Policies & Procedures

For the Prevention of

Child Abuse

Davidson Street Baptist Church
Clinton, South Carolina
PURPOSE

It is the purpose of the Preschool Department of Davidson Street Baptist Church to provide a safe and secure environment for preschoolers entrusted to our care. We do this to encourage these preschoolers and their families to grow in their relationship with God and one another. A safe and secure environment includes a formal, written policy to help prevent the occurrence of child abuse. The following policy and procedures are for the protection of our preschoolers and our entire church family at Davidson Street Baptist Church.

SCOPE

This policy shall apply to all current and future workers, compensated and/or volunteer, who will have the responsibility of supervising the activities of preschoolers.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy the following definitions shall apply:

1. “Preschooler” shall be defined as any individual from birth to 5 years.

2. “Adult” shall be defined as any individual at least eighteen (18) years of age.

3. “Worker” shall be defined as any adult who serves as a volunteer and/or paid person given the responsibility of working with or caring for preschoolers.

4. “Child Abuse” shall be defined as verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse of a preschooler.

5. “Criminal Background Check” (CBC) is the procedure used by the United Way Volunteer Center, DPS, or other qualified agency to check the background of adult volunteers for criminal activity.
WHAT IS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?

“Any sexual activity with a child—whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day care situation, a foster/residential setting, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent or another child, provided the child is four years older than the victim.”

Child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent. All child sexual abuse is an exploitation of a child’s vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the action.

Child sexual abuse is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially and developmentally ready.

Child sexual abuse includes behaviors that involve touching and non-touching aspects. –

WORKER ENLISTMENT

1. Each worker desiring to work with preschoolers will also be required to complete a Worker with Preschoolers Application which is specifically designed for workers who will be working with preschoolers.

2. After an application is received, prior employment and volunteer service and personal references will be checked. It is suggested that, at a minimum, personal references be telephoned and a written memorandum be made of the contents of those telephone conversations and that prior employment and church service references be contacted in writing.

3. Any prospective worker who has prior incidents of sexual misconduct or child abuse should not be allowed to serve in any capacity where they would have contact with minors.

4. Criminal background checks will be performed on each applicant after the applicant has signed the authorization/waiver/indemnity for, and prior to being enlisted as a worker. Annual criminal background checks may be performed on workers, randomly or as deemed necessary.

(Only qualified representatives of Davidson Street Baptist Church will have access to the criminal background check report. Recommendations will be given by this individual(s) to the Nominating Committee as to the qualifications of applicants.)

5. No volunteer will be allowed to work with preschoolers until they have been a member of the church for a minimum of 1 year.

6. At the applicant’s request, Davidson Street Baptist Church shall allow the applicant to review his/her criminal history record transcript at the church, but in no event shall the church allow the applicant to retain and/or copy his/her transcript.
WORKER TRAINING

Each new worker will be given the legal definition of child abuse in writing, as well as the policy of the church on reporting of child abuse. New workers will also be required to view child abuse prevention video(s) and read the written materials available on this subject to help them gain an appreciation for the reality of the concern. This will help workers identify child abuse in the future if they see signs of it.

VOLUNTEER INFORMATION FORM

Anyone serving in the Preschool Department of Davidson Street Baptist Church will be required to complete a Volunteer Information Form providing personal and confidential information necessary to perform security background checks and reference checks on each individual worker. While this process understandably trespasses into the privacy of our lives, the security of our children outweighs the personal invasion inherent with such investigation and disclosures. All personal information voluntarily disclosed, the results of all security background and reference checks or the refusal of any person to participate in a program or activity in lieu of such disclosure requirements will be maintained in the strictest of confidence. Whether disclosed voluntarily or by result of the security background check, the following items will automatically disqualify a volunteer from participating in the leadership, sponsorship or supervising of any activities or programs with minors:

- Any conviction for:
  - Criminal homicide;
  - Aggravated assault;
  - Crimes related to the possession, use or sale of drugs or controlled substances;
  - Sexual abuse;
  - Sexual assault (rape);
  - Aggravated sexual assault;
  - Injury to a child;
  - Incest;
  - Indecency with a child;
  - Inducing sexual conduct or sexual performances of a child;
  - Possession or promotion or display of harmful material to a minor;
  - Employment harmful to children;
  - Abandonment or endangerment of a child;
  - Kidnapping or unlawful restraint;
  - Public lewdness or indecent exposure;
  - Enticing a child.
All charges for these crimes or charges or convictions for any other crimes not listed above will be reviewed by the preschool director, assistant, pastor, chairman of deacons, law enforcement for interpretation of the criminal history record transcript and approved by the church for reviewing applicant transcripts. Only qualified persons (as stated above) may view information obtained on the criminal history record transcript.

**SPECIFIC ACTS AND OMISSIONS IN VIOLATION OF THE POLICY**

The following acts of omissions are violations of this policy and will not be tolerated or accepted during any activity or program and are to be immediately reported to the preschool director after the safety of the child involved has been assured.

- Any direct observations of evidence of sexual activity in the presence of or in association with a minor.
- Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct towards a minor.
- Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any person and a minor.
- Infliction or physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a minor.
- Physical neglect of a minor, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of Davidson Street Baptist Church.
- Mental or emotional injury to a minor.
- The presence or possession of obscene or pornographic materials at any function of Davidson Street Baptist Church.
- The presence, possession or being under the influence of any illegal or illicit drugs.
- The consumption of or being under the influence of illegal or illicit drugs or alcohol while leading or participating in a function for minors at Davidson Street Baptist Church.

**WORKER SUPERVISION**

1. The church will adopt the “two adult” rule, which means no adult shall be left alone with a child, and requires a reasonable ratio of adult workers to be maintained in each situation involving the supervision of children.

2. Preschool Director, Assistant Director and Church Staff will supervise on an ongoing basis and make unannounced visits into classes or other program sites from time to time. Supervisors shall complete a log to show which rooms, activities, time and date the classes or activity was visited.

3. An identification system shall be adopted so that the adults who drop off a child are the same adults who pick up the child. Permission slips will be available for adults to sign, authorizing the release of the child/children to other adults.
SUPERVISION OF VOLUNTEERS

I. Parental permission shall be obtained in advance for involvement in church sponsored programs.

2. A door without windows shall remain open at all times.

3. Use a “check-in/check-out” procedure for all preschool children.

4. A list of possible violations and proper reporting procedures will be posted in each room where activities or programs for minors are conducted.
CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION REPORTING

Any person having cause to believe that a child’s physical or mental health or welfare has been or maybe adversely affected by abuse or neglect shall report the person’s belief in accordance with this practice. Report will be made to Preschool Director who will notify law enforcement and pastor.

1) Fully comply with the child abuse reporting statute

2) The church should also immediately contact the insurance company to report the occurrence, and should contact its attorney.

3) In instances where child abuse is confirmed and a member of the ministerial staff 1st perpetrator, the preschool director should be contacted and advised

4) This procedure is not only required as a condition of your job or volunteer position, but is also required by law.

5) Upon the first suspicion of an instance of child abuse, the following steps should be taken immediately:

a) Do not treat the suspicion as frivolous.

b) Commence the investigation immediately, and conclude it as soon as possible.

   i) If a sponsor or volunteer of minors suspects a case of child abuse, he or she is required by law to report his/her suspicions within 24 hours to law enforcement. It is the policy of Davidson Street Baptist Church that it also be reported immediately to the preschool director.

   ii) The minister receiving the initial report will be responsible for confirming the facts reported and the condition of the child, on the same day on which the first report was made. Use the “Reducing the Risk Application Checklist” to complete the church staff responsibilities involved with the occurrence.

   iii) Data concerning the child, name, address and other pertinent information will be obtained through discussions with the initial reporter and other staff members. The name and address of the person responsible for the care of the child, if available, will be obtained.

   iv) After the information is secured, the minister or preschool director will contact law enforcement.
c) Maintain confidentiality of the investigation as much as possible. Emphasize confidentiality of the victim and any accused.

1) On the same day that the case is first reported verbally to law enforcement, the report will be documented on a Child Abuse Report Form. Copies of report will be filed for any additional agency needs.

d) Cooperate fully with law enforcement officials.

e) Suspend any accused from the performance of duties involving children until the investigation has been completed and a ruling finalized.

f) Inform the victim and the victim’s family of the steps that are being taken, and continue to keep them advised of the status of the investigations.

g) In instances where abuse is confirmed, the church should immediately dismiss the worker from that position. Consideration of member termination should be considered, as appropriate in the circumstances.

h) In instances where the evidence is inconclusive, the church must take appropriate action.

i) Keep the congregation informed of the investigation with respect to matters which are not confidential, so that the congregation will hear about the investigation from within the church rather than from the news media.

6) Promptly take steps to plan for a response to the media and attempt to speak to the media only through one contact person so that the church can emphasize through the media to the public the church’s position on child abuse, its concern for the victim and the extensive steps the church is taking to address the present occurrence and to reduce the risk and provide a safe environment for other children.

Every allegation of sexual offense or molestation should be investigated promptly and thoroughly by officials and reported to the church insurance company immediately. If such allegation is factual, the relationship with the worker should be terminated. It is unlikely the problem will ever be handled by relying on promises of the employee or volunteer to reform. Failure to take remedial action will make a claim difficult to defend.
INSURANCE

The church shall obtain a sufficient level of liability insurance coverage that would cover child abuse and sexual misconduct claims. If available, the church should have the levels of coverage which are required for limited immunity.

CONCLUSION

Churches need to be prepared! This is the legal reason for creating safety policies, but there’s a deeper, more significant reason—to protect the children. Policies are only printed expressions of the value placed on children. If the only reason for safety policies is to protect the organization, the church has missed God’s love for children.

Some people may think that our church is too small or that our church “knows” everyone to worry about these safety problems. Remember it’s much easier to make plans and develop safety policies as a means of prevention, rather than wait until they are needed as a reaction to an abuse case.

Some churches tend to take the biblical concept of trusting God to an extreme. They think nothing bad can happen to Christians. We must not be unwise regarding children’s safety. There is no automatic protection from evil for the faithful. We’re to watch and be ready. Accidents will always happen. There will always be unforeseen circumstances that need to be handled. But the church should build into its organization sturdy safety-policy fire blocks into the walls of its ministry to protect children.

Davidson Street Baptist Church desires to be a “church that cares” through the implementation of the above policy. Adoption of these provisions will enable Davidson Street Baptist Church to provide a more safe and secure environment for each individual of our church family and its guests.

Any person desiring to serve in the Preschool Department must complete all necessary forms, be willing to follow all above mentioned and approved by a committee consisting of: Preschool Director, Pastor, Church Staff, Chairman of Deacons and representative of law enforcement.