

Child Abuse Prevention Policy
for
Mountain Park First Baptist Church
Stone Mountain, Georgia

Acknowledgment of Receipt and Agreement

I _____ (print name) acknowledge receipt of the Child Protection Policy and agree to abide by the terms of the policy, and agree to refrain from engaging in any unscriptural conduct in the performance of any volunteer activities on behalf of Mountain Park First Baptist Church.

Signature

Date

MOUNTAIN PARK FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
5485 Five Forks Trickum Road, Stone Mountain, GA 30087
CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAM POSITION STATEMENT

Mountain Park First Baptist Church strives to provide a safe and caring environment for our children and youth and to protect those who work with our children and youth. To this end, Mountain Park First Baptist Church (hereafter referred to as MPFBC) has adopted a Child Protection Program and Policy entitled “Safe Haven” with guidelines to prevent child sexual abuse from occurring in our church.

The purposes of the Child Protection Policy of MPFBC (Safe Haven) are to:

- Provide procedures specifically designed to protect children, youth, church staff and volunteers associated with the ministries of the Church.
- Strengthen our Christian educational children and youth ministries.
- Establish appropriate ways of responding to alleged, reported, or suspected incidents of abuse, ensuring that all allegations are dealt with in a fair and compassionate manner.
- Safeguard children and youth from abuse and neglect while participating in Church sponsored activities.
- Provide a compassionate ministry for all affected persons—the alleged victim, the alleged victim’s family, the accused, the family of the accused, and the Church family.
- Protect church staff and volunteers from potential false allegations of abuse.
- Limit the extent of our Church’s legal risk and liability.

I. Definition of Child Sexual Abuse

- A. Child sexual abuse is any sexual activity with a minor—any individual under the age of eighteen (18)—whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day care situation, in 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 minor.
- B. Child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent. All child sexual abuse is exploitation of a child’s vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the action.
- C. Child sexual abuse is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially, and developmentally ready.
- D. Child sexual abuse includes behaviors that involve touching and not-touching aspects.
- E. For a fuller definition of child sexual abuse we defer to the Georgia Code which is found in the Appendix to this document.

II. Qualification and Screening Requirements for Workers with Children and Youth

- A. MPFBC provides a variety of ministries to children and youth. These activities are conducted and supervised by paid staff and volunteer workers.
- B. The Child Protection Coordinator administers MPFBC’s Safe Haven Program. The Coordinator will be the church’s Executive Pastor. The duties of the Coordinator involve processing applications of volunteers, contacting references provided by the volunteers, requesting, handling and evaluating criminal and other types of background checks, interviewing volunteers if necessary, approving applicants for serving, maintaining program policy documents, and procedures guides, and securing administrative records pertaining to staff and volunteers. In addition, the Coordinator conducts or coordinates training and other activities involving appropriate Church committees. If for any reason the Child Protection Coordinator should become unable to perform these duties, the Senior Pastor shall, in consultation with the Trustees, appoint a replacement

- C. The following states MPFBC's Safe Haven policies:
1. Requirements for volunteers who minister in an ongoing capacity to our children and youth under the age of eighteen (18):
 - a. Volunteers serving prior to the institution of the policy must:
 - (1) Submit a Volunteer Application and Screening Form.
 - (2) Sign a release for a criminal background check.
 - (3) Attend a group training session.
 - b. New volunteers serving after the institution of this policy must:
 - (1) Have attended MPFBC for at least six (6) months.
 - (2) Submit a Volunteer Application and Screening Form.
 - (3) Sign a release for a criminal background check.
 - (4) Submit names and authorization for reference checks.
 - (5) Undergo an interview with the Child Protection Coordinator or his designee utilizing standard criteria for questions during the interview.
 - c. Temporary volunteers for overnight activities (ex., DiscipleNow weekend leaders) or temporary volunteers for Vacation Bible School must:
 - (1) Submit a Volunteer Application and Screening Form.
 - (2) Sign a release for a criminal background check.
 - (3) Undergo an interview with the Child Protection Coordinator or his designee utilizing standard criteria for questions during the interview.
 - d. Teenage volunteers under the age of eighteen (18) years must:
 - (1) Submit a Teen Volunteer Information Form.
 - (2) Attend a training session.
 2. Approval of a volunteer for service will be based upon evaluation of the above requirements by the Child Protection Coordinator. The appropriate director or program minister will be notified when an individual is approved to serve as a volunteer worker with children or youth.
 3. All paid staff must first complete an employment application and then comply with the Screening Procedures, to include a criminal background check, prior to the hiring action being completed. This will be done by the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Committee for paid staff of the ECE program and by the Personnel Committee for all other paid staff of MPFBC.
 4. The Volunteer Application and Screening Form gives us personal and confidential information necessary to perform 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 criminal 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. All records will be kept in a locked cabinet, accessible only by the Child Protection Coordinator.
 5. Whether disclosed voluntarily or by result of a criminal 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:
 - a. Criminal homicide
 - b. Aggravated assault
 - c. Sexual abuse
 - d. Sexual assault (rape)
 - e. Aggravated sexual assault
 - f. Injury to a child

- g. Incest
 - h. Indecency with a child
 - i. Inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance of a child
 - j. Possession or promotion of child pornography
 - k. The sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a minor
 - l. Employment harmful to children
 - m. Abandonment or endangerment of a child
 - n. Kidnaping or unlawful restraint
 - o. Public lewdness or indecent exposure; and
 - p. Enticing a child
6. Any other crimes not listed above that appear on a criminal background check will be reviewed by the Child Protection Coordinator with the applicant for determination of volunteer service with minors. The Child Protection Coordinator will call the person and make an appointment to discuss the criminal background check. At the appointment the applicant will be given a written notice of the item(s) appearing on their criminal background check and sign a statement that they have been informed of the item(s) appearing on their background check. Discussion will be held as to whether it is feasible to continue with the application process. If so, the Child Protection Coordinator will then discuss the application and background check with the Senior Pastor, the age division minister involved, and the applicant.
 7. The success of this program is dependent upon screening, supervising, and training staff and volunteers. As the information concerning individuals may be considered confidential and sensitive, we strive to maintain the confidentiality of all information on backgrounds and suitability of our volunteers and staff. However, the need to protect children and youth will be paramount, and any information obtained will be used as needed to accomplish this purpose.

III. Policy Procedures for Workers and Minors

- A. Any inappropriate conduct or relationships between any volunteer or staff person and member of the youth group or a child will be addressed promptly. Accusations will be investigated immediately and appropriate action taken up to and including termination of the employee or suspension and release of the volunteer.
- B. Any person who has been convicted of, plead guilty to, plead *nolo contendere* to any charge of physical and/or sexual abuse of any person, or who fails to provide true, correct, and complete information on their Volunteer Application and Screening Form, or who fails to timely and correctly supplement same, or who, based on information provided to MPFBC, is otherwise determined by MPFBC to be disqualified, will not be allowed to volunteer service in any Church sponsored activity or program for children or youth.
- C. Adult volunteers and staff should not be alone with a minor on the Church premises, in a car/van/bus, or in any church sponsored activity unless it is in a counseling situation.
- D. Adult volunteers and supervisory personnel should be provided for all programs involving minors. Failure to provide adequate staffing may result in the program or activity being combined with another group or suspended until adequate supervision is on hand.
- E. Supervision of minors should also be maintained before and after Church-sponsored activities until all minors are in the custody of their parents or guardians. In group events, it may be inevitable that one child or youth's transportation from the event arrives after all other children's/youth's transportation has gone. In those circumstances a child/youth may be in the individual presence of a single adult. Because this circumstance may be simply unavoidable, the adult is responsible for exercising his/her best judgment for the child or youth's well-being.

- F. Special attention must be given to overnight activities that involve minors. All adult chaperones and supervisors must be under the direction of a staff member, cleared in advance, and meet the screening procedures established by the Church in Section II of this policy.
- G. All minors are required to have parental permission for involvement in Church-sponsored programs and activities.
- H. If the group of minors is of mixed gender, on any outside and overnight activities, the chaperones must also be of mixed gender.
- I. Adult volunteers and staff escorting a minor to the restroom should leave the door ajar.
- J. Leaders should periodically and randomly visit classes and check on isolated rooms, closets, and stairwells to reduce the likelihood of inappropriate activities occurring in these areas.
- K. Nursery identification procedures should use security ID tags so each child can be identified with that child's parent or guardian. Children will only be released to a properly identified and preauthorized adult.
- L. If an adult or parent desires to plan an activity of the Church off of the Church campus, he/she must:
 - 1. Notify the appropriate department leader or minister.
 - 2. Notify parents, in advance, of specific plans and receive permission.
 - 3. Always have at least one other adult present. Mixed gender groups require mixed gender chaperones.
- M. The Child Protection Coordinator will be responsible for the annual and periodic training provided for adult volunteer workers and staff to ensure current policies and procedures are understood.

IV. Reporting Child Abuse

- A. Any allegation of child abuse will be handled forthrightly with due respect for the privacy and confidentiality of each person involved. Full cooperation will be given to civil authorities and insurance company investigators under the guidance of the attorney retained by the Church.
 - 1. Internal Reporting of Suspicious Behavior on the Part of Workers or Staff
 - a. It is incumbent upon all volunteer workers and staff to be aware of the potential of child abuse that can arise from various situations and activities involving minors. Volunteers and staff will provide prompt and direct corrective comments to any individual when any suspicious behavior is observed.
 - b. Any violations of the policies set forth in this statement must be reported promptly to the adult in charge of the group, as well as the minister in charge or the Child Protection Coordinator.
 - 2. Reaction of Children and Youth to Inappropriate Behavior on the Part of Workers or Staff
 - a. Volunteers and staff aware of a concern by a minor alleging misbehavior from a volunteer or worker should encourage the minor to report their concerns to parents, a teacher, or trusted minister/volunteer of the church. Volunteers and staff must also promptly report the minor's concern to the adult in charge of the group, the minister in charge, or the Child Protection Coordinator.
 - b. The Church will provide information materials concerning this issue and reporting channels to parents of all minors involved in our programs.
 - 3. Reporting Alleged Child Abuse to Outside Agencies
 - a. Georgia statutes do not require that our Church report instances of suspected child abuse as "mandatory reporters." At this time, MPFBC has elected to provide reports of suspected or alleged child abuse to the appropriate authorities; including child protection agencies, police and the Church's insurance carrier. Such reporting, in good faith, is permitted by a provision in the Georgia Child Abuse Statute that states any

other person (other than a “mandatory reporter”) may report suspected or alleged instances of child abuse.

- b. The Senior Pastor, or an appointed designee, will serve as the reporting authority for MPFBC. A report may be made by telephone and if requested, followed by a report in writing.
4. State law indicates any person who, in good faith, makes a report to the proper authorities shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability. Any “mandatory reporter” who knowingly and willingly fails to report a suspected case of child abuse may be guilty of a misdemeanor. This does not apply to our failing to report, but may incur additional risk during litigation should we not report an alleged incident.
 - a. MPFBC has elected to notify the church’s insurance carrier of each reported case of alleged or suspected child abuse, as well as the proper authorities.
 - b. Our contact at GuideOne Insurance is Nolan Jackson, Jr., at phone 770-466-1000. The report to Georgia state authorities should be directed to Gwinnett County Child Abuse and Neglect Reports (Department of Family and Children Services), at phone 770-995-2122. The police will be called if the child appears to be in immediate danger.
 - c. The report should be made in the presence of the attorney retained by the Church or another staff member who can attest to the report and its content.
 - d. The report should contain the following: names and addresses of the child and the child’s parents or caretaker, the child’s age, the nature and extent of the child’s injuries, including any evidence of previous injuries, as much identifying information of the accused as possible, and any other information that the reporting person believes might be helpful in establishing the cause of the injuries.

V. Amendment of Policy

The ministerial staff in consultation with the Trustees may amend these policies as they deem necessary.

VI. Effective Date

June 12, 2005

VII. Revision Dates

(Date)