in the church office or teacher resource room.
 - d. All overnight activities must have at least two approved gender appropriate Unpaid Ministry Workers for both boys and girls.
 - e. Staffing ratios for all overnight events are one gender-appropriate Adult Unpaid Ministry Worker for every 5 students, and need to be maintained throughout the outing.
- Note: All overnight Adult personnel must have successfully completed a background check. Exceptions may be granted by the Pastor/Ministry Director.
- f. Unpaid Ministry Workers should be assigned a specific group of same-gender participants for whom they will be responsible for the duration of the overnight event.
 - g. Dormitory style sleeping arrangements are preferred. Other venues may be used only at the discretion of the Pastor/Ministry Director.
 - h. Camping events are permissible provided that the staffing requirements are adhered to. Tents or camping arrangements must be suitable for 8-10 individuals, and two gender-appropriate Adult Ministry Workers must be in each tent. .
 - i. Overnights involving both genders must be strictly supervised, taking precautions to keep genders appropriately separated.
 - j. At no time should an adult be alone with a program participant unless clearly visible by others.

G. Health

1. Maintaining the good health of children, youth, and Ministry Workers is a priority in Christian Education Ministries. Parents are requested to keep children at home who have active cold symptoms (coughs, running noses), or who have had fever, vomiting, or diarrhea in the past 24 hours prior to a Christian Ed activity.
2. Hand sanitizer and gloves should be available in all classrooms to help prevent to spread of germs. A new pair of gloves is to be worn each time a Ministry Worker changes a diaper, assists in the bathroom, wipes a nose, or comes in contact with blood or any other bodily fluid.

3. Children and youth who have HIV/AIDS or other chronic medical conditions are welcome to attend Christian Ed activities at the discretion of the Pastor/Ministry Director who will be responsible for appropriate risk assessment.

4. Parents of medically fragile children or youth may be requested to remain on the premises while their children participate in Christian Ed activities.

H. Incident Report

In the event of a medical incident or injury, a Notice of Incident or Injury form must be completed within 24 hours by the adult supervising at the time of the incident. Forms are available in the Resource Room and from the Church Office.

I. Transportation Policy

Maximum safety for all individuals while traveling is our utmost concern. Therefore, all drivers must complete the Driver/Vehicle Information Form and adhere to the "Transportation Policy" whether using private vehicles, church vehicles, or rented vehicles, when providing transportation for any of the ministries of College Church.

II. DISCIPLINE

The Christian Education program desires to encourage, stimulate and foster the Christian growth of all participants. Because of this, program participants will not be allowed to disrupt the classroom and/or hinder the growth and learning of others. The purpose of discipline is not punishment for wrongdoing, but assistance in doing what is right. All interaction regarding discipline needs to carefully consider a child's dignity and fragile life. Physical punishment or intimidation will not be used. For additional information on age-appropriate corrective measures, see the Christian Education Board "Discipline Policy".

III. SPECIAL CONCERNS IN CHILDREN'S MINISTRY (Birth – 6th Grade)

A. Architectural Precautions

1. Interior windows shall remain unobstructed in order to provide easy viewing by parents and supervisors.
2. Rooms for children under age four shall use gates or Dutch doors to help keep children contained.
3. All doors, with the exception of hallway public restrooms, will continue to have windows or side windows. Sight lines through the windows should remain unobstructed at all times.
4. Preschoolers will use the rooms with adjoining toilets whenever possible, preventing the need for children to leave the room.
5. The doors into the nurseries should remain locked to prevent anyone from entering unnoticed. The swinging gate outside nurseries should have a childproof latch to prevent children from exiting alone.
6. Nursery changing tables shall be in full view of the other Volunteers in the room.
7. The nursery sleeping room provides two non-locking doors with windows and a radio monitor into another room. This monitor should be on at all times when there is a child in the sleeping room.

B. Drop Off Policy

Children and STARS should not be accepted into a classroom until at least two Adult Ministry Workers are present. Of the two, one must have had a background check with satisfactory results. Generally supervision will be provided beginning 10 minutes before a program starts.

C. Registration Policy

1. Programs for nursery and preschool-aged children provide a weekly sign-in sheet. Parents are required to complete the information requested.
2. A registration card must be completed for any child who regularly attends any of the church programs. Visitor Cards must be completed for any visiting child. These forms are available online, outside each classroom/nursery, at the Kid's Harbor Welcome Center, and from the church office.
3. Children and STARS participants should be registered and attend the class at their age, grade or development level. Temporary exceptions may be made at the discretion of a supervisor.

D. Security System (Infants and Preschoolers)

1. All children in nursery through pre-kindergarten will be issued a number on a security tag which is used to release children back to their parents. Also, the security number is used to call a parent from the sanctuary if necessary, using the digital number displays on the balcony. Parents should be instructed to come directly to their child's room if the child's number is displayed.
2. A child will be released only to the person with the child's security tag.
3. If the security tag is lost, verification of the identity of the person claiming the child will be needed before the child can be released. A Supervisor, Pastor/Ministry Director, or an Unpaid Ministry Worker with personal knowledge of the child and the child's family will be required to verify an identity.
4. Parents should be advised not to enter the nursery/classroom when picking up their child unless requested to do so.
5. All Ministry Workers should wear an identifying name tag.

E. Child Release (Kindergarten – Third Grade)

Kindergarten through third grade children must be picked up from their classrooms following any College Church program.

However, the parent may authorize independent release on the Registration Card that allows dismissal from the program without an accompanying adult.

F. Communication

Orange cones, located in each classroom, can be used to get the attention of a supervisor, so that an Unpaid Ministry Worker does not need to leave the room to seek assistance. He or she puts the cone in the hall outside the classroom door, alerting the Supervisor when help is needed.

G. Diaper Changing Policy

Due to the architectural safety precautions and staffing requirements, men and women may both change children's diapers using the changing pads provided. Children under the age of 14 should refrain from changing diapers. For more information, see the Nursery Handbook.

H. Bathroom Policy

1. Preschool

Only female adults should assist preschoolers with bathroom needs. An exception is granted to a male family member of the child's household who is available to assist his preschool family member with his/her bathroom needs.

Most classrooms for younger children have bathrooms located in the rooms. If a younger child needs assistance in the classroom bathroom, a female adult may enter to assist.

If a classroom for preschoolers does not have a bathroom, an approved female Unpaid Ministry Worker or a Supervisor should escort a child/children to the hallway bathroom. (The cone communication system may be used to attract the attention of a Supervisor.) The Ministry Worker is to screen the bathroom prior to use to make sure that everything is in order and should remain outside the bathroom door in order to escort the child/children back to the classroom when they are ready. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the worker should prop open the bathroom door (using the garbage can or any other suitable object) and leave the stall door open as the child is assisted. A Ministry Worker should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed. Likewise, a worker should never go into a bathroom stall with a child and shut the door.

2. Grade School

If a child is out of the classroom for any reason during class time, he or she should be escorted or supervised by a Ministry Worker at all times. Ministry Workers are required to keep track of any program participant in their care and follow the guidelines outlined above for hallway bathroom use.

Parents should be advised to take their children to the bathroom prior to class.

IV. SPECIAL CONCERNS IN YOUTH MINISTRY (Junior High – Senior High)

Note: The definition of “Unpaid Ministry Worker” within the context of Youth Ministry shall be limited to persons over the age of 18.

A. Backrubs: Although backrubs may seem harmless, at no time is an Unpaid Ministry Worker to be involved in backrubs with youth. Furthermore, youth are to be discouraged from giving backrubs to one another.

B. Dating: At no time shall any adult working with youth pursue a dating relationship with a youth. Although youth may have a tendency to develop “crushes” on leaders, Supervisors and Adult Unpaid Ministry Worker should never encourage this, being careful to discourage inappropriate behaviors.

C. Driving: Be aware when transportation is involved, the Christian Education Board “Transportation Policy” must be followed and Driver/Vehicle Information Form completed.

V. SPECIAL CONCERNS IN STARS MINISTRY

A. Registration

1. Parents or guardians shall complete a STARS Ministry Registration and Medical Form for each STARS participant. These forms are available from the Pastor/Ministry Director or online at the church website.

2. Unless they are their own guardians, STARS will only be released to an adult family member or caregiver unless given written authorization from the parent or guardian.

3. STARS will wear nametags that include the following information: Allergies, pertinent medical information, fears, and contact information.

4. STARS Ministries will have secure procedures for sign in and release of all STARS participants.

B. Inclusion Policy

Some STARS are integrated into our Christian Education Ministries and may have a one-on-one aide. These program participants should follow the procedures of the “inclusion” program. For more information, contact the Inclusion Coordinator.

C. Bathroom Policy

1. Self-contained classrooms for STARS children should have an adjoining bathroom whenever possible, preventing the need for children to leave the room.
2. Youth and Adult STARS in self-contained classrooms should use the bathroom closest to their classroom and should leave the classroom one at a time, escorted to and from the bathroom by a Ministry Worker. If able, the STARS participant will enter the bathroom independently; however, the worker may need to close the door for them if the participant leaves it open (to protect their dignity). If the STARS participant requires personal assistance with undergarments, two approved workers must be present. The one actually assisting the STARS participant must be of the same gender as the STARS participant.
3. Inclusion participants will follow the Bathroom Policy of the ministry in which they participate. If additional assistance is needed, the child’s guardian or a supervisor may be contacted.

D. Diaper Changing

1. Preschool-age STARS who need a diaper change should be changed by an approved Ministry Worker.
2. For STARS older than pre-school, two approved workers need to be present to change a diaper. The workers changing the diaper must be the same gender as the STAR.
3. STARS participants requiring a diaper change must never be left in the bathroom unattended.

E. Safe Touch

Physical contact between Ministry Workers and STARS should be developmentally appropriate. Remember that teens and adults with disabilities are not asexual. Many of them have desires for marriage and romantic relationships. Ministry Workers must conduct themselves in a way that conveys friendship, nothing more.

F. Unpaid Ministry Workers

On occasion, family members or friends of STARS participants or approved STARS Unpaid Ministry Workers, who are not CCIW members or regular attenders, desire to help in the STARS ministry. These individuals will fill out the regular Unpaid Ministry Worker paperwork, including background and reference check. When the Ministry Director reviews the paperwork and it appears that the individual is not a Christian but passes the background check and has acceptable references, then the Ministry Director will follow these procedures:

- a. If the individual is unknown to the STARS ministry director, he/she will meet with this individual to explain the ministry values and purposes. In addition, it will be explained that he/she will be paired with a regular CCIW ministry partner.
- b. In CCIW’s database software Shelby, he/she will be coded as BACKNLD (restricted from leadership) **instead of** QB3/QB4 (approved volunteer for minors). This means that he/she has passed the background and reference checks, and has met with the Ministry Director but will not be allowed to be in any teaching or leadership position in STARS or any other ministry. He/she shall wear a nametag indicating the role of a guest assistant.
- c. Generally, these individuals will be restricted to assisting in our respite ministries (such as Friday Night Fun, Support on Saturdays), that are held on site at College Church and at an occasional retreat. Additionally, they will be paired with a spiritually mature ministry partner who will be made aware that this is a gospel opportunity and pray for the individual and seek ways to share the gospel with them.

- d. These individuals can be counted in the ratio for workers that are needed, but workers with this code cannot make up more than 10% of the workers needed for staffing purposes. The Ministry Director has the responsibility of maintaining the appropriate balance.

VI. CHILDCARE FOR CHURCH-SPONSORED EVENTS

When childcare is provided for a church-sponsored event using church facilities and not defined as Children's or STARS Ministry (example: congregational meetings, small group brunches, etc.), the following childcare requirements must be met:

- A. Childcare must be officially scheduled through the church office.
- B. A registration system, including pertinent information (allergies, custody issues, medical considerations, etc.) as well as a medical release form should be used for each child.
- C. Check-in and check-out procedures and a claim tag system for children younger than Kindergarten should be used.
- D. A minimum of two Adult Ministry Workers per room is required regardless of the number of children present.
- E. Of the two, one must have had a background check with satisfactory results. .
- G. Although College Church encourages family ministry, at no time should all Ministry Workers in one room be from the same family unless other Ministry Workers or a Student Helper is present.
- H. The number of Ministry Workers should be appropriate for the number of children present to ensure the safety of each child. See preferred Staffing Guidelines on page 4 of the Protection Policy.
- F. Children should not be accepted until at least two Adult Ministry Workers are present.
- I. Guidelines on Proper Display of Affection must be followed, as outlined on page 5 of the Protection Policy.
- K. Physical punishment or intimidation are inappropriate disciplinary tools and are forbidden.
- J. The Bathroom Policy and Diaper Changing Policy, as outlined on pages 8-9 of the Protection Policy, must be followed.
- L. Childcare Ministry Workers need to be familiar with and follow Our Ready Response to Suspected Abuse outlined in Article VII of the Protection Policy.

VII. OUR READY RESPONSE TO SUSPECTED ABUSE

The following outlines procedures are to be followed whether abuse is suspected in the ministry setting of College Church or during an off-site event sponsored by College Church.

A. Suspicion of Abuse:

Anyone working with children, youth, sports, or STARS participants in the ministries of College Church shall immediately report to the designated Pastor/Ministry Director any suspicions of abuse or neglect which may indicate a need for further investigation. It is not the responsibility of the reporting person nor the Pastor/Ministry Director to substantiate any allegations or suspicions. Possible indications of abuse or neglect can include:

- a. pattern of injuries not typical for everyday accidents (i.e., marks or bruises on the back, buttocks or abdomen, symmetrical or patterned bites or bruises, skin markings or welts in the shape of a hand, belt or rope)
- b. very poor hygiene or obvious lack of medical care

- c. sexual knowledge or speech not appropriate for the developmental level
- d. overtly sexual behavior or demonstrations
- e. extreme reluctance to go to a particular place or be with a particular person
- f. withdrawal and depression
- g. allusion to incidents in writing or through prayer request

B. Child/Youth Initiated Allegations of Abuse or Neglect

A program participant may approach a trusted Ministry Worker with testimony of abuse. In such a case, the Ministry Worker should take their words seriously and listen attentively and calmly, reassuring the child or youth that he/she is not at fault and was right to come forward with the problem. The Ministry Worker should not promise that he/she will not tell anyone.

C. Report Form

In the event that an Ministry Worker becomes suspicious or is made aware of allegations that a program participant is the victim of abuse or neglect, he or she must immediately contact the Pastor/Ministry Director. The Ministry Worker and Pastor/Ministry Director must together fill out a Suspicion of Abuse Report Form.

D. Confidentiality

At all times the person(s) reporting suspicions or allegations of abuse or neglect must keep the information confidential. Such suspicions should be shared only the Pastor/Ministry Director, or in their absence, the supervising Associate Pastor or the Senior Pastor.

E. Summary of Steps

1. Gently affirm the program participant with words of comfort.
2. Report to the appropriate Pastor/Ministry Director.
3. Fill out a Suspicion of Abuse Report Form with the Pastor/Ministry Director as soon as possible. Forms are available in the church office or Teacher Resource Room.
4. **Together contact the proper authorities.** The Pastor/Ministry Director, as a mandated reporter per the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act, is charged with calling the abuse hotline at 1-800-252-2873 when there is reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect.

F. Assessing the Report

The Pastor/Ministry Director, along with the supervising Associate Pastor, Director of Administration, or Senior Pastor will make every effort to make an assessment within 24 hours of the report. A review committee consisting of a lawyer, doctor, and psychologist/psychiatrist, or social worker (preferably experienced in working with children) may also assist in assessing the report.

If after the review it is determined that the investigation should continue, the Council of Elders will be immediately informed. The Elders, Pastor/Ministry Director, and the review committee will determine how best to proceed.

VIII. CONTINUING THE INVESTIGATION – RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS

A. Initial Response

(The following steps should be handled by the Pastoral Staff and/or Council of Elders:

1. Ensure that the incident has been reported to the proper authorities.
2. Document all your efforts to handle the incident.
3. Report the incident to the church's insurance company and lawyer.
4. If the parents are **not** the alleged perpetrators, notify the parents.
5. Notify the accused only after the safety of the alleged victim is secured.
6. Appoint a spokesperson to handle communication both within and outside the church.
7. Prepare a public statement to answer the media and to convey the news to the congregation.

B. Responding to Alleged Victim

1. Do not minimize or deny the allegation or assess blame.
2. Assure the victim that the church is taking his/her allegations seriously.
3. Make sure the care and safety of the victim is the first priority.
4. Provide ongoing support and assurance of acceptance to the victim and the victim's family.
5. Help the family find professional counseling if the family so desires.
6. Commit to helping the victim and the family toward full healing and recovery.

C. Responding to Alleged Perpetrator

1. Treat the accused with dignity and support
2. Remove any accused Ministry Worker immediately from his/her position until the investigation is finished.
3. Put in place a process of healing and restoration.
4. Future restoration to church fellowship should be handled with great care, taking the feelings of the victim and the victim's family into consideration.
5. If the accused is convicted, concern and support should be given, with the goal of forgiveness and restoration. However, no one who has ever been convicted of abuse of any kind or of any improprieties involving children or disabled persons should ever be placed in a position to work with children, youth, or persons with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. Other appropriate places of service should be encouraged.

IX. PROTECTION POLICY SOURCES:

Better Safe Than Sued by Jack Crabtree. Loveland, Co: Group, 1998

The Focus on the Family Complete Book of Baby and Child Care by the Focus on the Family Physicians Resource Council. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1997.

It Should Never Happen Here by Ernest J. Zarra III. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997

Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church by Richard Hammar, Steven Klipowicz, and James Cobble. Matthews, NC: Christian Ministry Resources, 1993.

When Child Abuse Comes to Church by Bill Anderson. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1992

Facing The Issue of Child Sexual Abuse in the Church by Christian Service Brigade. Revised: January 2006

Caring Relationships: Helping People with Mental Impairments Understand God's Gift of Sexuality by Ronald C. Vredeveld, CRC Publications Grand Rapids, MI.

Protection Policy Revised: April 2010

Due Reconsideration: April 2013