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Child Protective Policy

Our desire at Pahrump Community Church is to draw people to Jesus. This includes even the youngest children who attend our church. We take our responsibility to care for children very seriously. These guidelines are intended to provide a safe and nurturing environment, free from abuse, where children can come to a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

It's important for volunteers who work with children and youth to see themselves as partners with parents, seeking to provide quality care and instruction in the ministries and programs of our church. Our guidelines are designed to protect and promote faith formation for each child (and each adult volunteer) involved in children's and youth ministries.

Everyone who teaches, helps, or cares for children must agree to follow these guidelines. They represent minimum requirements; leaders of individual programs may develop additional guidelines as appropriate to the ministry setting.

Physical Precautions:

- All staff will have completed the application and background check process before being assigned to a children's ministry.
- All staff will wear a photo ID indicating their name and the date of expiration of the most recent background check.
- Doors will be open or windows left uncovered so that the view into a classroom remains unobstructed.
- Children under 3 will be cared for in rooms with gates or Dutch doors to keep them from leaving the nurseries without adult supervision.
- Nursery changing tables should be in view of all nursery workers. Yearly Child Protection Training by ministry leader.

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Child Security Policies

Drop-Off Policy—Children should never be dropped off in a classroom without the teachers present. This is the responsibility of parents.

Pick-Up Policy—Parents of children in nurseries through fifth grade must pick up their children at their classrooms. Children in sixth grade and above will be released on their own unless parents inform teachers otherwise.

Restroom Policy—All workers may take children to the restroom. Workers should take children to the restroom in groups, if possible. Assist children only if they ask. Encourage parents to take their children to the restroom before class begins.

Please note: Never be alone with a child in the stall of a restroom with the door closed.

Classroom Supervision Guidelines

The Children’s Ministry Leader and Church Leadership will approve teachers and workers. All willing workers will be interviewed and trained by the children’s ministries staff. All must agree to undergo a background check before being used in a children’s ministry.

General Complaint: If a student or parent makes a complaint regarding a teacher or a worker, the Lead Elder (Senior Pastor) / Children’s Ministries Leader will review the incident and discuss it with the worker involved. Parents will be notified of any actions (such as additional training, leave of absence, or removal from the ministry) that result from the complaint.

If An Accusation Of Abuse (physical, non-physical, and emotional) Is Made: Any accusation of abuse will be taken very seriously and will be handled according to the guidelines given in the “*Allegations of Abuse*” section of this policy.

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Discipline Policy

The goal of our church's children and youth ministries is to foster a sense of both fun and learning. Often, discipline can be handled by redirecting the child or teenager to a more constructive use of time and energy. Keeping the learning environment active and fun will usually eliminate the need for a lot of discipline.

However, children and teenagers must also understand that sometimes it is necessary to listen to lessons, instructions for an activity, etc. It's important not to disrupt classroom times because that takes away from the fun and learning of fellow students.

When "discipline" is necessary, all interaction will carefully consider a child or teenager's integrity and fragility. All children will be treated with gentleness, respect, and understanding. Physical punishment will never be used.

If the classroom teachers and assistants are unable to control a child or teenager after repeated attempts, the child can be taken to talk with the Children's Ministry Leader. The Children's Ministry Leader will discuss the incident with the child. Parents will be brought into the situation if needed.

If a child uses foul language, injures other children, or does anything to affect another child in a negative way, the incident will be discussed with the child and parents will be brought into the situation. The Children's Ministry Leader will decide if the child will be allowed back into class or if further action should be taken.

Staffing and Supervision

For the safety of children and for the protection of volunteers, at least two unrelated adults should be present in each classroom whenever possible. One trained/badged adult teacher with a teen helper may also be adequate.

In the event that two unrelated adults are not available, doors should be open to allow for easy viewing of the classroom. **The exception:** there is an unobstructed window mounted in the door for viewing. In no case should windows of classrooms be covered. Supervisory staff will routinely check on classrooms. Parents are also welcome to check on their children's classes, but should try to do so in a discrete way so the flow of the class isn't disrupted.

Reminder: Always consider what is in the best interest of the child.

Allegations of abuse: An accusation of child abuse can occur in any church, no matter how many precautions it takes. We must always be prepared to listen to and hear any allegation of abuse.

Like many guidelines listed in the handbook, we can't anticipate every possible situation.

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Church Response

The church will be guided by the following when an allegation of abuse occurs:

- All allegations of abuse will be taken seriously.
- Situations will be handled immediately, yet with due respect to people's confidentiality and privacy.
- Full cooperation will be given to law enforcement/ investigating agencies.
- Appropriate care will be given to victims.
- The alleged abuser will not be considered "guilty" or treated as such until an investigation can take place
- Lead Elder (Senior Pastor) or moderating Elder (Board chairman) will be the only persons allowed to speak to media. All other staff and/ or volunteer will refer all questions to this official spokesperson.
- Incident reports completed (within 24 hours of allegation) by all witnesses.

Church Procedures

- Report allegations to Ministry Leader, Lead Elder (Senior Pastor) and law enforcement or CPS 24-hour report line.
- Get proper assistance for the victim and accused.
- Do not question victim.
- Investigating the incident should be left up to law enforcement or investigating agencies.
- Cooperate fully with all law enforcement and investigating agencies.
- No one should engage in denial, minimization, or blame.
- Church leaders should not accuse the victim or detail the event to those not involved with the incident.
- If media becomes involved during an investigation of alleged abuse, the church will appoint a spokesperson to respond, and advise all church members to not respond on their own.
- If the accused is a volunteer, the church will relieve him or her of duties until the incident is resolved.
- Incident reports completed by all witnesses within 24 hours.

Abuser caught in the act:

- Report allegations to Ministry Leader, Lead Elder (Senior Pastor) and law enforcement or CPS 24-hour report line.
- Remove the victim from the situation to a safe place with two unrelated adults.
- Do not question victim.
- Keep suspect on the premises only if there is no risk to the safety and well being of others.
- Cooperate fully with all law enforcement and investigating agencies.
- No one should engage in denial, minimization, or blame.

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