

# **MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY**

## **I. Purpose**

As people of faith, we have concluded that it is our desire and calling to create environments that are welcoming and free from danger and harm, and where people can grow and prosper in their faith journey. As the people of God gathered as the Church, we recognize the diverse nature of those whom come to us to worship, minister, grow, and who seek grace and mercy. All of us who gather are imperfect people, saved by grace.

Through the opportunities we create to interact and be in ministry, we recognize that each of us comes as broken and imperfect people. And sometimes that brokenness and imperfect nature can cause concern and even harm to those within the body. While we seek to be available to and offer the love of Christ to all, we are also called to take measures that will create a safe environment for all who gather.

We especially take our charge to care for “the least of these” very seriously. As faithful adults, we must do all that we can to create a safe and secure environment for the children that have been given to us to nurture and care for. This includes the physical, emotional and spiritual dangers that may confront them. We acknowledge that religious organizations are not immune to incidents of abuse and misconduct. We further acknowledge our limited understanding of the complexities of abuse.

Therefore, we embrace this policy that puts in place the practices and procedures necessary to keep children free from harm. We also see these practices and procedures as a protection for those adults who have graciously stepped forward to care for the children within our congregation. Finally, we endorse all aspects of this policy, recognizing that by protecting children, and reducing the possibility of abuse, we are also taking critical steps necessary to protect the entire ministry of our church.

## II. Abuse Defined

According to the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information, Neglect is failure to provide for a child's basic needs. Neglect may be:

- Physical (e.g. failure to provide necessary food or shelter, or lack of appropriate supervision).
- Medical (e.g. failure to provide necessary medical or mental health treatment).
- Educational (e.g. failure to educate a child or attend to special education needs).
- Emotional (e.g. inattention to a child's emotional needs, failure to provide psychological care, or permitting the child to use alcohol or other drugs).

These situations do not always mean a child is neglected. Sometimes cultural values, the standards of care in the community and poverty may be contributing factors, indicating the family is in need of information or assistance. When a family fails to use information and resources, and the child's health or safety is at risk, then child welfare intervention may be required.

Physical Abuse is physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) as a result of actions such as punching, beating, kicking, biting, shaking, throwing, stabbing, choking, hitting (with a hand, stick, strap, or other object), burning or otherwise harming a child. Such injury is considered abuse regardless of whether the caretaker intended to hurt the child.

Sexual Abuse includes activities by a parent or caretaker such as fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure and exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials.

Emotional Abuse is a pattern of behavior that impairs a child's emotional development or sense of self-worth. This may include constant criticism, threats or rejection, as well as withholding love, support or guidance. Emotional abuse is often difficult to prove and, therefore, CPS may not be able to intervene without evidence of harm to the child. Emotional abuse is almost always present when other forms are identified.

- Specific North Carolina statutes can be found in NCGS Chapter 7B, which can be viewed through the following link:

[https://www.ncleg.gov/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/ByChapter/Chapter\\_7B.html](https://www.ncleg.gov/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/ByChapter/Chapter_7B.html)

### **III. Requirements to serve in Children's or Young Adult (Youth) Ministry:**

The following are necessary:

- Only Members of Macedonia Baptist are allowed to serve in Children's or Youth Ministry.
- Requirements of Children's or Youth Ministry service will be discussed during the four interview sessions that are required for membership.
- In order to serve in Children's (ages 0-13) or Youth Ministry (ages 14-18), a criminal background check must be completed. Results of the background will only be shared with those making the decision on whether to place the applicant into a ministry position. Those offenses that would keep an applicant from being selected would include all crimes of violence, abuse, or felonies against people, especially children. Other crimes revealed will be reviewed by the Elders. (Note: background checks will be conducted by the Children's Director or an Elder.)
- Members who would like to serve in Children's or Youth Ministry must adhere to the 6-month waiting rule prior to being placed in direct contact with minors (meaning they must be a member who has been attending the church for at least six months).
- No teens under the age of 14-years-old may be placed in charge of other minors. Those between 14 and 18-years-old must do so only under the direct supervision of an adult.
- All persons desiring to serve in Children's or Youth Ministries must successfully complete a church approved course on sexual abuse prevention prior to having access to minors.
- All members must sign and affirm that they have read and understand all policies prior to being placed in Children's or Youth Ministry.

## IV. Training

All people working with children or teens will be required to participate in a course on sexual abuse prevention in the church prior to having access to minors.

## V. Supervision

To guard against the potential of abuse or injury, it is important that all of those working with minors understand the necessity for proper supervision. The following ratios are to be followed:

<b>Age Grouping</b>	<b>Adult/Maximum Child Ratio</b>
Babies – Kindergarten	1:3
Babies – Twos	1:3
Threes – Kindergarten	1:4
Babies	1:2
Ones – Twos	1:3
Threes – Pre-K	1:4
Kindergarten	1:5
School-age Children	1:6

In addition, the following guidelines must also be followed:

- No adult will be permitted to be alone with one child at any time.
- When in a room with children, if there is no line of sight through the door (e.g. window glass, spy hole, etc.), the door must not be closed.
- Adults must not be alone with children in the restroom. Trips to the restroom should be with at least two children. Where possible, the adult should be in the doorway and not in direct physical contact with the child.
- Any children participating in dangerous, hazardous or unusual behavior must be corrected and reported to the staff person in charge.

- All injuries or suspected abuse should be reported to the Children's Director, who will ensure an ACCIDENT, ALLEGATION, INCIDENT REPORT FORM is filled out and reported to the Elders.
- Only female adults are permitted to change the diapers of infants and children.
- All off-site activities will be pre-approved and will include at least two adults. When boys and girls are present for off-site or overnight events, at least one adult of each gender will be present. It is recommended that the two adults be unrelated.
- Behavior that is disruptive to the group will be handled with positive verbal instruction defining behavioral expectations and/or time outs. Physical discipline, isolation and abusive verbal correction is prohibited.
- Situations that could give rise to the perception or appearance of inappropriate behavior must be avoided.
- Any physical contact with a person should be done in a public area and be done modestly and in moderation.
- Physical discipline or restraint of a child, unless that child is in immediate danger, is never permitted.
- If a child cannot be controlled through non-physical correction, their parent or guardian should be notified and asked to provide care for their children.

## **VI. Accident, Allegation, Incident Response and Reporting**

Adult leaders are responsible to respond to and report all acts of physical, emotional or sexual abuse and any accidents or incidents that could have or did cause injury.

Emergencies: Adults may be called upon to respond to an emergency (illness, injury, accidents, etc.). Render whatever aid possible on the spot. Remove them from immediate harm. Unless trained in first-aid, it is best not to move the victim. Keep them calm and summons help immediately. An Accident, Allegation, Incident Report Form should be completed.

Abuse: Abuse is a complex issue. New trends are emerging. It is reported that up to 25% of abuse is at the hands of other children. Further, the category of women

offenders is also growing. Therefore, a broad understanding of violators and victims is required to recognize abuse. Macedonia takes the issue of child abuse very seriously. Training must be completed in this area.

- All abuse or suspected abuse should be immediately reported to an Elder or Children's Director. North Carolina is a Mandatory reporting state with no clergy exemptions. A Report must be made within the first 24 hours of suspicion of abuse.
- A report should be written and reviewed by the senior staff as to who will report and how it will be reported to the authorities.
- The following procedures must be followed when confronted with an abuse allegation or incident:
  1. Immediately ensure the safety of the child or youth.
  2. Report the event immediately to an Elder or Children's Director but do not leave the child alone while doing so. If reported to the Children's Director, the Children's Director will immediately inform an Elder.
  3. Make notes as appropriate as to what was seen or heard.
  4. Do not discuss the event with anyone other than an Elder or Children's Director.
  5. Do not confront the alleged perpetrator.
  6. Any employee or volunteer accused of abuse will be removed immediately from contact with children until an investigation by authorities is concluded. The results of the investigation will determine if the person is reinstated or released.
  7. The Elder or Children's Director will
    - Notify the child's parent(s) or guardian(s).
    - Complete the Accident, Allegation, Incident Report Form.
    - Contact the appropriate authorities (e.g. the county department of Social Services where the child resides, police, etc.).
    - Notify the church's legal counsel and insurance carrier.

- Offer support and counseling to the victim.
- Determine appropriate communication necessary to the church and media.

## **VII: Contagious Disease**

For the protection of other children and volunteers, children exhibiting the following symptoms of contagious illness will not be permitted in the nursery area:

- Green discharge from nose or eyes
- Fever in last 24 hours
- Vomiting or diarrhea in last 24 hours
- Severe coughing
- Pink eye
- Lice
- Strep throat
- Impetigo

\* If there is concern of another contagious disease not listed above, this should be reported to the Children's Director or Elder who can make a determination. In cases where a condition appears to be contagious but is unclear, the parent or guardian may be asked to provide a letter from the child's physician stating the child's condition is not contagious. This policy is in place for the protection of other children and caretakers at Macedonia.

## **VIII: Administration of medicine**

- No volunteer or staff member shall administer medicine to a child, including diaper rash cream or other ointments.
- An exception would be when the child's life is in danger such as anaphylaxis due to allergy and an EpiPen kit has been provided by the parent or guardian for such cause.

## **IX: Photo, video and social media policy**

No photography or video of children will be posted on the church's website or social media without the parent's or guardian's written approval.

Sample social media consent form:

[https://ncbaptist.org/wp-content/uploads/Parental\\_Guardian\\_Consent\\_Form.pdf](https://ncbaptist.org/wp-content/uploads/Parental_Guardian_Consent_Form.pdf)

## **X. Policy Violations**

Any staff or child/youth volunteer that does not follow these policies will be notified of their actions. If the violation is considered to be major (as determined by the Elders) the person will be terminated from their position immediately. Pending an investigation and/or review he/she may be reinstated or terminated. Minor violations will be placed in the members file. Multiple violations may result in termination.

I have read, understand and will comply with the Children and Youth Protection policies of Macedonia Baptist Church.

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Printed First and Last Name of Macedonia Baptist Member

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Signature of Macedonia Baptist Member

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Date of Signature