

## CHILD/WORKER PROTECTION POLICY

### **Background:**

Physical, emotional and sexual abuse of children is a problem that plagues our country today. Child abuse strikes children from every social background and often occurs in settings where children or youth have put complete trust in those adults who supervise activities in which they participate. Numerous court cases testify that the church is not exempt from providing an opportunity for child abusers to gain access to innocent children. The purpose of this policy is to help ensure that Grace Evangelical Free Church (GEFC) will act positively in the defense of our children and in the protection of those who work with children.

The aim of this policy is to:

- 1) safeguard the children and youth of this church against any form of child abuse,
- 2) protect church staff and volunteer workers from potential false allegations of abuse,
- 3) limit the extent of our church's legal risk due to abuse.

### **Priority:**

In working with children and youth in a church setting, we must never lose sight that these children and youth have been entrusted to us by their parents and by God. With this in mind we must be in pursuit of the following goals in our interaction with the children who attend or are involved in the outreach ministry of GEFC:

- 1) to honor the Lord
- 2) to protect the safety and self esteem of every child
- 3) to provide an environment that is pure, loving, and affectionate
- 4) to prevent even the appearance of evil
- 5) to promote the development of healthy relationships
- 6) to properly intervene and restore an abused child and family's well-being

Effective screening measures combined with policies aimed at the preventing and identifying abuse, are among the first steps in protecting children and reassuring parents with respect to their child's safety. Therefore, the following guidelines will be faithfully observed:

## 1. Worker Selection

A. Each paid staff member must undergo a thorough screening process prior to hiring that will consist of the following:

- (1) a completed confidential screening form (see Appendix 4)
- (2) a personal interview with the board of elders
- (3) reference checks made by an elder board member (see Appendix 2)
- (4) completion of a criminal record check authorization form to be used when the Board of Elders considers it appropriate (see Appendix 5)

B. Each volunteer of GEFC ministries must have on file.

- (1) a completed confidential screening form (see Appendix 4)
- (2) a completed criminal background waiver (see Appendix 5)
- (3) a completed interview verification form (see Appendix 2)

## 2. Physical Safety and Protection

A. Overall Facility

Each room used for public meetings will have:

- (1) A posted fire escape route
- (2) Emergency lights
- (3) No broken chairs, tables or other furnishings

B. Nursery/Toddler Rooms

- (1) Rooms used for nursery/toddler care will include all necessary safety precautions:
- (2) Outlet protectors in all safety outlets or safety outlets placed 3 feet up on walls
- (3) Childproof latches on all cabinets
- (4) Toys cleaned (sprayed with disinfectant and wiped) each week
- (5) Broken toys and equipment will be repaired immediately or discontinued from use
- (6) Crib linens will be changed/cleaned after each use and crib mattresses cleaned
- (7) Cleaning supplies and other poisonous substances will be locked up or inaccessible (i.e. high shelf) to small children

### C. Playground

It is recommended that no child be allowed on the playground without adult supervision. Since this is not always enforceable, a sign should be placed on the gate of the playground that states, "Children not allowed to play without adult supervision" or "Play at own risk; church not liable for accidents."

The playground will be inspected monthly by the Deacons and all broken, damaged or questionable equipment repaired or removed.

## 3. Worker Supervision/Accountability

### A. Nursery/Toddler area

- (1) In each nursery there must be at least two adults. Additional helpers may be an adult or a child twelve years old or older.
- (2) A child ten years old or older is permitted to be the helper if one of the adults is the child's parent.
- (3) Bathroom doors will be left ajar when assisting a child in the bathroom.
- (4) Diaper changing
  - a. Whenever possible, adults changing diapers should have an additional helper to observe. The third worker will be watching the other children.
  - b. If an observer is available, the worker will not start until the observer is watching.
  - c. The worker will take the diaper off, wipe only the necessary areas, use cream only when requested by parent (if rash is present).
  - d. The worker will throw the diaper away, immediately wash their hands, and will wash the changing pad with disinfectant or baby wipes.

### B. Other Ministries

- (1) All ministries involving children under 7<sup>th</sup> grade must have at least 2 adults present at all times and with clear visibility from the outside of the room.
- (2) It is strongly recommended that adult teaching teams consist of either 2 ladies or a man and a woman
- (3) Restroom policy
  - a. Children (4<sup>th</sup>) grade and below (see nursery section) will not be allowed to walk to the restroom unattended

- b. Bathroom use will be allowed with the accompaniment of an adult. If adult/child are same sex, the adult may stand outside of the stall. If opposite sex, the adult should stand outside bathroom with door slightly ajar. Whenever possible a male adult should escort a male and a female adult should escort a female child.

#### C. Permission for off church activities

Church staff or volunteer workers will obtain the verbal consent of the child's parent or guardian before going off church property with that child.

Workers will notify the appropriate church leader of such off site activities in advance.

All children or youth involved in an activity scheduled as a church organized event shall have turned in prior to the event a *Release of Liability/Authorization For Medical Care Form* signed by the parent or guardian (see Appendix 3)

Any group taking children or youth off church premises but within the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex will keep a record of attendance for the trip.

#### D. Authorization For Emergency Medical Care Forms

All church groups taking children or youth outside the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex will have a notarized *Authorization For Medical Care* form on file, signed by a parent or legal guardian, updated yearly, for each child or youth (see Appendix 3).

#### E. Transportation

- (1) A male leader shall not be in a car with female passengers without another family member or other male passenger.
- (2) A female leader will not be in a car with male passengers without another family member or other female passengers

#### F. Discipleship Activities

- (1) One-on-one conversations with children or youth must occur in a visibly accessible place
- (2) Male leaders should disciple the boys and female leaders should disciple the girls. Discipling activities shall occur in a visibly accessible place.

## F. Affection

- (1) Any area covered by a child's swimsuit are private and are never to be touched by any staff or volunteer worker.
- (2) Hugging should be reserved for special occasions. Tickling, pinching and kissing are inappropriate in the context of a church activity.

## H. Overnight Rule

Any church activity that involves keeping children or youth overnight shall be chaperoned only by leaders who have been properly screened by a member of the pastoral staff (see Worker Selection above). P. 2

## 3. Response to Allegations

- A. An allegation of child maltreatment is to be taken seriously and appropriate measures shall be determined by the Board of Elders of GEFC.
- B. These measures shall include:
  - (1) Offering appropriate counsel for the child involved
  - (2) Notifying the parents or guardians of the child involved to offer any care and support needed
  - (3) Designating the pastor or other elder as the spokesman for the church with the responsibility of speaking to the congregation and media as needed
  - (4) Documenting all efforts involved in the investigation of the incident including preventative measures taken prior to the incident
  - (5) Reporting the incident to the current church insurance agency as well as consulting with a reputable attorney.

## 4. Reporting Obligations

It is worth noting that reporting known or suspected cases of child abuse is not only required by law, but also reflects a caring love for the child. It is not in any way an act of disloyalty. Discrete and confidential reporting of suspected abuse is critical to abuse prevention.

- A. Any known or suspected case of child abuse is to be directly reported to Child Protective Services of Texas within 48 hours of detection at 1-800-252-5400. Any known or suspected case of child abuse is also to be directly reported to the pastor of GEFC or the pastor's representative as designated by the Board of Elders of GEFC.

## APPENDIX 1

### Scripture & Definitions

#### Encouragement from Scripture:

He (Jesus) took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms He said to them, "Whoever welcomes one of these in my name welcomes me." Mark 9: 36-37

He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: "...if anyone cause one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea." Matthew 18: 2,6

#### Definitions:

The National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse (NCPA) defines child abuse as a non-accidental injury or pattern of injuries to a child. Child abuse is damage to a child for which there is not "reasonable" explanation. Child abuse includes non-accidental physical injury, neglect, sexual molestation, and emotional abuse:

- Non-accidental physical injury may include severe beatings, burns, strangulation, or human bites.
- Neglect is failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life: food, clothing, shelter, or medical care; and lack of supervision or total abandonment.
- Sexual molestation is the sexual exploitation of a child including rape, incest, fondling of sexual organs, pornography, or exhibitionism.
- Emotional abuse is a pattern of behavior that attacks a child's emotional development and sense of self worth; examples include constant criticizing, belittling, insulting, rejecting, and providing no love, support or guidance.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> National Committee to Prevent Child abuse, *Think you know something about child abuse? – Questions and Answers*, 1993.





APPENDIX 3

**LIABILITY RELEASE FORM/  
AUTHORIZATION FOR MEDICAL CARE  
(Release of All Claims)**

I do hereby release, forever discharge and agree to hold harmless Grace Evangelical Free Church of Allen, TX, its Board, Staff and Youth Sponsors from any and all liability, claims or demands for personal injury, sickness or death, as well as property damage and expenses, of any nature whatsoever which may be incurred by the undersigned and the participant that occur while said person is participating in any activity of Grace Evangelical Free Church, whether on or off church property.

The undersigned further hereby agrees to hold harmless and indemnify said church, its directors, employees and agents from any liability sustained by said acts of said participant, including expenses incurred attendant thereto.

The undersigned further consents to the administration of first-aid and/or doctor's care, or any other form of medical treatment necessitated by illness or injury that may require the same. In the event of the necessity of such care or treatment as heretofore described, the undersigned agrees to hold harmless and indemnify said church, its directors, employees and agents from any acts of malfeasance, and/or failure to act on the part of those chosen to administer medical care on behalf of the participant.

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Insurance Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Policy Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Person to be notified if Parent or Guardian is not available: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



If yes, please explain (attach a separate page, if necessary): \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Church History and Prior Youth Work**

List any previous ministry experience involving children and youth (include church or organization's name and phone number, type of ministry & approximate dates that you served):

Church/organization:      phone:      type of work:      dates:

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List any gifts, desires, training, education or other factors that have prepared you for ministry with children and youth at GEFC:

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Personal References:

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Applicant's Statement**

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references, churches or organizations listed in this application to provide any information that they may have regarding my character and fitness for work with children and youth. In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application by Grace Evangelical Free Church, I hereby release any individual or the church from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result in me, my heirs, or family, on account of compliance or any attempts to comply with this authorization.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to abide by the constitution and policies of Grace Evangelical Free Church.

I further state that I have received a copy of the Child/Youth Protection Policy, I have read it and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it. I agree to abide by the Child/Youth Protection Policy.

I further state that I have carefully read the foregoing release and know the contents thereof and I sign this release as my own free act.

Applicant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX 5

**CONSENT FOR CRIMINAL BACKGROUND HISTORY CHECK  
AUTHORIZATION/WAIVER/INDEMNITY**

I hereby give my permission in exchange for good and valuable consideration for Grace Evangelical Free Church to obtain information relating to my criminal history. The criminal history record, as received from the reporting agencies, may include arrest and conviction data as well as plea bargains and deferred adjudications. I understand that this information will be used, in part, to determine my eligibility for a volunteer or employment position with this organization. I also understand that as long as I remain a volunteer or an employee here, the criminal history records check may be repeated at any time. I understand that I will have an opportunity to review the criminal history and a procedure is available for clarification, if I dispute the record as received.

I, the undersigned, do, for myself, my heirs, executors and administrators, hereby remise, release and forever discharge and agree to indemnify and defend Grace EFC, directors, employees and agents harmless from and against any and all causes of actions, suits, liabilities, costs, debts and sums of money, claims and demands whatsoever, and any and all related attorney's fees, court costs and other expenses resulting from the investigation of my background in connection with my application to become a volunteer or staff member.

Applicant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please print name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Maiden name if applicable

\_\_\_\_\_  
Any other names ever used

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of birth

\_\_\_\_\_  
Place of birth

\_\_\_\_\_  
Social Security Number

Records sent to:  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_