
Child Protection Policy

We desire to honor God by providing a safe environment so that we can reach our community with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and train one another to love and serve Him.

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SECTION 1: CHILDREN'S WORKER SELECTION

Procedures for Selecting Children's Workers

- **Church Membership.** Anyone who desires to work with minors (0-18 years old) at Heritage Baptist Church must have gone through membership class and be voted into membership at HBC—either as a full member or watchcare member.
- **Waiting Period.** No volunteer worker can be considered for any ministry position involving minors (0-17 years) until he or she has been regularly attending Heritage for at least three months. The volunteer worker candidate should begin the membership class and the application process at HBC during this three month waiting period.
- **Written Application.** The volunteer worker candidate will complete and return a written application. This application should include information on previous experience with children/teens, previous church membership, at least two references, previous and current employment information, and disclosure of any prior history of physical or sexual abuse. In addition, a criminal background check permission form will be given to the volunteer candidate.
- **Reference Check.** Following careful review of the application, Heritage Baptist Church will contact the two references listed on the written application.
- **Personal Interview.** A personal interview will be conducted by the ministry leader or pastoral/ministry staff to discuss the ministry position with the potential volunteer worker.
- **Background Check.** A criminal background check will be performed (a local state law enforcement and/or FBI background check) to screen any potential volunteer worker of previous incidents of abuse. All full and part time Heritage staff will be subject to this background check as well.

Non-Adult Workers

We understand that teenagers (18 years old or younger) may desire to serve in the children's ministry departments and assist in the care of children. The following guidelines apply to such workers:

- Must be at least 13 years old.
- Must go through the normal application procedure cited above.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and never left alone with the children.

SECTION 2: CHILDREN'S WORKER PROCEDURES

General Policies

- All children's workers will wear the approved Heritage Baptist Church identification badge during their ministry times.
- Workers are responsible to supervise those in their care from the moment of drop-off until the moment of pick-up.
- Only scheduled workers will be in the classrooms unless it is a nursing mother in the nursery or parents/guardians as needed and will need to wear a temporary guest badge.
- Workers will sign the Volunteer's Sign In/Out Form at the beginning of their scheduled ministry time and then sign out when they leave.
- Modest attire must be worn by all workers. Remember that you will be bending down, sitting on the floor, etc. Do not go barefoot.
- Once a child is in the room, he/she will not be allowed to leave the room for any reason without permission from a volunteer.
- Workers need to be in the room 15 minutes prior to the start of the ministry and be completely ready to receive children.

Drop-Off Procedures

Nursery (ages 0-2), Preschool (ages 2 & 3)

- A worker must be at the door to ensure that the parent/guardian (16 years old or older) checks in the child when arriving. Each regular attendee will have an assigned numbered pager and/or ID sticker that will be given to the parent correlating with their child's ID sticker. Each visitor will also be given a pager and/or ID sticker correlating with their child's ID sticker.
- The worker needs to inform the parent/guardian (16 years or older) that they need to keep the pager. The greeter must also inform the parent/guardian to present the pager and/or sticker in order to pick up the child.
- The worker must offer the parent/guardian a copy of the Parent Handbook tri-fold document.

Early Elementary (pre K - 2nd grades), Intermediate (3rd - 6th grades)

- A worker must be at the door to ensure that a parent/guardian checks (16 years or older) in the child when arriving. The worker will give the parent/guardian an identification sticker that corresponds to the child's identification sticker.
- The worker needs to inform the parent/guardian (16 years or older) that they need to keep the identification sticker and that the parent/guardian must present the identification sticker in order to pick up the child.

Pick-Up Procedures

Nursery (ages 0-2), Preschool (ages 2-3)

- A parent/guardian (16 years or older) must present the pager and/or sticker when picking up the child. If they do not have it, or lost it, then they need to wait until all the other children are picked up and the worker can be assured that the child is supposed to be released to the individual.
- Only a parent/guardian (16 years or older) may pick up the child.

Early Elementary (pre K – 2nd grades), Intermediate (3rd – 6th grades)

- The parent/guardian (16 years or older) must present the identification sticker in order to pick up the child. If they do not have it, or lost it, they need to wait until all the other children are picked up and the worker can be assured that the child is supposed to be released to the individual.
- Only a parent/guardian (16 years or older) may pick up the child.

Restroom Guidelines

- If a child requires assistance, the worker will prop open the bathroom door as he/she assists the child. Every effort will be made to protect the child's privacy while still providing an environment of accountability for the worker.
- For the protection of all, workers will never be alone with a child in the bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child.
- Parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to have their child visit the bathroom prior to each class. Parents/guardians will have the sole responsibility to potty train during Heritage Children's ministries.
- Only women can assist children with dressing issues (snaps, buckles, etc.).

"Two-Adult" Rule (Infant through 6th grade)

- Every children's class will have two adult workers at all times when children are being supervised during our ministries. If there are two related adults working together, then there must be at least a third, unrelated adult.
- A hallway monitor will be assigned for all children's ministries in order to assist with bathroom runs and other needs so as not to leave only one adult in a room.
- No worker will ever be alone with a minor in a room. If a child needs to go to the restroom, the hallway monitor will assist.

Heritage Student Ministries (HSM 7th-12th grade) General Procedures

- HSM workers will be subject to the selection requirements outlined in this policy in *Section 1: Worker Selection Procedures*.
- Additionally, HSM workers must be at least one year removed from high school graduation and must have attended Heritage for at least one school year.
- HSM workers must understand their mandatory reporting obligations as outlined in this policy in *Section 3: Recognizing, Reporting, and Responding to Abuse*.
- HSM workers will never be alone with students of the opposite sex.
- If meeting in a room, HSM ministries will meet in rooms that have windows or an open door.
- HSM will provide student and leader attendance records for every HSM sponsored event. When the event calls for individual on-site room use, HSM must record the names of the leaders and students in each individual room.
- HSM workers will practice an open-door counseling policy, never behind closed doors.
- As it relates to the HSM one-on-one mentoring ministry (including but not limited to car rides, special events, and discipleship times):
 - o HSM will provide regular opportunities for parents to meet HSM adult workers throughout the year (with a special focus on meeting new workers)
 - o HSM will encourage adult workers to interact with students in public environments (with families, in small groups, at restaurants, etc.)
 - o When one-on-one interaction is appropriate, the following steps will be taken:
 - HSM worker will contact parents with specific details of the planned interaction (times, places, activities, transportation, cost, etc.). This will happen before every separate one-on-one interaction.
 - If parents agree to the plan, HSM worker will contact the student.
 - One-on-one interaction should occur in public environments as much as possible.
 - If there is a change of plan, HSM worker will contact the parents immediately with the specific details of the change.
 - At the end of the interaction, HSM worker will contact the parents.
 - HSM adult workers are never to be in a one-on-one situation with a student for an overnight interaction.

Discipline Policy

- We expect all children to follow the basic behavior guidelines set down by each department. Heritage children's workers will not administer bodily punishment, even if parents have given permission for it. There will be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. The only exception to this would be the restraint of a child who is in danger of harming him/herself or others in which case the restraint should be done carefully and only as long as absolutely necessary.
- Behavior problems will be dealt with on an individual basis so as not to embarrass the child. The child will receive a warning for behavior that is deemed disruptive or destructive. At that time, the child will be taken aside and explained what the wrong behavior is and what will happen if the behavior continues. Next, the child will receive a time-out away from the others but in the classroom. If the behavior continues, the child's parents will be contacted and asked to help correct the behavior.

Overnight Trips

- An insurance form and permission form must be completed for each minor prior to any official overnight trip.
- No worker should sleep alone in a room with one other child. Therefore, at least two children will be in each room.

Record Keeping

- We will maintain adequate records according to the policy guidelines that include worker applications, references, and screening forms. These records will be accessible by essential personnel and will be updated as needed.
- We will maintain confidential background checks to which only the Pastors will have access.
- An attendance list will be kept for all the ministry's functions involving children or youth. The date of the function, along with the names of all participants and leaders will be recorded and will be filed.
- A written incident/notice of injury report will be prepared by workers whenever an injury should occur during a ministry function. The incident report will be forwarded to the church office promptly upon completion and will be filed.

SECTION 3: RECOGNIZING, REPORTING, AND RESPONDING TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Recognizing Abuse

Workers of minors at Heritage Baptist Church need to be able to identify the three forms of child abuse because they are legally mandated to report evidence of any form of child abuse. The National Committee of Prevention of Child Abuse defines the three forms of abuse as— physical abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse.

- **Physical Abuse**

What constitutes physical abuse?

Physical abuse is a non-accidental injury, which may include beatings, violent shaking, human bites, strangulation, suffocation, poisoning, or burns.

What are some physical abuse indicators?

Some physical abuse indicators are bruises, welts, broken bones, scars, permanent disfigurement, and internal injuries.

- **Neglect**

What constitutes neglect?

Neglect is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, including food, shelter, clothing, education, and medical care.

What are some indicators of neglect?

Some indicators of neglect are children who are frequently absent from activities; begs for or steals food; lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses; is consistently dirty and has severe body odor; lacks sufficient clothing for the weather; abuses alcohol or other drugs; or states that there is no one at home to provide care.

- **Sexual abuse**

There are two forms of child sexual abuse. The Heritage children's worker must understand what constitutes child sexual abuse and be able to identify its various indicators.

What constitutes child sexual abuse?

Non-touching sexual abuse includes:

- Verbal comments
- Pornographic material
- Obscene phone calls, emails, and text-messaging

- Exhibitionism
- Allowing children to witness sexual activity

Physical sexual abuse includes:

- Fondling
- Oral, genital, or anal penetration
- Intercourse
- Forcible rape

What are some indicators/symptoms of child sexual abuse?

Physical indicators:

- Cuts and/or bruises
- Nightmares
- Irritation or pain to the genital area
- Difficulty with urination
- Discomfort with sitting
- Torn or bloody clothing, especially undergarments

Behavioral indicators:

- Anxiety when approaching nursery area
- Nervous behavior towards adults
- Sexual self-consciousness
- Acting out of sexual behavior
- Withdrawn from church activities and friends

Verbal signs may include the following statements:

- “I don’t like (specific person)”
- “(Specific person) does things to me when we’re alone”
- “I don’t like to be alone with (specific person)”
- “(Specific person) did this or that to me”

Reporting Procedure for Abuse and Misconduct

- The worker must contact their ministry supervisor immediately after detecting evidence of child abuse.
- The ministry supervisor must immediately inform the Senior Pastor of any allegations.
- The worker and Senior Pastor together must complete the Suspicion of Abuse Form.
- The Senior Pastor will contact the church lawyer and the family of the alleged victim.
- The Senior Pastor will notify the Pennsylvania Department of Health and Human Services (1-800-692-7462).
- If the alleged perpetrator is a Heritage worker, then the worker will be placed on leave of absence from working with children pending an investigation.
- Strict confidentiality will be maintained on behalf of the victim and perpetrator until directed otherwise by the Senior Pastor.
- Anyone found guilty of abuse charges will be permanently removed from working with minors.
- The Senior Pastor will speak to the media on behalf of Heritage Baptist Church. All other workers will refrain from speaking to media in order to maintain confidentiality.

Nature and Content of the Report

- The report will be kept confidential and include only necessary parties.

Response Guidelines (in addition to the reporting procedure)

- All allegations will be taken and treated seriously.
- We will handle all allegations professionally with respect to the confidentiality to all involved parties.
- We will fully cooperate with an investigation by public agencies. An internal investigation will occur in the absence of public agencies in cooperation with legal counsel.
- We will act responsibly by showing care to the alleged victim and we will not hold the victim responsible in any way.
- We will contact Heritage Baptist Church’s insurance company for further assistance.