



Child **Protection Policy**

Mission & Vision

Our mission at New Story Church is to make “More and Better Followers of Jesus.” This policy will guide the workers in our nursery, children’s, and youth ministries to create and maintain a safe environment for those entrusted to our care. In addition, this protected environment will allow parents to focus on following Christ, assured that their children are receiving loving, age-appropriate supervision.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

Children’s Ministry Workers are adults who serve in children’s ministries after completing the New Story Church screening process described below. These workers may be volunteers or church staff.

Screened Minors are minors between the ages of fifteen and seventeen (15-17) who have completed, with written parental permission, the same screening process as the adults serving in a children’s ministry. They are required to have *indirect* supervision by a children’s ministry worker. Indirect supervision is defined as having an adult worker in the general area.

Helpers are minors who are between the ages of thirteen and fourteen (13-14) and assist in some area of children’s ministry alongside an adult. Helpers will not go through childcare screening process, but will be vetted by the children’s ministry staff. Written parental permission is required to serve as a helper. Helpers will be *directly* supervised by the adult workers in the same room.

Child Abuse is harm or injury of a child by an adult or older child that is not accidental. It may include physical abuse, emotional abuse, or sexual abuse.

Ministry Parameters

Scope

The Child Protection Policy applies to any ministry serving children. Each individual ministry may add additional policies and procedures as necessary to provide age-appropriate care. Any modification of this Policy must be approved by the pastors.

Worker Responsibilities

- All children’s ministry staff and volunteers share a particular responsibility for:
- Loving the children as Christ loves them.
- Setting an example of proper Christian conduct in the way we live our lives.
- Caring for the children.
- Understanding that serving in the children’s ministries is not a right, but a privilege; and this privilege embodies responsibilities to God for ministering to and caring for the children.

Ministry Process

- Screen all children’s ministry workers.

- Require training for all children's ministry workers.
- Use child check-in/check-out system for children ages 0-12.
- Employ scheduling procedures and worker staffing that optimize safety.
- Equip each area with a first aid kit.
- Educate our staff and volunteers to recognize suspected child abuse, to require them to understand and follow any applicable reporting policies, and to encourage them to report suspected abuse to the appropriate staff members.
- Adhere to a healthy child policy for admittance to children's ministry.
- Adhere to a two-adult room policy whenever possible.
- Equip our workers to respond to any emergency that arises and to know how to evacuate children safely in case of fire or weather situation.

Worker Screening Process

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our ministries and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

- **Six Month Rule** No applicant will be considered for any position involving contact with children until she/he has been involved with New Story Church for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.
- **Written Application** All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. It must be witnessed by someone other than a family member. In the case of a minor applying to serve in the children's ministry, it must also include the signature of a parent or guardian. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application will include a consent form for the required background check. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the New Story Church.
- **Personal Interview** Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview will be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the pastors on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

Any worker that relocates for a substantial length of time and subsequently returns to New Story Church will be required to complete the screening process again.

Training

All children's ministry workers must attend New Story Church's childcare training to

be allowed to work with the children. Initial training will include the Child Protection Policy, abuse reporting, ministry responsibilities, and safety procedures. Additional training sessions will be scheduled for workers to update them on policies and procedures. Parents with questions about childcare training are welcome to attend these sessions.

Check-In/Check-Out Procedure

For children age twelve (12) and below, a check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be signed in by a parent or guardian, who will receive a "child check" for the child. The parent or guardian must present the "child check" in order to sign out the child from our care. In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to present the "child check," the ministry director or coordinator will be contacted. That leader will be responsible for releasing the child to the care of a parent or guardian after discussing the surrounding circumstances with the parent or guardian. EXCEPTION: Children age twelve (12) may be released without parent or guardian being present if that parent or guardian has given written permission to the ministry leader.

Protection Guidelines

Two Adult Rule and Visibility

For all children's classes and programs, at least two qualified, unrelated adult volunteers are preferred in each classroom. In no case will there be less than two adults present. Helpers are always in addition to and supervised by the two adults. Helpers are never to be left alone at any time with children without the presence of the two workers. Workers must never leave a child alone in a classroom.

An exception to the two volunteer rule is when one adult is taking children to the restroom. The remaining adult must be present in the classroom, and that adult should be highly visible to other adults at all times. In this situation, doors must be open all the time.

Two male volunteers may not serve together in the same room without a female volunteer also being present.

Workers may take children out of the nursery or classroom only for a compelling reason, such as to use the restroom or in cases of illness, emergency, or evacuation.

Workers should not have private one-on-one meetings with children out of sight of the classroom.

Rooms should never be completely darkened and the doors must remain unlocked when children are present.

Restroom Guidelines

Children five years of age and younger should use a classroom bathroom if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain at the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child requires assistance, the workers should pro open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

For children over the age of five, at least one adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female should take girls. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom is empty, and then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain at the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, workers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

Discipline

All children's ministry workers are responsible for providing a loving, respectful, and orderly atmosphere in which children can learn, play, and interact with others. This atmosphere should be maintained by preparing beforehand, proactively directing children towards acceptable activities, verbally encouraging positive behavior, and, when necessary, correcting or redirecting inappropriate behavior. Acceptable means of redirecting inappropriate behavior may include correcting the child verbally, withholding a certain privilege or activity for a brief time, or separating a child from the situation or problem for a brief time (particularly if his behavior is endangering or upsetting other children). During correction, a child should never be removed from the classroom. Correction should be discrete; in the classroom (not in the hallway); and never outside of the sight of others.

Steps of correction might include (depending on the age of the child): (1) removing the child from the situation or problem; (2) pointing out the problematic behavior; talking to the child about his/her sin and need for Christ; (3) praying for the child and redirecting to a new activity; (4) helping the child to reconcile with the offended children when appropriate.

Children's ministry workers are strictly prohibited from using any form of corporal punishment such as slapping, kicking, punching, spanking, or hitting. They should never speak harsh words, insults, belittling comments, threatening words, or any other verbal humiliation to children.

If a child's behavior is uncontrollable or the child does not respond to the acceptable means of discipline indicated above, workers should contact the parents. If the child assaults, harasses or bullies' other children, misbehaves beyond minor correction, or has a pattern of misbehavior, the parents should be immediately called so the child can be removed. Workers are allowed to physically restrain a child if he/she is physically endangering other children. Please report any of these problems (as well as the appropriate response taken to deal with the behavior) to the pastors.

Health/Hygiene

Hygiene

Good hygiene practices are very effective for protecting both the children and volunteers from illness. These methods are employed such that all human bodily fluids are treated as if they carried infectious diseases. These practices are applicable in any setting and should always be used.

- Wash hands before and after any contact with bodily fluids, including wiping noses, changing diapers, cleaning vomit, and treating a blood spill.
- Always wear disposable gloves when dealing with any bodily fluids.
- Treat all soiled linen (i.e. sheets, clothing) as potential infectious agents.

- In rooms with children ages 23 months and below, remove toys that children have mouthed from the general play area. Set them in the container by the sink and wash.
- At the end of the session, disinfect the room with disinfectant spray or wipes.

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

- For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
- For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
- Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

Medications Policy

It is the policy of New Story Church **not** to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the ministry director or coordinator to develop a plan of action.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at New Story Church. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

Food and Drink Policy:

One of the ways we protect children is to limit the food and drink allowed in classrooms. Workers may not bring food or drink (other than water) with them when they serve. In most classrooms, a snack and water are supplied for snack time. Workers will discuss a child's food allergies with their parents prior to giving any food.

Off-Site and Overnight Activities

Permission Slips

Children should have parental or guardian permission in advance to participate in any overnight activity or activity that takes place away from New Story Church grounds.

Permission should be given in writing and signed and dated by a parent or guardian. The permission slip will identify the name and date of the activity in which the child will be participating, as well as provide a basic description of what will occur.

Transportation

- It is recommended that children be transported in groups rather than alone for church-sponsored activities. A child's parent or guardian may give permission for an unaccompanied adult to drive a single child or children to or from a church-sponsored activity. Parental permission for transportation as part of a planned event should be obtained in writing.
- Children legally required to ride in a car seat or booster seat must be transported using the appropriate safety seat. All other passengers shall wear a seatbelt while a vehicle is in motion or turned on.
- This policy is not intended to prohibit workers, when two are available to assist, from offering a ride home to children in an emergency situation. The adults should make reasonable attempts to contact parents or guardians prior to providing the ride. The adults providing the ride should inform the child's parents or leave a message stating the expected departure, travel, and arrival times. The child or children should ride in the backseat.
- No person under the age of 21 shall drive other children as part of a church activity.
- Every driver should have a valid driver's license. Every driver should drive a registered and insured vehicle.
- If a group is traveling in one vehicle, there must be two unrelated trained adults in the vehicle. If a group is traveling in more than one vehicle, care should be taken so that a single vehicle with one adult driver is not separated from the group for an extended length of time.

Security and Emergency Response

Emergency Situations

In emergency situations, if appropriate, 911 will be called to secure help and the Safety Team will be called to the children's area to assist with the emergency.

Evacuation Procedures

In the event of a fire, a worker should call 911 and also assist all children in immediately evacuating the building. Staff and key responders will help keep parents away from the children's areas. Parents should not report to the children's areas because they risk creating chaos and blocking the exit stairwells for children. Instead, parents will meet their children in the designated areas outside of the church building. Evacuation information is located on all of the floors. Workers and parents should familiarize themselves with this information.

A Live Threat

A live threat includes a shooting or some other type of security hazard.

Step 1: Workers Communicate the Danger

- When it is safe to do so, whoever sees or hears the live threat should notify the pastors or the Safety Team Leader about the problem. That person will then notify the

remaining workers about the live threat.

- When it is safe to do so, the Safety Team Leader should call 911. Give the following information:
 - Location and the nature of the threat.
 - If shots have been fired, tell police we have an “active shooter.”

Step 2: Volunteers and Staff Evacuate Children

- If it is safe to do so, the first course of action should be to evacuate the building.

Step 3: Hide

- If evacuation is not a safe option, hide in as safe a place as possible.
- Close and lock the door.
- Barricade the doors with heavy furniture.
- Close and lock windows and close blinds.
- Turn off the lights.
- Silence all electronic devices.
- Maintain silence.
- Have children lie or sit on the floor away from the door. If possible, stay out of sight of any interior windows.

After the area has been made safe and secure by police, the pastors or the Safety Team Leader will communicate an “all clear” sign to anyone who is in lock-down mode.

Missing Child or Kidnapping

In the case of a missing child, the workers will first do a thorough check of the children's ministry areas to make sure the child is not in another part of the building. If the child is not found after a thorough check of the children's ministry areas then alert the key responders, each of whom will then block their assigned door until otherwise notified by the pastors or the Safety Team Leader. Workers will continue to search for the child until they are found. If the child is not found, the Safety Team Leader will call police to secure further help. Key responders will continue to block their assigned door until otherwise notified by the Safety Team Leader.

Parent Involvement in Emergency Procedures

The pastors will decide how and when to notify parents about security or emergency situations. Involving parents too early might cause unnecessary fears or panic. If an emergency does happen, parents will need guidance, pastoral care and counseling, so we rely on our pastoral staff to walk with parents through difficult situations.

Child Abuse Reporting

New Story Church will ensure that a caring response is always provided to any suspicion or witnessing of neglect or abuse. Every allegation of neglect or abuse will be taken seriously. Proper guidelines for handling such complaints will be followed diligently and exhaustively.

The victim(s) and victim's family will be cared for by the church in whatever way is available. Situations will be handled forthrightly with due respect for all parties' privacy and confidentiality.

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- Emotional abuse – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- Neglect – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Who Should be Notified?

Reporting of abuse (suspected or actual) will begin by the worker immediately contacting the director or coordinator of the specific child ministry that an incident has occurred. A written report of the incident will be submitted on the Child Abuse Reporting Form (Appendix 1) within 24 hours of the incident to the ministry leader. The ministry leader will report the incident to the pastors. The church will seek professional assistance when deemed appropriate by the New Story Church pastoral staff. Notification will be limited to those who need to know about the allegation and to those who can provide assistance in responding to neglect or abuse. The church may:

- Report suspicions or firsthand accounts or any knowledge of abuse to civil authorities. Full cooperation must be given to civil authorities.
- Notify medical personnel in order to obtain ongoing care for the victim(s) and victim's families.
- Notify an insurance agent or any other outside officials.
- Notify and consult with a church attorney.

How Will New Story Church Respond to Allegations, Admission or Criminal Conviction?

Allegations of neglect or abuse, admission of child abuse by staff, volunteer, helper, or any member of New Story Church, or criminal conviction of abuse should:

- Be reported to New Story Church's pastoral staff. This disclosure of abuse is to be done regardless of the source of the information and should be conveyed within 24 hours of the allegation being made or the admission of child abuse or criminal conviction. (See "Who Should be Notified?" above.)
- Immediately result in removal of the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender from any activity or program involving children.
- Result in immediate ineligibility of the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender from being granted approval to participate in any activity or program involving children.

The pastoral staff and deacons of New Story Church will decide on other appropriate

responses to allegations, self-admission of guilt, or criminal conviction, some of which may include:

- Contacting police or other state authorities.
- Notification of staff, deacons and workers.
- Reporting allegations, self-admission or criminal conviction to the congregation during New Story Church's services or business meeting.
- Barring from any activities or church programs with children or the children's ministry areas at the church building.
- Disciplining (removal from membership) of alleged perpetrator or criminal offender.
- Barring alleged perpetrator or criminal offender from any and all church property.
- Suspension or termination of a paid staff member or volunteer position.
- Acknowledging to another organization about allegations against or termination of staff, deacon, volunteer, helper, or any member of New Story Church for misconduct or abuse against children.

If the pastoral staff learns from law enforcement authorities that allegations of neglect or abuse are being investigated or criminal charges have been filed, the staff should:

- Be careful to not interfere with the investigation by law enforcement authorities.
- Prevent contact between the accused and the accuser if appropriate.
- Remove the accused from activities or programs involving children, pending the outcome of the investigation.
- Appoint a member of New Story Church staff to be a liaison with law enforcement authorities.

Confidentiality

The church will maintain confidentiality to the extent that it deems appropriate for the care of its members and consistent with applicable law. Allegations and suspicion should be reported only to the persons specified in this policy.

Response to Media

If appropriate, the New Story Church pastoral staff will respond to the media. Normally, one staff member will be designated to speak to the media on behalf of the church. A written statement should be distributed at the time of media disclosure. Great care should be taken to disclose only facts and not suspicion. Disclosed facts might include the nature of the abuse allegation and when the alleged abuse happened. Great care should be taken to protect the identity of all parties involved (the alleged abuser and victim). Alerting the media lets the alleged victim know that allegations will be taken seriously and gives other vulnerable members of the community a chance to be protected.

APPENDIX 1

Child Abuse Reporting Form

Instructions: If a children's ministry worker suspects, hears about, or observes signs or symptoms of abuse, please: (1) Talk immediately with the appropriate ministry leader; and (2) document any relevant information on this form. This report should include signs or symptoms observed, notations about bruises or injuries that are visible, a summary of what the child said, and a description of any emotions expressed by the child. Do not go back and interview the child. Fill this form out based on whatever information has already been obtained.

Date: _____

Name of Child: _____

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Name of Worker: _____

Signs or Symptoms of Abuse Observed:

Bruises or Injuries that are Visible:

Emotions Expressed by Child:

Summary of Conversation with the Child: