



## Child Safety Policy and Procedures

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## **Child Safety Policy and Procedures**

### **April 18, 2017**

The following child protection policy and procedures shall apply to those working with minors at Highpoint Church. Those working with minors shall be required to read this policy, complete the online training (explained below), sign, and return to the appropriate pastor before beginning volunteer service.

### **Section 1: Children and Youth**

#### **1.1 Our Mission**

Highpoint Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the practices listed here, we will protect the children of Highpoint Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

#### **1.2 Definitions**

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” will pertain to all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “worker” includes both paid and volunteer persons who work with children.

#### **1.3 Selection of Workers**

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

- a. **Written Application:** All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application supplied by Highpoint Church. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire about previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, and reference and employment information as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application will be on file at Highpoint Church.
- b. **Personal Interview:** Upon completion of the application, an interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss their suitability for the position.
- c. **Reference Checks:** Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicant’s references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation

of the reference checks will be on file and held in strictest confidence at Highpoint Church.

#### **1.4 Criminal Background Check**

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and for the following categories of volunteers:

- a. Those who will be involved in overnight activities with children
- b. Those counseling children
- c. Those involved in ministry to minors at Highpoint Church
- d. Those having occasional one-on-one contact with children (such as church-sponsored athletic team coaches and vehicle drivers)

Before a background check is initiated, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, they will be unable to work with children.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense (that will keep an individual from working with children) will be determined by the pastoral staff on a case-by-case basis. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency, or any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude an individual from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifier.

The background check authorization form and results shall be processed by a member of the pastoral staff.

#### **1.5 Two-Adult Rule**

It is the goal of Highpoint Church that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session. In these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open, and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a professional counseling situation. All other counseling between a minor and an adult must be conducted in a visible space.

#### **1.6 Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse**

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological, or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- a. Physical abuse – any injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burning, and biting.
- b. Emotional abuse – an emotional injury occurs when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as being in an environment of constant criticism, belittling, and persistent teasing.
- c. Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child

and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.

- d. Neglect – depriving a child of essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

If an individual involved in the care of children at Highpoint Church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under their care, it must be reported immediately to the pastor over that area of ministry and to the lead pastor for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

If an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at Highpoint Church or during church-sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

- (1) The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
- (2) The Highpoint volunteer will file an incident report with the lead pastor and executive administrator.
- (3) The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. The worker is precluded from having any contact with the child or family involved as far as all forms of communication are concerned to include emails, text messages, phone calls, social media, letters, or personal contact at Highpoint Church or at the home of the minor.
- (4) Civil authorities will be notified, and Highpoint Church will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse. Highpoint Church will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
- (5) The church insurance company will be notified and an incident report filed. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
- (6) The lead pastor or his or her designee will be the church spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect unless he or she is alleged to be involved. Highpoint Church will seek the advice of legal counsel before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the congregation. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking to the media.
- (7) A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.
- (8) Any person who is found guilty of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position of working with children or youth.

## **1.7 Teenage Workers**

We recognize there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to such workers:

- a. Must be at least age 15 years of age
- b. Must be approved by the pastoral staff

## 1.8 Check-in/Check-out Procedure at the Southlands Campus

Specific areas of the church designated for services or activities for minors will be restricted to screened and approved volunteers and parents dropping off and picking up their children. Parents are required to check in/check out their children before they are dropped off or picked up. For children below fifth grade, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be signed in by a parent or guardian through the check-in system, and the parent or guardian will receive a label for the child to wear and a label for the parents to use at checkout. The parent or guardian must present the label in order to sign out the child. In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to present the label, a member of the pastoral staff will be contacted. The pastor over that ministry will release the child to the parent once determination has been made that it is the custodial parent and that there are no outstanding circumstances to be considered.

## 1.9 Sick Child Policy

It is the church's desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all children at Highpoint Church. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under the care of the church. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- a. Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours
- b. Green or yellow runny nose
- c. Eye or skin infections
- d. Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Children who are observed by church workers to be ill will be separated from the other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

## 1.10 Medications Policy

It is the policy of Highpoint Church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under its care. A parent should administer medications at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the pastor in charge of that particular ministry to develop a plan of action.

If an overnight trip where medications are required is scheduled, proper written instructions for dosage and quantities must be provided to the supervising adults. Minors should not be in possession of medications unless special arrangements are made prior to the event with the supervising adults.

## 1.11 Off-Campus Trips and Activities

- a. **Two-Adult Rule:** The two-adult rule must be followed during all off-campus activities. One exception is when students are being transported in vehicles to an activity. If only one adult is present, he or she should take multiple students, not one, even if it is only

one student who has the need to leave the main group. The nature of some off-campus activities requires students to be without direct adult supervision for a period of time (e.g., ski trips). In these cases, students must always be in pairs (never alone), they must know how to reach a ministry leader, and they must be given clear instructions about geographic and time boundaries.

- b. **Emergency Medical Forms:** Students and children are required to have an emergency medical form with a liability waiver on file for each year they participate in Student and Kids Ministry programs at Highpoint Church Southlands. These forms must be filled out by the child's parent or legal guardian.
- c. **Local and Distant Activities:** All students participating in local or distant off-campus activities must provide emergency medical forms and permission slips to the church office, ministry area pastor, and supervising adult. Ministry leaders must have a copy of these forms with them as well as a copy in the church office. A list of all participants (minors and adults) should be left in the church office along with the phone numbers for reaching the group in case of emergency. Whether participating in an on-campus sleepover or an off-campus trip, male and female students must sleep in separate rooms with adult leaders of the same gender or on separate sides of one large room with adult leaders between the two sides. Ministry leaders and students should not enter the sleeping quarters, restrooms or bathing areas of students of the opposite gender. Students and adults are required to wear modest sleep attire.

## 1.12 Discipline Policy

It is the policy of Highpoint Church not to administer corporal punishment even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There will be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the pastor in charge of their area of ministry if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

## 1.13 Restroom Guidelines

Children five (5) years of age and younger will use a classroom bathroom if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers will escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They will always go in a group with no child ever being taken to the bathroom alone. The workers will check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty and then allow the children inside. The workers will then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker will open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers will prop the bathroom door open and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

For children over the age of five, at least one adult male will take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female will take girls. The worker will check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom is empty and then allow the children inside. The worker will then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, workers will never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and will never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

## **1.14 Accidental Injuries to Children**

If a child or youth is injured while under the care of Highpoint Church, the following steps should be followed:

- a. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide first aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from the care of the church.
- b. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple first aid, the parent or guardian will immediately be summoned as well as the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
- c. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, the immediately involved ministry leader should complete an incident report in the case of injuries requiring treatment. Parents of the minor will be asked to sign the report as well as the supervising adult ministry leaders.

## **1.15 Transporting Children and Youth**

Drivers must be at least 21 years of age or older and have a valid driver's license with no outstanding violations, DUIs, reckless driving charges, or chronic history of speeding. Drivers should also refrain from driving if they are on medication or have a physical condition that impairs driving.

Written consent must be received before to a child or adolescent may be transported by church volunteers or staff.

Drivers must always leave locations, including the church, as a group and must not make stops en route without the knowledge of the supervising pastor. If drivers are taking students home, they must make certain they leave by the time the last car departs the parking lot. Staff and volunteers can return to clean up after transporting students.

## **1.16 Training and Equipping Volunteers**

All workers will be required to complete the approved online training for reducing risk of abuse, injury, and illness before beginning volunteer service. Continued service shall be contingent upon completing additional annual training.

## **1.17 Physical Contact/Appropriate Touch**

Touching is a difficult area because touch can be very positive and it is important for children to understand and receive positive touches. Context and situation must always be taken into consideration. It is appropriate to hold and comfort an infant, toddler, or young child or one who is in discomfort. In the same way, it can be appropriate to hug children or youth who are grieving or hurt or when a child initiates the hug. Ask children for permission before hugging them and respect the child's right if they say "no."

When appropriate to initiate contact:

- a. Celebrating: high fives, handshakes, side hugs
- b. Circle prayer, holding hands, hands on shoulders
- c. Comfort and redirection: a hand on the shoulder, side hugs

When inappropriate to initiate contact:

- a. Wrestling, tickling, sitting on laps, caressing, grabbing, slapping, hitting, or spanking

### **1.18 Worker to Child Ratio**

While Highpoint Church strives to increase its worker to child ratio more and more, the church currently abides by the following ratios in its various areas of ministry:

Birth-2	1 childcare worker for every 5 children
2 years of age	1 childcare worker for every 10 children
3-5 years of age	1 childcare worker for every 12 children
5+ years of age	1 childcare worker for every 25 children

### **1.19 Parental Contact/Involvement**

All parents of children are encouraged to participate in an area of Highpoint Kids as volunteers. Positions within all services and programs are available. The Early Childhood department goes one step further. Since it is run as a co-op program, all parents who utilize the nursery and EC Wing are asked to serve once a month in return.

### **1.20 Sexually Orientated Conversations/Material**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children or youth and are not permitted to discuss inappropriate or explicit information with any child or youth in the program about their own personal relationships, dating, or sexual activity.

Furthermore, staff members and volunteers are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of students or children.

### **1.21 Appropriate Social Media/Texting**

- a. Photography and video releases will be included on all permission slips and forms for camps and events to be signed by the parents and created or approved by the church office.
- b. If at any time during a private or public communication a child or youth reveals something harmful about themselves or someone else, the conversation should be documented and brought to the attention of the ministry leader.
- c. Texting as well as Facebook, Twitter, etc., should be limited to daytime hours. Late-night online conversations with students are not appropriate.
- d. Leaders and volunteers should seek the advice of a pastor when they have questions or concerns about communications with students.

## **Section 2: Safety Policies**

### **2.1 Calling 911**

- a. A call to 911 should be made for any serious situation where a law enforcement officer, firefighter, or an emergency medical team is needed right away.

- b. If you happen to call by accident, stay on the line until you can tell the 911 operator that you called by accident and there is no emergency.
- c. Stay as calm as possible and answer all the questions the 911 operator asks.
- d. Know your location. The main campus address is 6450 S. Southlands Pkwy.

## **2.2 Medical Emergency**

- a. Calmly call 911.
- b. Assess the scene first. Do not help the victim or attempt a rescue unless you are ABSOLUTELY certain that the environment in which the victim is located is safe and does not represent a life-threatening situation for you.
- c. The first aid administered to an injured individual should be limited to procedures necessary to stabilize and protect the person from further injury.
- d. Do not move an injured person unless they are in further danger (e.g., an advancing fire).
- e. If you detect the victim is not breathing and the heart is not beating (and you are properly trained in CPR), establish a clear airway and begin CPR.

## **2.3 Tornado/Severe Weather/Weather Related**

- a. Calmly escort people to the main auditorium.
- b. Make sure all auditorium and exterior doors are secured so they do not blow open.
- c. Direct everyone to gather in the auditorium. People may sit on the floor or in the last rows of chairs.
- d. If you do not have time to get to the auditorium, go to a safety zone.
- e. Know your safety zones. Maps are located throughout the building.

## **2.4 Earthquake**

- a. Calmly direct people to get down on the floor between chairs and cover their heads with their hands.
- b. Inside doorframes are also safe places to be.
- c. Do not leave a safe place until the shaking completely stops.
- d. The average earthquake lasts less than one minute.
- e. Calmly escort people outside. Stay away from streetlights, power lines, trees, etc.
- f. Children's and youth rosters are to be taken by the teacher/leader.
- g. Children and youth are to be taken to their designated pick-up areas. Know your pick-up areas.
- h. Children and youth are to be released only to a parent/guardian.

## **2.5 Fire/Fire Alarms**

When the fire alarm sounds, act immediately to ensure your safety and the safety of those in your care. The fire alarm system is designed and engineered to provide an early warning to allow everyone to exit the building safely during an emergency. Never ignore or assume the alarm is false or the result of a test.

- a. A call to 911 should be made for any serious situation where a law enforcement officer, firefighter, or an emergency medical team is needed right away.
- b. Everyone must evacuate the building by way of the safest and closest exit and/or stairway.
- c. Once outside, move away from the building and assemble in the parking lot adjacent to the building.
- d. The front and perimeter of the building is where the firefighters and fire trucks will be operating. Do not obstruct their access to the building.
- e. If there is an incident occurring near glass windows and glass is being blown out of the windows, the area below is a hazard zone where serious personal injuries will happen. Do not remain in or near a hazard zone.
- f. Once outside, never re-enter the building until you are told to do so by the fire department or Police.
- g. Fire lanes are to remain open to ensure that fire trucks have access to the building. There is no parking in fire lanes at any time.

## **2.6 Facility safety**

- a. A map of the locations of first aid kits and fire extinguishers may be obtained at the church office, Info Center booth, Usher Closet, and Kids Check-in Station.
- b. Maps of emergency exits are located throughout the building.

## **2.7 Power outages**

- a. If power goes out during a service or event, the pastor or his/her designee should contact the appropriate Excel Energy utility at Xcel Energy 800-481-4700. You can also report electrical outages by calling 1-800-895-1999 and gas outages or emergencies at 1-800-895-2999 or 911.
- b. If power is not restored within fifteen minutes, the service or event shall be canceled.

## **2.8 Evacuation Plan**

- a. Know your evacuation route. Maps are located throughout the building.
- b. Calmly escort people outside to a safe distance.
- c. Children's and youth rosters are to be taken by the teacher/leader.
- d. Children and youth are to be taken to their designated pick-up areas. Know your pick-up areas.
- e. Children and youth are released only to a parent/guardian.
- f. Know where fire extinguishers are located.

## 2.9 Fire Lanes

- a. During normal operation of the facility fire lanes are to remain open to ensure that fire trucks have access to the building. There is no parking in fire lanes at any time.

I have read this policy, agree to abide by these guidelines, and have asked any appropriate questions where clarification is needed.

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Volunteer Name and Date

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Supervising Pastor