



## **CHILD/YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY**

In Mark 10:14 Jesus said, *“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.*

It is our desire to bring children to Jesus. We desire to do all that we can to create and maintain a safe, secure, and welcoming atmosphere in which to teach our children God’s love and care for them. All of our guidelines are designed to protect and promote growth for each child and adult involved.

- At least two workers (at least one adult) must be in the room when children are present. Doors will be left fully open and a hallway volunteer will have visual access to the room if one worker needs to leave the room temporarily. No children may be checked into classrooms unless two approved Children’s Ministry workers are present.
- Speaking with children one-on-one should be done in public settings where a worker is in sight of other people. One-on-one meetings must occur in public settings and with the knowledge of the parent/guardian, or another approved adult worker.
- Any physical contact between a worker and a child that would provide, or is intended to provide, any form of sexual gratification is strictly prohibited.
- Volunteers and employees shall not abuse children/youth in any way including, but not limited to:
  - Physical abuse: e.g., strike, spank, shake, slap.
  - Verbal/Mental abuse: e.g., humiliate, degrade, threaten.
  - Sexual abuse of any kind, including inappropriate touching and exposure.

### **Guidelines for Physical Contact**

- Southbrook Church does not permit or allow sexual abuse or molestation to occur in the workplace or at any activity sponsored by or related to it. In order to make this “zero—tolerance” policy clear to all staff, volunteers and staff members, we have adopted mandatory procedures that employees, volunteers, family members, board members, individuals and victims must follow when they learn of or witness sexual abuse or

molestation.

- Sexual abuse takes the form of inappropriate sexual contact or interaction for the gratification of the worker who is functioning as a caregiver and is responsible for the patient's or child's care.
- Sexual abuse includes sexual assault, exploitation, molestation or injury. It does not include sexual harassment, which is another form of behavior which is prohibited by Southbrook Church.
- Limited physical contact, such as a pat on the back, on the head, or a hand shake, is permissible. We advise all adult volunteer and care givers to refrain from initiating hugs with students and children. Lap-sitting, carrying and piggyback rides are not allowed with students over the age of 3 years old.

#### Guidelines for Healthy Behavior Management

- Children who are disruptive should be taken to another side of the room, or if necessary, into the hallway (leaving the door fully open and within sight of other people). The worker should explain to the child that a particular behavior is unacceptable. The worker may then pray with the child, asking that the Lord help the child to control him/herself.
- If the disruptive behavior persists, the parents may be asked to come and sit with the child in class the following week and for as long as necessary, until the child can demonstrate self-control.
- We are committed to working with children to find what they need in order to fully participate, but not to the detriment of the other children in the class.

#### Worker Identification Policy (Infant – High School)

- All approved workers are required to wear identification tags that clearly identify them as qualified workers, authorized by the church, to work with children.
- Other than the students in the room, only individuals wearing an identification tag will be allowed in the classroom without specific permission of the Coordinator or Pastor.

#### Registration Policy (Infant – 6th Grade)

- All children, except visitors, must be registered to ensure that children are in the classroom appropriate for their age or level of development, and to provide contact information.
- Registration may be completed at the KIDS check-in area, at Planet 56, at

Student Ministry events or at home.

- Visitors will receive a numbered card to check-in and check-out their child. They may choose to register and will be added to the class list after a second visit.

Diaper Changing Policy

- Only approved adult workers may change a child's diaper.
- Diaper changing must take place in the designated diaper-changing locations.

Bathroom Policy

- When a child needs assistance in a restroom, a door must remain open.
- Children in 1st grade or older may be excused from the classrooms to use the restroom within the secure Children's Ministry area.

Off-Site/Overnight Policy for Southbrook Sponsored Events and Informal Get-Togethers

A 'Southbrook sponsored' event is an event that has been approved by the Pastor and must include at least 2 children. And follow all guidelines including:

- Presence of at least two unrelated approved workers is required.
- Written parental permission and a medical release card must be obtained for each participant for overnight events, or when group transportation is provided.
- Parent notification of the agenda of the event, the address and telephone number of the place to which the class will be going and the anticipated departure and return times. (Refer to 'Driving or Transporting Children'.)
- Appointments: One-on-one meetings must occur in public settings and with the knowledge of the parent/guardian or another approved adult worker.

Driving or Transporting Children

- Workers should not transport a child without the parent's/guardian's knowledge and permission.
- All drivers must have a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance.

- When transporting children in groups, parents are to be informed when they will be leaving, how they will be traveling, when they expect to arrive at their destination, and when they will return. One approved worker must be in each vehicle.
- We strongly discourage driving alone with one student of the opposite sex.
- In an emergency, the leader will attempt to call the child's parent to obtain their permission and/or to make specific arrangements for their transportation. When it is not possible to reach parents, a child will be transported by two adults.

*Be Aware*

*Behavioral signals suggestive of sexual abuse include, but are not limited to:*

- Fear or reluctance about being left in the care of a particular person;
- Recoiling from being touched;
- Bundling in excessive clothing;

*Reporting Procedure*

Any violations of this Child Protection Policy or Code of Ethics should be reported directly to the proper authorities AND to the Pastor. Additionally, any worker that has reason to be concerned about the safety or welfare of a child is expected to bring his/her concerns to the proper authorities and to a pastor. All staff and volunteers who learn of sexual abuse being committed must immediately report it to a member of the Southbrook Church staff and to the local police and/or state Protective Services Agency.

*Retaliation Prohibited*

We prohibit any retaliation against anyone, including an staff member, volunteer, elder board member, student or individual, who in good faith reports sexual abuse, alleges that it is being committed or participates in the investigation. Intentionally false or malicious accusations of sexual abuse are prohibited.

Anyone who improperly retaliates against someone who has made a good faith allegation of sexual abuse, or intentionally provides false information to that effect, will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.