

North Trenholm Baptist Church

CHILD ABUSE & SAFETY POLICY

Dated March 26, 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AGREEMENT

I, _____, acknowledge that I have received this Abuse Prevention Policy of NORTH TRENHOLM BAPTIST CHURCH (NTBC). I have been given the opportunity to read and understand each of the policies, and I have received adequate training regarding these protocols. I have also signed the worker application and release form. In exchange for the privilege of serving NTBC, I agree to abide by this Abuse Prevention Policy.

Date: _____

Applicant Signature

Date: _____

Staff Member Signature

INTRODUCTION

NORTH TRENHOLM BAPTIST CHURCH (NTBC) adopts this Abuse Prevention Policy as a positive and proactive statement of our concern for children, workers, and volunteers. We acknowledge that God places the nurture and care of his children in our hands, and we believe that children should be safe from all forms of harm, abuse, or neglect. We also desire to protect and support those who work with our children on a paid and volunteer basis.

We offer these safeguards, policies, and procedures for the safety and protection of all concerned. We acknowledge that child abuse is not just a tragedy for the abused and the abuser; the repercussions of abuse reach their families and our wider community as well. Accordingly, we must remain attentive to the legal and moral implications of the environment in which NTBC provides services and programs.

These policies aim to prevent child abuse, neglect, and unfounded allegations against workers and leaders in order to promote a greater sense of confidence, safety, and peace. We are aware that abusers exist in all kinds of situations, and we recognize the importance of balancing our urge to welcome with the need to protect. These policies therefore provide reasonable precautions in the following major areas:

1. Applicant Screening Process
2. Worker Practices
3. Reporting Obligations
4. Responding to Allegations

We hope that this plan is received with understanding and grace towards all who are involved with NTBC's ministries.

SCREENING PROCESS

NORTH TRENHOLM BAPTIST CHURCH (NTBC) requires applications for all workers, whether paid employees and volunteers, and whether full or part time, who are or will be engaged in providing NTBC services to minors, including the general public, according to the following requirements.

1. Each worker – volunteer and paid staff – must complete an application.
2. A personal interview will be included as part of the selection process for each worker.
3. Criminal background checks shall be completed for all adult worker applicants. NTBC reserves the right to renew background checks every 3 to 5 years or as deemed necessary.
4. NTBC shall check any and all applications against South Carolina and federal sex offender internet registries. Any applicants found to be on such a list shall not be allowed to serve in ministries involving vulnerable persons.
5. A further check of the personal references may be made to determine the suitability and character of the applicant. The references check shall be documented by completing the Reference Check Questionnaire.
6. NTBC workers must have a demonstrated commitment to and regular involvement of at least six months with NTBC. Exceptions to this policy must receive the approval of the specific ministry staff member. If such approval is given, it shall be documented, by stating the reason for the exception along with the signature of the responsible staff member.
7. All written application forms, signed consents, and background check reports shall be securely stored, with access available only to authorized personnel, in order to duly protect confidentiality.
8. For training purposes, every applicant, upon approval, may be required to watch a video and read other training materials regarding abuse prevention and child safety.

SAFETY POLICY

Definitions

1. “Abuse” is an injury of a vulnerable person by another person, which might not be intentional, but is not accidental. It is usually classified as physical abuse, emotional abuse, or sexual abuse.
2. “Sexual abuse” can take the form of inappropriate sexual contact or interaction. Sexual abuse includes sexual assault, exploitation, molestation, or injury. It does not include sexual harassment, which is another form of behavior that is strictly prohibited by NTBC and is addressed in NTBC’s other policy materials.
3. “Child” means a person under the age of eighteen years.
4. “Vulnerable persons” includes children, the elderly, and persons with mental or physical impairments that prevent them from protecting themselves adequately against abuse.
5. “Mandatory reporters” are persons who are under a legal duty to report abuse to designated civil authorities.
6. “Supervision” is defined as the reasonable exercise of thoughtful action and care by responsible persons towards others, realizing that what constitutes appropriate supervision will vary with the ages of those involved and the context of the activity.

General Principles

1. All workers in NTBC’s programs are subject to the supervision and evaluation of NTBC staff. All workers – paid staff and volunteers – are required to comply with these policies to ensure a safe and secure environment for all persons served.
2. NTBC does not permit or allow sexual abuse or other inappropriate abuse to occur in or near its facilities or at any activity sponsored or related to it. In order to make this “zero-tolerance” policy clear to all employees, volunteers, and others, NTBC has adopted obligatory procedures contained in this policy that all must follow in connection with any potential abuse.

3. While working at NTBC's facilities or otherwise engaged in NTBC - sponsored activities, the behavior of all workers – volunteers and paid staff alike – must both be and appear to be above reproach.
 - Sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse will not be tolerated. It is never appropriate for a NTBC worker, while he or she providing services on behalf of NTBC, to engage in any manner of sexualized behavior. This refers not only to explicitly sexual behavior, but to sexually provocative, seductive or erotic behavior or language as well. It is inappropriate to tell jokes with sexual content, connotations, or “double entendres.” The presence or possession of obscene or pornographic materials is prohibited.
 - Taking pictures or videos of children for personal purposes is expressly prohibited, absent express advance approval by parents or legal guardians. Taking pictures or videos of children for ministry-related purposes must be approved in advance by NTBC's supervisory staff in accordance with similar approval requirements.
 - The presence, possession, consumption or being under the influence of any illegal or illicit drugs or alcohol will not be tolerated.
4. NTBC's workers are personally responsible for their own actions in relation to others served by the NTBC, when engaged in any off-site activities or other activities not sponsored by the NTBC and NTBC takes no responsibility therefore.
5. Violation of any of this Policy shall be grounds for immediate termination of all responsibilities and privileges related to working with children served through the NTBC's programs and activities.

Two Adult Rule

FOR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

It is mandatory, that at least two approved workers be present for all activities involving minors, one of whom must be an adult. An approved worker is an adult or youth (12-17 years of age) who has successfully completed our screening process as outlined herein. It is advisable to have a ministry supervisor or leader conduct periodic checks of approved workers as they supervise children. While recognizing the important role of youth volunteers in ministries to minors and in an effort to assure a safe environment, all activities involving minors will be

supervised by at least one person who is 18 years of age or older. At no time will a ratio of one worker together with one minor in a private space outside of the sight or sound of others be tolerated, except as in the provisions noted below and in emergencies beyond the control of the worker who will seek to join with others as soon as possible.

FOR STUDENT MINISTRY

We recognize that meeting the emotional needs of students may occasionally require staff/volunteer leaders to minister to them on an individual basis. Staff/volunteer leaders should observe the following guidelines when planning to hold a counseling session or any one-to-one meeting with a student:

1. Staff members and volunteer leaders should conduct one-to-one meetings with an individual student at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed unless prior approval is obtained from a Student Ministry Staff Member.
2. If a closed-door meeting must occur with a student, this should be done in a room/office with a window at the church (never in a private residence) and the staff/volunteer member must inform a staff member and ensure the door remains unlocked.
3. Never hold a counseling meeting or any other one-on-one meeting with a member of the opposite gender. You may discuss this with a staff member to make alternative plans.
4. Any ongoing meetings with students (such as counseling, one-on-one discipleship, etc.) should be discussed with a Student Ministry Staff Member for approval.
5. Staff/volunteer leaders are not permitted to date students in the student ministry.

Open Door Policy

Legal guardians, approved volunteers, or staff of the church may visit and observe the program at any time. Doors are to remain unlocked when rooms are occupied, and visibility should not be blocked.

Physical Contact/Behavior Guidelines

It is important that all of our staff members and volunteer leaders understand the difference between appropriate/inappropriate touch with children. The reality is that appropriate touch is needed and encouraged, but it is vital that staff/volunteer leaders do not blur or cross the lines. In light of this, the following guidelines should be observed:

1. Appropriate touch/behavior for adult to child and child to child is:

- non-demanding, gentle
- shoulders, hands, arms, head, back
- high-fives/gentle pat on the back
- side-to-side hugs
- sitting a young child on leg or lap in a lighted room with one or more other adults present
- rejecting the behavior, not the child (e.g. “You told a lie” rather than “You are a liar”)

2. Inappropriate touch/behavior includes:

- kissing
- demanding hugs
- touching genital region, upper legs, buttocks, chests
- unwanted, reluctant or forced touching
- sitting child in center of lap in a darkened room or when no other workers are present
- "piggyback" rides
- rough physical games, including horseplay
- allowing minors to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- making sexually suggestive comments about, or to, a child, including social media
- ridiculing or rejecting a child, bullying
- invading privacy when the child is using the bathroom

3. Diapers

- Only female workers may change diapers.
- Disposable gloves are always required to be worn while changing a diaper.
- For their protection against false accusation, workers may change diapers only within the presence of another worker.

4. Restroom Use

- When taking children to the restroom, one worker may escort them but should be watched at all times by another worker in doing so. Children need as much privacy as possible when using restrooms.
- If the occasion that a child needs assistance the worker must remain visible to another adult worker.

5. Discipline

It is the policy of NORTH TRENHOLM that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any way for behavior management of children. **No form of physical discipline is acceptable.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction or inappropriate behaviors by children. If a child is unruly or fails to comply with verbal warnings or instructions from staff/volunteers, that child will be asked to leave (if not endangered by doing so) or the child's parent will be contacted to pick up the child. In the event of a fight or physical altercation, staff/volunteer will verbally redirect children involved and will try to avoid physical intervention unless the child poses a danger to others or himself/herself. In these instances, staff/leaders are allowed to restrain a child with appropriate physical force as needed. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents and a Kids Ministry Staff Member.

Communication

1. Sexually Oriented Conversations

Staff members and volunteer leaders 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 in the program. However, in our mission to teach God's Word to the next generation the topic of human sexuality may come up. In light of that, here are some guidelines to follow:

FOR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

- Staff and volunteer leaders are not to discuss anything of a sexual nature with a child. The only exception to this is up-front large group teaching from God's Word on this subject. Staff and Leaders should

proceed with great caution and be sure to teach with sensitivity and from a biblical perspective.

- It is recommended that when possible, adults have another adult present when talking with children about sensitive issues concerning biblical definitions of sex (such as in a small group setting). Staff and volunteer leaders are asked to convey to children the biblical views on these topics.

FOR STUDENT MINISTRY

- Staff and volunteer leaders are not to discuss anything of a sexual nature with students of the opposite gender. The only exception to this is up-front large group teaching from God's Word on this subject. Staff and leaders should proceed with great caution and be sure to teach with sensitivity and from a biblical perspective.
- It is recommended that when possible, adults have another adult present when talking with students about sensitive issues concerning biblical definitions of sex (such as in a small group setting). Staff and volunteer leaders are asked to convey to students the biblical views on these topics.
- If a student's questions or comments on a sexual matter become too detailed or explicit in a group setting, the leader should use discretion and set up another time to meet with this student.
- For volunteer leaders who set up a time to meet with a student about sexual matters, they are asked to first inform a student ministry staff member.
- If there is a question as to whether your conversation could possibly be interpreted as a "sexually oriented conversation," you are required to treat the conversation as if it is unquestionably a sexually oriented conversation and follow this policy accordingly. Then, clarify any questions with the Student Ministry Staff Member.
- Sharing one's personal testimony is often helpful in counseling teenagers; however, great discernment and modesty should be used when sharing a testimony that includes sexual topics. A leader should

never share intimate details of sexual sins, temptations, or struggles with a student.

2. Online Communication (FOR STUDENT MINISTRY)

There should be no online communication between volunteers and a child in elementary school or pre-school; however, online communication may be appropriate with middle and high schoolers. As many of our students now communicate through phones, social media, and other forms of technology, it is important that our staff/volunteer leaders maintain healthy boundaries with students that are “above reproach.” Specifically, Staff Members and Volunteers should observe the following guidelines when it comes to communicating with students over technology:

- Staff Members and Volunteer Leaders should never one-on-one DM “direct message” with students of the opposite sex. Leaders should also be cautious to avoid ongoing, in-depth message chains with students of the same gender. These online chats should be used to encourage students and to make connections but not for extended dialogue which may blur the lines between leader and friend for students.
- Staff Members and Volunteer Leaders should avoid talking about anything of a sexual nature when talking with students over social media/texts/etc. Even over the phone, staff and leaders should proceed with caution.
- Staff Members and Volunteer Leaders should be cautious about what they post on their personal social media websites if any of their followers/friends are minors. Our personal lives should be a good model for students, so leaders should be cautious with posts.
- For communicating with students by text, volunteer leaders should never send a private (non-group) text to a student of the opposite gender. Staff members may occasionally text a student of the opposite gender for reasons such as: remind them about an event, rehearsal, meeting, or ongoing ministry tasks (with interns, student leaders, etc.). All staff and volunteer leaders should still be cautious when communicating with students of the same gender and avoid ongoing, in-depth conversations over texts.

- It is recommended that staff and volunteer leaders not follow/friend students they do not already know and have an established relationship with. Even for students that staff/volunteer leaders do know, it is recommended that they allow students to initiate the friend/follow request.

Transportation

Staff members and volunteers may occasionally be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when leaders are involved in the transportation of children:

1. Children should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one student in transport unless approval has been given by the parents.
2. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
3. Cell phones should not be used by drivers while transporting children (other than GPS for directions). An exception arises only with an obvious emergency situation and safe, temporary halting of the vehicle is preferred. Texting or web surfing is strictly prohibited while driving.
4. Drivers should only take the number of children that they have seatbelts for in the vehicle. Seatbelts should be worn at all times while in the car. No one should be double-buckled. Extra caution should be used when driving students.
5. Drivers should never be alone in a vehicle with a child of the opposite sex.

Overnight Events

It is anticipated that occasionally certain ministry activities/events will require overnight sleeping arrangements to be made for children and staff/volunteers (i.e. camp, mission trips, etc.). In the event an activity requires sleeping arrangements, staff members and volunteers will strictly observe the following rules:

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1. Overnight sleeping arrangements must be discussed with a Ministry Staff Member (prior to the activity) and approved.
2. The two-adult rule must be followed. The two-adult staff/volunteer leaders present must have previously completed the entire NTBC screening process.
3. An adult of the same gender as children is required on all overnight events or activities.
4. As long as any children are awake, one of the leaders must also be awake and monitoring children, to ensure safe behavior.
5. Leaders should use good judgment regarding PG or PG-13 movies. No R-rated movies are permitted. Any questions should be discussed with a Ministry Staff Member. Leaders should never view any form of pornography or sexually explicit content with students.
6. Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn.
7. In the event of a sleepover on campus that involves both guys and girls, guys and girls must sleep in separate rooms, properly supervised by leaders of the same gender.
8. No staff/volunteer leader should sleep in the same bed with a student. No staff/ volunteer leader should be alone in a room with a child.
9. Whenever possible, at least one staff or volunteer will sleep in the same room as children or in an adjoining room with the door between the rooms kept open.
10. In the event that overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each staff, volunteer, and child will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances, a “one-person-to-one bag or blanket” rule will be observed.
11. Staff and volunteers in the kids ministry should never be nude in the presence of children in their care. If there is a situation where staff and volunteers will be showering or changing clothes when children are nearby, proper precautions should be taken. Any questions or concerns should be discussed with the Ministry Staff Member.

REPORTING OBLIGATIONS AND PROCEDURES

A. When should abuse be reported?

Sexual or other abuse should be reported whenever an NTBC worker knows, observes, or reasonably suspects that abuse of a vulnerable person has occurred. (Abuse can and often will continue when it goes unnoticed or unreported.)

B. Who should report child abuse?

In South Carolina, the South Carolina Children’s Code, Sec. 63-7-310, specifies that certain professionals working with youth or children are mandatory reporters. Members of the clergy are also mandatory reporters. Clergy privilege may apply, however, and therefore provide exemption from otherwise applicable reporting requirements.

Mandatory reporters must report both actual and reasonably suspected cases of child abuse to the Department of Social Services (DSS) whenever there is “reason to believe” that a child may have been abused. The DSS telephone hotline number is **(800) 422-4453**. The DSS report can be filed online at <https://dss.sc.gov/abuseneglect/report-child-abuse-and-neglect/>.

Others may report to the DSS hotline as well, even though they are not mandated reporters.

In addition, persons who witness suspected or actual abuse must immediately report such information to their immediate supervisor or a Board member, and they must otherwise comply with this Abuse Prevention Policy. The Incident Report must be completed for all such incidents.

C. What is the applicable statute covering mandated reporters?

MANDATED REPORTERS

Title 63. South Carolina’s Children’s Code, Chapter 7. Child Protection and Permanency

Sec. 63-7-310.

(A) The following persons must report in accordance with this section when, in such person’s professional capacity, he has received information that gives him reason to believe that a child has been or may be abused or neglected as defined in Section 63-7-20: a physician, nurse, dentist, optometrist, medical examiner, or

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coroner, or an employee of a county medical examiner's or coroner's office, or any other medical, emergency medical services, mental health, or allied health professional, member of the clergy including a Christian Science Practitioner or religious healer, clerical or nonclerical religious counselor who charges for services, school teacher, counselor, principal, assistant principal, school attendance officer, social or public assistance worker, substance abuse treatment staff, or childcare worker in a childcare center or foster care facility, foster parent, police or law enforcement officer, juvenile justice worker, undertaker, funeral home director or employee of a funeral home, persons responsible for processing films, computer technician, judge, and a volunteer nonattorney guardian ad litem serving on behalf of the South Carolina Guardian Ad Litem Program or on behalf of Richland County CASA.

(B) If a person required to report pursuant to subsection (A) has received information in the person's professional capacity which gives the person reason to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by acts or omissions that would be child abuse or neglect if committed by a parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, but the reporter believes that the act or omission was committed by a person other than the parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare, the reporter must make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

(C) A person, as provided in subsections (A) and (B), who reports child abuse or neglect to a supervisor or person in charge of an institution, school, facility, or agency is not relieved of his individual duty to report in accordance with this section. The duty to report is not superseded by an internal investigation within the institution, school, facility, or agency.

(D) Except as provided in subsection (A), a person who has reason to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect may report, and is encouraged to report, in accordance with this section. A person, as provided in subsection (A) or (B), who reports child abuse or neglect to a supervisor or person in charge of an institution, school, facility, or agency is not relieved of his individual duty to report in accordance with this section. The duty to report is not superseded by an internal investigation within the institution, school, facility, or agency.

(E) Reports of child abuse or neglect may be made orally by telephone or otherwise to the county department of social services or to a law enforcement agency in the county where the child resides or is found.

(F) Nothing in this section shall be construed as requiring a person under the age of eighteen to be a mandated reporter pursuant to subsection (A).

D. What procedures should reporters follow?

Since revealing abuse information may be traumatic for a victim, particularly for a child, a victim should not be asked to repeat the information to others except as required by DSS or other government authorities. NTBC's policy is that the person that observes or hears of abuse will be the only one making the report jointly with the immediate responsible staff member. The staff member will require a written statement of the report.

The NextGen Pastor and Senior Pastor should be notified as soon as possible of all reports of abuse. The identity of all persons who report abuse shall be confidential.

RESPONSE TO AN ALLEGATION

Guidelines

1. All allegations shall be taken seriously. Full cooperation is to be given to civil authorities.
2. Every instance of alleged abuse must be recorded on the Incident Report and kept in NTBC's files for review by the appropriate NTBC officials and law enforcement agencies as required.