

COLLEGE CREEK CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

College Creek Church is committed to providing a safe environment for children and youth. This policy serves as a formal mechanism to uphold this commitment and help protect children and youth from abuse within the church community. The policy also guides and protects volunteers and staff from unwarranted allegations of child abuse. College Creek Church implements the following policies and procedures to maximize safety and to prevent child abuse, motivated by and in keeping with the biblical call to care for one another and to protect the vulnerable.

I. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

1. **Child or Youth:** Individuals under 18 years old and considered a minor under the law. Legally incompetent individuals of any age shall also be protected by this policy.
2. **Volunteer:** An adult not employed by College Creek Church who teaches, supervises, or otherwise helps with children or youth activities.
3. **Staff:** Any individual employed by the church.
4. **Leader:** A member of staff or adult volunteer designated by the church to have responsibility for children and youth.
5. **Designated Childcare Leader:** Member of staff or adult volunteer assigned by College Creek Church to serve as a primary point of contact for childcare programming.
6. **Church Sponsored Activity:** Any and all gatherings organized by College Creek Church.
7. **Child Abuse:** An act committed by an approved worker or person in a position of trust, which is non-accidental and which harms or threatens harm to a child's physical or mental health or welfare. Types of abuse may include physical injury or threat of injury, physical neglect defined as failure to provide necessary care to a child, sexual abuse, mental abuse or neglect, emotional abuse, and spiritual abuse. Child abuse includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. *Physical Abuse:* Any physical force applied by an adult or older youth to a child, youth, or other vulnerable individual.
 - b. *Neglect of Basic Needs:* A form of abuse, which may include denial of food, water, shelter, cleanliness, clothing, or sleep. These are not appropriate means of discipline.
 - c. *Sexual Abuse:* Any sexual contact or sexual interaction between a child (under the age of eighteen years) and an adult or older youth; any use of a

child for the sexual stimulation of an adult or older youth, a third person, or the child; any discourse that has sexually suggestive context, innuendo, unwelcome casual touch, unwelcome and inappropriate hugs and kisses, and sexually suggestive pictures between an adult or older youth and a child, as deemed inappropriate by any reasonable adult.

- d. *Emotional Abuse*: Inappropriately derisive words and/or actions directed toward a child, youth, or vulnerable individual. Discipline by humiliation is also emotional abuse.
- e. *Misuse of Technology*: Using technology, which results in the sexual harassment or abuse of a child or youth. This includes, but is not limited to, viewing, texting or emailing suggestive messages or images to an individual, as well as utilizing social media platforms to exploit or inappropriately engage an individual.

II. PROHIBITED CONDUCT

Volunteers and Staff shall refrain from the following:

1. Inappropriate physical interactions as defined in this protection policy.
2. Inappropriate corrective measures as defined in this protection policy.
3. Having or viewing sexually explicit materials, including any type of pornography.
4. Staring or commenting on a child's body.
5. Offensive or vulgar speech, or speech that involves children in inappropriately burdensome or disturbing issues.
6. Abuse of alcohol or drugs.
7. Perpetrating any kind of abuse upon any child; this includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - a. Verbal abuse: degrading, threatening, cursing
 - b. Physical abuse: hitting, shaking, slapping, unnecessary restraint
 - c. Sexual abuse: inappropriate touching, exposing oneself, sexually-oriented conversation
 - d. Emotional abuse: shaming, humiliating, cruelty
 - e. Neglect: withholding or denying food, water, clothing, shelter, medical care, freedom of movement, or failure to protect

III. VOLUNTEER & STAFF SCREENING PROCEDURES

1. Before a volunteer is approved to work with children, they must be generally observed at church sponsored activities and involved with College Creek Church for a period of time. This time of interaction allows for better evaluation of the potential volunteer's suitability for working with children.
2. All new volunteers are required to indicate in writing their desire to work with children at College Creek Church, and must disclose in whether or not they have been charged or convicted of any sexually related felony, including sexual assault or abuse.
3. All new volunteers are required to provide two non-family personal references, to be contacted by the church staff and/or the designated childcare leader.
4. All new volunteers must participate in a face-to-face interview with church staff and/or the designated childcare leader.
5. An outside background check will be performed for all volunteers through a private provider of record check services or a state law enforcement agency. Childcare workers must pass this background check prior to involvement in children and youth activities.
6. Evaluation of volunteer candidates:
 - a. If the screening process reveals any information that causes a concern that a candidate poses a threat of abuse to children, youth or any adult, the candidate will not be approved for work with children and youth.
 - b. Any candidate who has any prior history of abuse directed against another person will create a strong presumption that the candidate will not be approved for work with children or youth.
 - c. Any candidate whose background check reveals that the candidate has behavioral or emotional problems that may interfere with the care and wellbeing of the children and youth will not be approved for work with children and youth.
 - d. In deciding to withdraw a candidate from consideration or remove a volunteer who has previously been approved, the designated childcare leader should indicate the potential or actual threat being addressed in writing to the volunteer and keep a copy for College Creek Church records.

7. All volunteers will be required to complete Child Protection Training, which will familiarize them with College Creek Church's Child Protection Policy and childcare worker protocols.
8. The church hiring authorities will screen any potential employees of the church using procedures at least as comprehensive as the procedures applicable to volunteers.

IV. TRAINING

College Creek Church will provide training on this Child Protection Policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training as needed.

V. SUPERVISION

1. At least two unrelated leaders shall supervise all children and youth activities, except in limited cases to be approved by the designated childcare leader. In exceptional cases, proper oversight measures will be taken to ensure appropriate protection for the participating children and the supervising adults. The presence of at least two unrelated leaders is to protect children and youth against situations in which abuse might occur, and to protect leaders against false allegations of abuse.
2. During any College Creek program, all leaders should avoid being alone with a single child in a place where others cannot easily or quickly observe them.
3. Leaders become responsible when the scheduled activity begins. Until then, parents or guardians are responsible for their children. Leaders remain responsible until the children or youth have been picked up by a parent, guardian, or person authorized by a parent or guardian to pick up the child or youth.
4. Parents are responsible for their children when at church or related events and the children are not in a church-sponsored activity for children or youth.
5. Any area in which programs for children or youth are taking place may be visited without prior notice by staff, parents, or other volunteers. No windows may ever be totally blocked to prevent visual observation into the childcare area.
6. To the maximum extent practical, there shall be visual access into each area in which activities with children and youth are being conducted. Each area for children and youth should ideally have a door with an observation window. If it does not, and two leaders are not present in the room, the door must remain open at all times.
7. In the event that two leaders cannot be present in the area, such that one leader is alone with one or more children or youth, the leader will be visible to passersby.

They should not position themselves in the room such that other people passing the area cannot see them.

8. At any counseling session with children or youth, the door of the area used must remain open for the entire session. The session should be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance.

VI. SAFETY AND SECURITY

1. Childcare programming will be held in an area that can be properly secured and provides restricted access to outside passersby and persons not involved in childcare programming.
2. All church-sponsored activities involving supervision of children and youth will implement a secure check-in/check-out procedure. The child will be checked in by the parent or guardian and attendance will be recorded upon arrival at the childcare area.
3. At the end of the childcare program/church-sponsored activity, the child will be released only to the parent or guardian, after the parent or guardian has been properly identified.
4. To the maximum extent practical, only the child's parents/guardians and leaders are allowed in the designated childcare area during childcare programs.
5. There should always be visibility into the childcare area. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room, except in emergency lockdown situations.
6. Leaders should refrain from the taking and sharing (via email, text, social media, or other technology platform) of photos and videos of children and youth during church-sponsored activities, without the prior consent of the child's parents.

VII. RESTROOM GUIDELINES

For the protection of all, childcare workers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed, and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their child use the restroom before class.

1. If a child is still in diapers and requires a diaper change, the leader should notify the parents so they can change the child's diaper. The leader should not change the diaper.

2. If a child is potty training and still requires assistance to use the restroom, the leader should notify the parents so they can take the child to the restroom. The childcare worker should not take the child to the restroom.
3. Children five years of age and younger who are capable of using the restroom on their own should always be escorted in a group to use the restroom. Leaders should not take children to the restroom alone. The leader should ensure the bathroom is empty and wait outside the bathroom door until all children are done using the restroom.
4. For children over five years of age, at least one adult male should take the boys to the restroom in a group, and at least one adult female should take the girls to restroom in a group. The leader should ensure the bathroom is empty and wait outside the bathroom door until all children are done using the restroom.

VIII. DISCIPLINE

1. Childcare workers may not hit, spank, grab, shake, or otherwise physically discipline anyone.
2. Any disciplinary problems by a childcare worker should be brought to the attention of the designated childcare leader. Please see section X regarding the process of reporting.

IX. RECORD KEEPING

1. If an injury requiring medical treatment beyond simple first aid occurs during a church-sponsored activity, the leader will fill out a report, submit it to the designated childcare leader and share it with the parents/guardians.
2. A record of completed child protection training will be kept on file for all volunteers and staff working with children and youth.

X. REPORTING

The following procedures for reporting abuse are not designed to discourage reporting to secular authorities, but to provide clear internal steps to follow up in the event that an incident involving suspected abuse occurs. Mandatory reporting laws may require reporting of child abuse. Furthermore, any person observing abusive conduct which appears likely to cause imminent risk of serious physical or emotional harm, death, sexual abuse, or exploitation should immediately intervene to address the situation, followed by a verbal report to the designated childcare leader or staff. Contact should be made to Emergency Response Personnel

(911), Social Services of Anne Arundel County (410-269-4500), Child Protective Services and/or Adult Protective Services as needed.

1. **Reporting Incidents:** any adult who observes or becomes aware of any alleged incident of child abuse must, as soon as possible, complete a Suspected Child Abuse Report and submit it to the designated childcare leader and to the pastor in charge of childcare.
2. **Investigation:** Upon receipt of a Suspected Child Abuse Report, the pastor shall ensure that an appropriate investigation commences, and appropriate procedures are followed as required by Maryland law. The process will include documenting all steps undertaken in handling the investigation.
3. **Confidentiality:** All investigations shall be conducted in as confidential a manner as is compatible with a thorough investigation of the report or allegation.
4. **Parental Notification:** If an incident has occurred on church property or during church-sponsored activity, the parents/guardians of any minor involved in any allegation of abuse shall be immediately notified by the designated childcare leader or the pastor.
5. **Initial Response:** Upon receipt of a Suspected Child Abuse Report, any individual accused of such conduct will be temporarily relieved of all duties and responsibilities involving youth or children pending an appropriate investigation.
6. **Spokesperson:** A single church leader will serve as a spokesperson following notice of any alleged abuse in connection with children and youth activities. This spokesperson will be the only person to convey information concerning the situation to external audiences to avoid compromising any ongoing investigation.