

# **Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedure Manual**

**Marlbrook Baptist Church  
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# Marlbrook Baptist Church, Raphine VA

## CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

### POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

#### I. Purpose

- A. To help Marlbrook Baptist Church provide a caring, safe, and secure environment for children in all phases of church life.
- B. To help Marlbrook Baptist Church reduce its legal risk and liability exposure.

#### II. Biblical Foundation

Marlbrook Baptist Church seeks to express God's love of children and provide for their personal wholeness. This caring community seeks to prevent child abuse of any form to our children and youth and to minister to victims of abuse and their families. The Bible is foundational to our understanding upon which all policies, procedures, and ministries must stand.

*And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them. Mark 10.'13-16*

*And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come,' but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Matthew 18:5-7*

Our goal in response to these Biblical mandates is to maintain a safe, secure, and loving place where children may grow: a place where caregivers, teachers, and leaders (both paid and volunteer) minister appropriately to their needs.

#### III. Child Abuse Prevention Policy

Marlbrook Baptist Church DESIRES TO BE A SAFE PLACE FOR ALL CHILDREN AND ADULTS WHO ATTEND ANY ACTIVITY. Individuals they know and trust sometimes victimize children. The church is not immune to such abuse, either by its members or by those in leadership positions. Incidents of child abuse or neglect cut across racial, social, economic and religious boundaries. Although no organization or individual can assure complete protection, this Child Abuse Prevention Policies and Procedures Manual reflects {Ministry Name}'s commitment to help to protect children from harm. This manual applies to all volunteer and compensated workers of {Ministry Name}.

Marlbrook Baptist Church will not tolerate child abuse or neglect. Your cooperation in this commitment not only reflects your concern about children's safety in this society, but also your willingness to take steps toward halting child abuse and its detrimental effects.

For the safety and protection of our children and workers, all people who participate in church-sponsored activities with children are required to comply with the guidelines provided in this manual.

#### IV. Definitions

In this manual the following definitions apply:

- A. **Adult**—Any person age 18 or older.
- B. **Child or Youth**—Any person under the age of 18.
- C. **Child Abuse** Child abuse 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. The law typically uses the following definitions and explanations in determining whether abuse of a child has occurred.

**Physical Abuse** A physical injury, threat of injury or creation of a real and significant danger of substantial risk of death, disfigurement or impairment of bodily functions. Such injury or threat of injury, regardless of intent, is inflicted or allowed to be inflicted by non-accidental means. Examples: asphyxiation, bone fracture, brain damage, skull fracture, subdural hematoma, burns, scalding, cuts, bruises, welts, abrasions, internal injuries, poisoning, sprains, dislocations, gunshot, and stabbing wounds.

**Physical Neglect**—The failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, or supervision for a child if the child's health or safety is endangered. Physical neglect may include multiple occurrences or a one-time critical or severe event that results in a threat to health or safety, such as a toddler left alone. Other types of neglect include abandonment, inadequate supervision, inadequate clothing, inadequate shelter, inadequate personal hygiene, inadequate food, and malnutrition.

**Sexual Abuse** Abuse that consists of sexual contact or interactions with a child, including physical contact (fondling, sexual intercourse) and nonphysical contact (exhibitionism, child prostitution, pornography, voyeurism).

**Medical Neglect** – Refusal or failure by caretaker to obtain and /or follow through with a complete regimen of medical, mental, or dental care for a condition which left untreated could result in illness or developmental delays.

**Failure to Thrive** A syndrome of infancy or early childhood that is characterized by growth failure, signs of severe malnutrition, and variable degrees of developmental retardation. Children are considered to be in this category only when the syndrome is diagnosed by a physician and is caused by non-organic factors.

**Mental Abuse/Neglect**—A pattern of acts or omissions by the caretaker that result in harms to a child's psychological or emotional health or development.

**Educational Neglect**—The child's caretaker is directly responsible for the failure of the child to attend school or an approved alternative program of study.

**Bizarre Discipline**—Any actions in which the caretaker uses eccentric, irrational, or grossly inappropriate procedures or devices to modify the child's behavior

- D. **Compensated Worker**—Hourly, salaried, part-time or full-time employee who works with children at any church-sponsored activity.
- E. **Volunteer Worker**—Any non-compensated individual who works with children at any church-sponsored activity.
- F. **Caregiver**—Any compensated or volunteer worker, sixth grade or older.
- G. **Mandated Reporter**—Any persons with the responsibility for the care of children is a mandated reporter. Virginia law states that if a care giver has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect or observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances that would reasonably result in abuse or neglect, that person shall immediately report or cause a report to be made to the Pastor and/or Deacon Board, who will contact the appropriate authorities.
- H. **Corporal Punishment**—Any punishment applied to the body but not limited to slapping, spanking, pinching, pulling, or squeezing.

## V. **Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse**

In an effort to create the safest possible environment within Marlbrook Baptist Church several abuse prevention measures will be used. These measures include screening of paid and volunteer workers for past child abuse convictions or expungements, provision for regular training on child abuse issues to paid and volunteer staff members, use of the two adult rule, standards for appropriate classroom discipline and open classrooms.

**A. Six Month Rule**

Volunteer workers must have been members or regular attendees of Marlbrook Baptist Church for at least six months prior to the time they begin serving with children in church-sponsored activities. (Please Note: Most ministry-related positions of service require church membership, only a few do not.) There is an exception to the six-month guideline. If a volunteer worker:

1. Has served in ministry with children for at least six months in the church he *or* she attended prior to coming to Marlbrook Baptist Church and
2. Can provide a reference from the staff person with whom they worked at that church, they may be considered for service prior to the six months of regular attendance at Marlbrook Baptist Church

**B. Staff Screening**

The following procedures reflect Marlbrook Baptist Church's commitment to provide protective care for all children and workers who participate in church sponsored activities.

1. All compensated and full-time volunteer workers must complete the following procedures before participating in any church sponsored child or student activities.
  - a. Complete a standard application and disclosure form. References will be checked;
  - b. Participate in an interview conducted by the staff person responsible for the area of ministry;
  - c. Attend orientation/training activities appropriate to the level of the volunteer or compensated worker involvement;
  - d. Sign a written acknowledgement stating they have received and reviewed a copy of the *Child Abuse Prevention Policies and Procedures Manual* of Marlbrook Baptist Church
2. No adult members of the congregation, whether volunteer or paid workers, who have been convicted of a crime against a child or a violent crime against another adult, will provide services in any church-sponsored activity or program for children or youth.
3. All compensated and volunteer workers are subject to background checks for the purpose of obtaining information regarding criminal history or child abuse findings.

4. Applications and the results of any screening will be kept confidential by authorized church staff.

**C. Two-Adult Rule**

Teachers will be assigned in teams of two or more per church nursery, Sunday school class, junior church class, and youth meeting. If the Rule of Two cannot be met, that particular ministry will not be offered. Other church-sponsored groups of children or youth, whether they meet at the church or elsewhere, must also have two or more adult sponsors present. When a church-sponsored children's youth group has both male and female participants, both male and female adult sponsors must also be present.

**D. Classroom Discipline**

All teachers and workers will use the following discipline measures. If a child is behaving inappropriately, the teacher or worker will tell the child specifically what he/she is doing that is not acceptable and state what the expected behavior is, e.g., "We do not throw the blocks. We use blocks for building." If this measure is not effective, the child will be guided to another activity. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be placed at a table to work alone away from the other students. If the child's disruptive behavior continues after these steps have been taken, the child may be taken to the Sunday school superintendent and left under the supervision of the Sunday school superintendent. No corporal discipline or verbal abuse, e.g., ridicule, are to be used at any time. If isolating the child within the classroom or removal of the child from the room becomes necessary, the situation will be recorded on a disciplinary incident form and discussed with the child's parents or guardian as soon as possible.

**E. Open Classrooms**

Classrooms or childcare rooms will be visited without prior notice by church staff, parents, or other volunteer church workers, e.g., Sunday school superintendent. The Sunday school superintendent or his delegate will conduct brief observations of childcare rooms and classrooms of children or youth during Sunday school and other meeting hours.

## **F. Driving Policies**

The designated leader of the event must know each person designated to provide automobile or van transportation to or from church. The driver must:

1. Be at least 18 years old;
2. Have a valid state driver's license, qualified for the vehicle being operated;
3. Have no record of convictions for the past five years for drunken driving, driving under the influence, driving with a suspended or revoked license or reckless endangerment;
4. Have proof of insurance; and
5. Never be alone in a vehicle with a child not his own.

## **G. Gifts**

No staff, either paid or volunteer, are to give personal gifts to individual children or young people without the prior knowledge of the parent(s) or responsible leadership. Because gift giving can be a form of buying loyalty or silence, gift giving should be done on a group basis, or for special occasions only. Gifts may not be elaborate but should be modest and appropriate to the occasion.

## **H. Overnight Trips**

Situations where staff members are taking children or young people out of the area for long periods of time or for overnight outings are to be carefully planned. Only known, proven staff will be permitted to sponsor/chaperone the trips. New staff or volunteers may be used as additional sponsors, but shall not be left alone with the children or young people in a situation where there are no other staff to observe. In no circumstance will one adult be allowed to take children or youth on an overnight outing.

# **VI. Age-Specific Guidelines for Working with Children**

## **A. Nursery**

1. A minimum of two adult female caregivers must be present in each nursery regardless of how few children are in attendance.
2. The windows of the nursery will remain uncovered to allow a clear view of classroom activities.

3. Church nursery workers who change diapers must adhere to the following procedures.
  - a. Always wear rubber gloves.
  - b. Always use rubber gloves when applying lotion or powder.
  - c. Always keep a cloth or wipe between her hand and the child.
4. Children will be released to parents at the nursery counter. Persons other than the child's parents or guardians must be authorized to pick up the child.
5. Only assigned workers are allowed to stay in the nursery or to be in the nursery area during sessions.
6. A positive approach to discipline will be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits will be established to help the children function appropriately. **Corporal discipline is never allowed.**

**B. Preschool Ministry (Toddlers through Kindergarten)**

1. A minimum of two caregivers (one being an adult) must be present with each group of children regardless of how few children are in attendance.
2. The windows of classroom doors and between classrooms will remain uncovered to allow a clear view of classroom activities.
3. When possible, children will be encouraged to take care of their own bathroom needs. Should assistance be required, the outer bathroom door must remain ajar while the teacher assists the child.
4. Children will be released to parents at the door of the nursery. Persons other than the children's parents or guardians must be authorized to pick up the children.
5. When children are taken out of the classroom (playground, etc.) the teachers are to take a count of the children to insure all are present.
6. Only assigned workers are allowed to stay in preschool rooms or to be in the preschool area during sessions.
7. A positive approach to discipline will be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits will be established to help the children function appropriately. **Corporal discipline is never allowed.**
8. The pastor or one delegated to do so by him must approve any children's activities that are held off-site. Parental permission will be secured for off-



site activities and there will be a minimum of two adults present. All activities of children, on or off the church campus, must be scheduled on the official church calendar.

**C. Children's Ministry (First through Sixth Grades):**

1. A minimum of two caregivers (one being an adult) must be present with each group of children regardless of how few children are in attendance.
2. The windows of classroom doors and between classrooms will remain uncovered to allow a clear view of classroom activities.
3. When possible, children will be encouraged to take care of their own bathroom needs. Should assistance be required, the outer bathroom door must remain ajar while the teacher assists the child.
4. A positive approach to discipline will be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits will be established to help the children function appropriately. **Corporal discipline is never allowed.**
5. The pastor or one delegated to do so by him must approve any children's activities that are held off-site. Parental permission will be secured for off-site activities and there will be a minimum of two adults present. All activities for children, on or off the church campus, must be scheduled on the official church calendar.

**D. Student Ministry (Seventh Grade through Age 17):**

1. A minimum of two adults must be present regardless of how few students are in attendance.
2. Organized events on or off the church campus will be staffed with a minimum of 1:10 adult to students.
3. The pastor or one delegated to do so by him must be informed in advance of all activities held on or off the church campus. Parental permission will be secured for off-site activities and there will be a minimum of two adults present. All activities for students, on or off the church campus, must be scheduled on the official church calendar.
4. Overnight events that are attended by students of both genders must also be chaperoned by adults of both genders. At least one adult will be present in each sleeping area.

5. A positive approach to discipline will be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits will be established to help the children function appropriately. **Corporal discipline is never allowed.**
6. It is recognized that certain counseling and ministerial situations may preclude the presence of two adults and that the general guidelines for supervision of workers should not restrict situations where individual counsel and guidance is necessary. However, such counseling should only take place in a room where interior windows allow a clear view of the activities in the room.

## VII. **Reporting Child Abuse**

If Marlbrook Baptist Church receives an allegation of child abuse, it will respond with the utmost concern to the victim, parent, or other party making such an allegation. The accused will be treated with dignity. Without clear and convincing evidence to the contrary, Marlbrook Baptist Church personnel will assume that such complaints are made in good faith. Persons making such complaints should have no doubt that Marlbrook Baptist Church takes them seriously and will take appropriate action.

When it becomes necessary to report suspected child abuse or neglect, the protection of children must be the most important concern. It is the legal responsibility of any person with responsibility for the care of children to report all cases of child abuse they observe, and further, to report visible signs of alleged abuse. Failure to report could lead to liability on the part of the church, the observer or both. Marlbrook Baptist Church has determined that it is the responsibility of the program staff to report all cases of suspected child abuse to the proper legal authorities. While the confidentiality of the pastor/parishioner relationship is very important, reporting reasonable suspicion of child abuse has the potential for helping individuals receive help for a previous problem and may prevent further harm to a child, that person or others.

**What is reasonable suspicion?** Reasonable suspicion means that there is credible evidence or a discrepant or inconsistent history in explaining a child's suspected abuse.

A report based on reasonable suspicion does not require proof that abuse, or neglect has actually occurred or that the reporter witnessed the incident in question. **Reporting is not a determination that child abuse or neglect has actually occurred; rather, it is a request for an assessment of the condition of a child.**

Because we believe children are our most important concern, Marlbrook Baptist Church has adopted the following guidelines for reporting:

- A. Treat each allegation of child abuse seriously.
- B. Attempt to assure the safety and protection of persons who have been harmed.
- C. Pray for the church and all persons affected by the allegation.

- D. Immediately begin documenting all procedures observed in handling the allegation.
- E. Immediately notify the Pastor and/or members of the Deacon Board. The Pastor and/or members of the Deacon Board will initiate an internal investigation of the allegations within 24 hours of notice.
- F. Immediately notify the appropriate state office of the allegation.
- G. Immediately notify the parents if it is not known that they have previous knowledge of the allegations.
- H. Immediately notify the church's insurance company. As appropriate, the Pastor and/or members of the Deacon Board shall immediately notify the church's insurance carrier of the possibility of a claim. If the abuse allegation does not implicate a church staff member or church volunteer, this step may be omitted.
- I. If the accused has assigned duties within the life of the church, that person must be temporarily relieved of his duties until the investigation is concluded.

The pastor should extend whatever care and resources necessary. In providing care to the principals (alleged victim and the accused) and their families, the pastor or church leader, should under no circumstances be drawn into a discussion of the truth or falsity of the allegation which could contaminate an official investigation. Do not assign blame or take any steps that involve establishing or negating the allegation.

- K. It is appropriate to show care and comfort for the alleged victim. This should be the pastoral objective from the moment the allegation is received or otherwise made known.
- L. Observe confidentiality for both the alleged victim and the accused until advised to the contrary by the pastor.
- M. Do not confront the accused until the safety of the child or student is secured.
- N. Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously and reach out to the alleged victim and his or her family. Showing care and support help to prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the alleged victim is the first priority. In some situations, churches have responded in a negative or non-supportive manner to the alleged victim. This can increase the anger and pain of the alleged victim and his or her family. Further reconciliation can then be more difficult and the possibility of damaging litigation increases.
- O. Treat the accused with dignity. If the accused is a caregiver, that person should be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is completed.

- P. If the media or other parties contact a church official about a pending allegation of child abuse, they should be referred to the pastor. Only the pastor or his designee should make comments about the allegations. The pastor will use the text of a prepared public statement to answer the press and to convey news to the congregation. The prepared statement shall be made only after consultation with the church's attorney and will include the steps the church has taken to protect children, such as the development and implementation of this manual, and the care and concern the church has for all parties involved. The privacy and confidentiality of all involved shall continue to be of primary concern.

### **Important Contacts and Their Phone Numbers**

National Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-4-A-CHILD

State Child Abuse Hotline 1-804-786-8536

County Child Protective Services Office (540) 463-7143