

Christ Chapel Child Protection Policy

Dear Children's Volunteer or Staff Member,

Welcome to Christ Chapel!

At Christ Chapel, we take our responsibility to care for children very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which children can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for volunteers and staff members. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children, protecting children, you, and the mission of Christ Chapel. The following procedures have been adopted and will be diligently enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

Christ Chapel Leadership

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1. Introduction

Christ Chapel desires to create a community that reflects the goodness of God's creation and our new life in Christ. We strive to achieve an environment that nurtures the dignity and safety of each person.

We recognize, however, that we live in a broken world and that abuse can occur within the church family. Appropriate steps will be taken to prevent abuse, and if it occurs, appropriate action will be taken. Abuse of any kind is unacceptable.

As a community, Christ Chapel is committed to preventing abuse, fostering the development of healthy relationships through our children and youth programs, protecting and promoting the healing of those who have been abused, and working toward repentance and healing for those who abuse.

The Scriptures teach that all persons, male and female, adult and child, are created in the image of God and therefore are worthy of respect. (Gen. 1: 26-27) Women and men are equal in the sight of God. (Gal. 3:28) The human body is good, including human sexuality (I Cor. 3:16, 6:19; II Cor. 6:16). Through the fall of the human race into sin, the goodness of God's creation was distorted; one result of the fall is the evil of abuse. Through Jesus Christ, God calls people to wholeness again and to participation in the Body of Christ, the community of faith, whose quality is redemptive love (I John).

As a church we acknowledge what the Bible teaches concerning the legitimate mandate of civil authorities, and we pledge to cooperate with them in seeking justice in the area of abuse and the protection of children. As a church, however, we will not leave the matter of abuse and its impacts only to the law courts and social services because abuse and healing both have a spiritual basis. The church has its own calling to be Christ's ambassadors, offering protection for children, warning against the abuse of authority, and providing a healing ministry for those whose lives have been affected by the sin of abuse.

2. Definitions

1. **Children**, for the purposes of this policy, are individuals under the age of 18.
2. **Physical abuse** exists when a child has a non-accidental injury.
3. **Emotional abuse** is an injury to the psychological capacity or emotional stability of the child.
4. **Sexual abuse** exists when an adult uses a child as a part of any type of sexual act.
5. **Emotional neglect** is when the child suffers from an adult failing to give chances for feeling loved, wanted, secure, and worthy.
6. **Physical neglect** is when an adult does not provide basic needs or supervision.
7. **Grooming** is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or 'gatekeeper'), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

3. Child Safety Policy

3.1. Abuse Tolerance

Christ Chapel has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at Christ Chapel to act in the best interest of all children in every program.

In the event a staff member or volunteer observes any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse or neglect (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is that individual's responsibility to immediately report their observations to a supervisor or a pastor.

3.2. Reporting Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors

Christ Chapel is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse or neglect will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to Child Protective Services, or another appropriate agency.

Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a child for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to a supervisor or pastor.

3.3. Enforcement of Policies

Christ Chapel staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Church policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or removal from Children's Ministry positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Board of Elders.

3.4. Publication of Policies

This policy will be posted on the church website and copies will be available in the nursery and welcome table for distribution to parents. It will be given to all Children's Ministry staff and volunteers prior to their term of service, and to any others who request it.

4. Overview of Christ Chapel Safety System

Christ Chapel requires all staff members and volunteers working with children and other vulnerable populations to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placements begin.

STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in 'grooming' a child for sexual abuse. To equip staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, Christ Chapel requires all staff members and volunteers to complete Ministry Safe's sexual abuse awareness training. This training will be renewed every two years.

STEP TWO: Screening Process

A volunteer must attend Christ Chapel for six months before being eligible to serve in positions providing ministry services to children. Volunteers from other churches are eligible to serve in positions providing ministry services to children at VBS with the recommendation of their pastor and successful completion of this screening process.

Staff members and volunteers working with children are required to complete Christ Chapel's Screening Process, which includes:

- a Safety Application
- a face-to-face interview
- references
- a criminal background check

STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures

Staff members and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

5. Christ Chapel Safety Committee

Christ Chapel will appoint and maintain a Safety Committee.

5.1. Mission Statement

The purpose of the Safety Committee is to enable Christ Chapel Children's and Student Ministries to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

5.2. Composition

The Safety Committee will be comprised of the following members:

1. Christian Education Director
2. Nursery Director
3. Other designees of the Board of Elders.
4. An elder who will chair the committee

5.3. Responsibilities

The Safety Committee will be charged with the following duties:

1. Meeting at least twice a year to discuss risk management practices and updates.
2. Meeting on an emergency basis upon the recommendation of a member or following the report of any incident or allegation.
3. Applying existing Christ Chapel policies and procedures related to children's safety and risk management issues.
4. Monitoring all Children's Ministry programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
5. Making recommendations to the Christ Chapel Board of Elders regarding safety issues.
6. Reviewing this policy for compliance with the law and best practices at least every five (5) years.
7. Oversee the reference and screening process.
8. Function as the Background Check Committee, per the Background Check Policy document.

6. Building Safety

6.1. Building Monitoring

The Christian Education, Nursery, and VBS Directors will be responsible for ensuring that the building is monitored during Sunday classes or programming. This will include monitoring of staff members, volunteers and children in children’s classrooms.

6.2. Supervising Children

No child will ever be left unattended in the building or on the church grounds during children’s ministry programming or classes. Children’s Ministry staff members or volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in any room. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single child, that staff member or volunteer will take the child to a room occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: if a child is the last in a class to be picked up by a parent, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present.)

After every programming event, Children’s Ministry staff members and volunteers must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

When children are playing on the church premises, staff members and volunteers will circulate, watching children during play periods, giving particular attention to the areas not easily seen from all viewpoints. (Example: in corners, behind structures or bushes). Children in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area of the premises.

6.3. Worker-to-Child Ratios

Christ Chapel is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Children’s Ministries programs. Accordingly, the following worker-to-child **minimum ratios** will be observed:

Program	Workers	Children
Nursery	2	8
Preschool, 2 and 3 years old	2	12
Preschool, 4 and 5 years old	2	18
Elementary	2	20
VBS	2	20

If a worker is ‘out of ratio’ it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the program supervisor. Supervisors will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately bring worker to children ratios into compliance with Church policy.

6.4. Physical Measures

Windows will be placed in all doors where children or youth ministry is conducted (e.g., Sunday school rooms, pastor's office).

6.5. First-Aid Kits

First-aid kits are located in the kitchen, the nursery, and the Fireside Room. They are restocked yearly in June.

6.6. Access to Children's Ministry Spaces

During Children's Ministry activities, access to Children's Ministry spaces shall be limited to Children's Ministry staff members and volunteers, the children participating in the ministry, and parents or guardians (subject to 7.9 below). Children's Ministry staff and volunteers will ask all others to leave.

During the Sunday service, the lower level of the church will be reserved for Children's Ministry, food preparation, Adult Sunday School, restroom use, and elder-approved uses of the church office. All others will be asked to remain on the main floor or balcony. Security staff will regularly patrol the area.

6.7. Two Worker Rule

As articulated elsewhere in this policy (including 6.2, 6.3, and 7.6), Children's Ministry activities should always be staffed by two workers. There must always be two *unrelated* workers present. If more than two workers are present, some of them (but not all of them) may be related.

7. Standards of Conduct

7.1. Discipline

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children. **No form of physical discipline is acceptable.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, biting or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. In employing this procedure, staff members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines:

1. Verbally redirect the child before physically intervening. With younger children some physical redirection may be necessary (for example, removing a toy from the hands of a child that is hitting another).
2. If the behavior does not cease, remove or direct the child away from the group to a corner of the room where the group is meeting (avoid being alone with the child).
3. Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the time-out, and provide the child with a clear explanation of your expectations. (“Jamie, you didn’t stop hitting Chris when I asked you to, so you need to sit quietly in the blue chair for three minutes.”) In addition, be verbally reassuring, as being removed from the group will likely upset the child. Do not physically hold a child in time-out.
4. Provide the child with a chair to sit in or a “spot” to sit on (using a pillow, blanket, carpet square, etc.) until their time-out is complete.
5. Follow the rule of thumb that a time-out is ineffective if it lasts longer than one minute for every year of the child’s life (3 years old, 3 minutes).
6. Monitor the child through the entire time-out without giving your undivided attention. For longer time-outs give intermittent praise to reassure the child and keep them on task. (“Jamie, you’re doing a great job of sitting quietly – just 2 more minutes.”)
7. Praise the child once he or she has completed the time-out and tell them that their reward is being able to rejoin the group. Remind them that repeating their initial behavior will result in further time-out. Follow this with praise.

Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to the child’s parent/guardian and the program supervisor.

7.2. Bathroom Supervision and Assistance Guideline

7.2.1. Nursery children

Because nursery children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies:

Diapering

1. Only the child’s parent/guardian will undertake the diapering of their own children.
2. When possible, nursery workers will text the child’s parent/guardian to alert them to the need.
3. If necessary, a teen may be sent to find the parent/guardian. An adult must always remain in the nursery with the other children.

Toilet training

1. No child will be forced to toilet train.
2. Only female nursery workers or the child’s parent/guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children of either sex.
3. When children are taken into a bathroom the door will be left partially open.
4. Young children will never be left unattended in a bathroom.

5. Parents should be consulted on each child's progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with volunteers or staff members. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery will be recorded on the sign in sheet ("Georgia can use the toilet, but she needs to be reminded – ask her if she needs to go.").
6. Children should be verbally assisted where possible. If physical assistance is necessary, another staff member or volunteer should be present, when possible.
7. "Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child and texting or finding the parent/guardian. Extra clothing and diapers are available in the children's area if the parent has not furnished a clothing change.

7.2.2. School age children

School age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. Children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities. Staff members and volunteers should never take a lone child to the restroom.

If a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another worker to accompany him/her. If another worker is not available to accompany, he/she should go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. If the child requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall. Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer.

7.2.3. Special needs

Parents or legal guardians will change all special needs individuals.

7.3. Intoxicants

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drug while in any church facility, while traveling with children, or while working with or supervising children during any Christ Chapel program or activity.

7.4. Medication

A staff member or volunteer may not administer non-emergency medication to any child while serving in the Children's Ministry.

7.5. Nudity

Staff members and volunteers serving in the Children's Ministry should never be nude in the presence of children in their care.

Children should never be nude or undress in the presence of others at a church event.

If an activity (e.g. an overnight or pool party) necessitates changing clothes of either children or staff, the staff member or volunteer leading the event will submit a written plan to the Safety Committee ahead of time that specifies appropriate changing arrangements.

7.6. One-to-One Interactions with Children

Staff members and volunteers should never conduct one-to-one, unobserved meetings or interaction with children while participating in Children's Ministry activities or programs. Another trained, screened adult should always be present.

7.7. Transportation

. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children:

1. Children should be transported directly to their destination. There will be no unauthorized stops to a non-public place.
2. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.
3. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
4. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving for Christ Chapel, except for navigation or in the case of an emergency.

7.8. Parental Contact

Parents who leave a child in the care of Christ Chapel staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if a child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Children's Ministry programs. Parent contact information will be recorded upon child drop off.

Each program will develop its own method of collecting and maintaining contact information for parents.

7.9. Parental Involvement

Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child is involved. Until the parent completes the volunteer application and screening process, that parent does not count as a worker for the purposes of this document. The program staff/volunteers and supervisors, may, at their discretion, ask a parent to complete the volunteer application and screening process if the parent is becoming too involved in the overall functioning of the program.

7.10. Physical Contact

The following physical contact guidelines are to be carefully followed by those working in Children's Ministry programs:

1. Hugging, pats on the back, and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children are important for children's development, and are generally suitable in the church setting.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to an immediate supervisor or pastor.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children or Children's Ministry staff members and volunteers.
5. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing.
6. Do not force physical contact, touch or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse must be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor or a pastor.

7.11. Sexually Oriented Conversations

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children, and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information.

7.12. Sexually Oriented Materials

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from possessing (or transmitting to a child) any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.).

7.13. Alcohol, Tobacco, and Recreational Drug Use

Christ Chapel requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of alcohol, tobacco products, and recreational drugs in church facilities, while in the presence of children or their parents, or during Christ Chapel activities or programs. Christ Chapel is a tobacco-free and alcohol-free facility.

7.14. Verbal Interactions

Staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging and constructive, and should be mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is or could be construed by a reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing or any coarse language in the presence of children.

7.15. Release of Children

At any time that a child has been entrusted to Children's Ministry staff members or volunteers, the Church incurs responsibility for the safety and welfare of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.

Children's Ministry staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents/guardians, or other persons designated by parents/guardians at the close of services or activities.

It is presumed a person who drops off a child has authority to pick up that child.

In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact their supervisor or a pastor before releasing the child.

Each program will develop its own method of ensuring that children are released only to authorized individuals.

7.16. Supervision

Staff members and volunteers in Children's Ministry are expected to provide adequate supervision for children in their care while working in church programs.

7.17. Monitoring of Staff

Supervisors will make announced and unannounced observations of staff members and volunteers.

7.18. Photography and Videography

Photos and videos of children will not be posted online without permission from a parent/guardian.

8. Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

8.1. Reporting

All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to a supervisor in the ministry area or pastor.

Children's Ministry volunteers and employees must immediately report any suspected abuse to their program supervisor, who will work with them to fill out an Incident Report Form.¹ They are not responsible to substantiate the alleged abuse. Any allegation of abuse will be taken seriously and the program supervisor and church pastors will ensure that the following people will be notified:

- Child Protective Services (if a minor)(1-800-342-3720) and/or local police,
- The Elder Board,
- The church's attorney,
- The church's insurance carrier,
- Parents/guardians of the allegedly offended person (if a minor),
- The accused person after the security of the allegedly offended person is guaranteed,
- Denominational authorities or other oversight group as appropriate (if the alleged abuser is a pastor)

The church will cooperate fully with any investigation done by Child Protective Services or local police.

If necessary, other people directly involved will be notified. The allegation of abuse will remain within the confidence of these parties.

¹

https://s3-us-west-1.amazonaws.com/faithnetworkuserfilestore/FAITHNETWORK_USERFILESTORE/FAITHNETWORK_USERFILESTORE/filecabinet/ministries/f0569817-bce6-45f9-a588-4bd3b86aa9d5/GrovelncidentReportFormRevision2111213.pdf

Those who make allegations of abuse in “bad faith” will be disciplined by church leadership and the church could cooperate with local authorities to pursue legal responsibility.

8.2. Consequences

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in Children’s Ministry. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies. If the person accused is an employee, he or she will be suspended with full pay and without prejudice pending an investigation.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child may be prohibited by the Board of Elders from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming involving children or students at Christ Chapel. Future church attendance will be strictly governed by the Christ Chapel Inclusion Policy for Registered Sex Offenders. If the person is an employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from Christ Chapel.

In the event that criminal charges are dropped or prosecution does not result in conviction, the Board of Elders must decide whether or not the church leader or volunteer is to be restored to his/her previous position or duty. Conviction or lack of it is not the only criterion the church uses to discern ungodly conduct. An alleged abuser is not reinstated to a previous position of leadership or volunteer position until the Board of Elders, in consultation with the police/child protection authorities, legal counsel, and child abuse experts, deems it safe and proper to do so.

In addition to fully cooperating with any external criminal investigation, the church will exercise church discipline if the allegation is substantiated.

Failure to report a policy violation is grounds for termination of an employee. Volunteers who fail to report a policy violation may be restricted from participation in any future activities involving children or students at Christ Chapel.

8.3. Response to Report of Abuse

Christ Chapel Leadership will take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs.

The Senior Pastor and the Chair of the Elder Board will jointly maintain a record of reported allegations of abuse which will be kept secure and confidential. Such records will be retained in the church structure for a minimum of 50 years from the closing of the case.

All persons involved in a particular case, including their families, will be supported as appropriate with pastoral and professional counseling/care throughout the hearing, investigation and/or legal processes.

If abuse is judged to have occurred, members of the congregation and regular attendees will be notified by announcement and by letter explaining the allegation and/or the reason for suspension and what steps have been taken. All adult members of the congregation and regular attendees will receive the same explanatory information, which will be worded with discretion and sensitivity. Abusers will be identified; victims will not be identified.

When an allegation of abuse becomes public knowledge outside of the church, one official spokesperson will be designated by the elder board to interact with the media.

Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of Christ Chapel's Children's Ministry Policies and Procedures Manual and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at Christ Chapel.

Further, I understand that the manual may be modified at any time, and that any guidelines may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by Christ Chapel.

I also acknowledge that I have reviewed and agree to fulfill the duties listed in the manual. While, ideally, I will serve in this ministry for the agreed term, I understand that I may choose to end this relationship at any time. If possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to my supervisor.

I further acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this manual in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between Christ Chapel and me. If I am applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no compensation for hours worked.

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed, as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of the Christ Chapel Child Protection Policy.

Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: _____

[This page is to remain attached.]

Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

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Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: _____

[This page is to be signed, detached and delivered to your program supervisor.]