

Child/Youth Protection Policy

General Purpose Statement:

“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14). Crievewood Baptist Church sees ministering to children and youth as a central part of Christ’s calling for the church. Crievewood Baptist Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the practices below, our goal is to protect the children and youth of Crievewood Baptist Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

Definitions:

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term ‘adult’ refers to anyone 18 years or older.

Selection Of Workers:

All employees and all volunteers (i.e., non-paid staff) who desire to work with the children participating in our ministries and activities will be screened. This screening includes:

a. **Six Month Rule**

A Volunteer will not be allowed to work with children until he/she has been a member of Crievewood Baptist 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. A waiver (in writing) may be granted in an exceptional circumstance by the Minister of Spiritual Growth and Administration.

b. **Written Application**

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application (“volunteer form”), to be supplied by Crievewood Baptist Church. 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 form will be maintained in confidence on file at Crievewood Baptist Church.

c. **Personal Interview**

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with applicants to discuss their suitability for positions.

d. **Reference Checks**

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicant’s references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at Crievewood Baptist Church.

Crievewood Baptist Church

e. **Criminal Background Check**

A national criminal background check is required for all employees, regardless of position, and for volunteers, including those:

- who will be leading or assisting to lead children in our ministries and programs;
- approved drivers of the church's vehicles;
- who will be involved in overnight activities with minors;
- in one-on-one mentorship of minors;
- having occasional one-on-one contact with minors (e.g., church-sponsored athletic team coaches)

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church to run the check. Individuals declining to sign the authorization form will be unable to work with children.

If the applicant is currently involved in circumstances where he/she has been arrested or has charges pending, the applicant is required to disclose such on the application, since these may not show up on a background check. False statements and/or omissions will result in the volunteer being removed from positions working with children.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense on the background check (i.e., one that will keep an individual from working with children) will be determined by the Minister of Spiritual Growth & Administration on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions and instances of a *nolo contendere* plea 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.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at Crievewood Baptist Church.

At any point after background screening has been completed, any worker (paid or volunteer) must immediately report to the Minister of Spiritual Growth & Administration any subsequent arrest or charges against him/her. The worker may be removed from child care until pending charges are resolved.

Once the employee or volunteer applicant has been successfully screened, he/she may be allowed to work with children.

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two adult workers, unrelated by blood or by marriage, will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. In situations where the two-adult rule is not practical, adult "roamers" will move around the church to view children or youth activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation.

Transporting Children & Youth

No fewer than three persons, one of which is an adult, should occupy a vehicle when transporting children or youth. Only adults will provide transportation.

Overnight Events

For overnight events, the recommended adult-to-child ratio is 1:6 within gender. If both genders of children participate in the overnight event, chaperones, too, will be composed of both genders.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

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

- Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child which 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 – a sexual situation between a child and an adult or a person in a position of power over the child, including sexual exploitation of the child, activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, and pornography.
- Neglect – depriving children of their essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of pre-existing abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at Creievewood Baptist Church suspects abuse or neglect of a child under our care, he/she should report this immediately, as required by law, to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services. Any person acting in good faith who makes a report of child abuse/neglect shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability, according to state law. The name of any person reporting child abuse or neglect shall in no case be released to any persons other than employees of child protective services or affiliates.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at Creievewood Baptist Church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. Secure the safety of the child.
2. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
3. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation.
4. The church's insurance company will be notified, and staff will complete an incident report.
5. The church will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse.

Crievewood Baptist Church

6. The church will cooperate with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities. In the event there is no investigation of the incident by state or local authorities, an appropriate team from within the church will be formed to investigate the circumstances of the incident. The team should act only in consultation with our insurance company and/or attorney.
7. Persons who are not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position with children or youth.
8. The Pastor or Minister of Spiritual Growth and Administration, or the person they specifically designate, will be the church's spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect (if one of these two is alleged to be involved, the other will be the spokesperson). All other workers should refrain from speaking to the media.
9. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.

Open Door Policy

Doors to classrooms and other rooms being used should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

Publication of Photographic Images

Use of any child's photograph or name on the church's website will occur only with the written permission of the parent or guardian.

Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for youth (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to such workers:

1. Teenage workers must be at least age 14 (a 12 or 13-year old may be authorized in writing by the Minister of Youth and Young Adults).
2. Teenage workers will be screened as specified above ("Selection of Workers," *a through d*).
3. Teenage workers must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.
4. No youth under age 16 may work with bed babies or creepers.

Check-in/Check-out Procedure

For children ages birth to Kindergarten, a Care Card Security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be signed in by a parent or guardian, who will receive a "Care Card" for the child similar to a claim check. It is necessary for the parent/guardian to complete the information requested. The parent or guardian must present the "child check" in order to sign out the child from our care. If parents or guardians approve of someone else picking up their children, that person must have the Care Card.

Crievewood Baptist Church

If there is an emergency, the parents/guardians will be notified immediately. Parents/guardians of birth to two's will have beepers and will be paged when there is a need, or parents will be called on their cell phones.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at Crievewood Baptist 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 stay at home:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 24 hours
- Colored drainage
- Sore throat
- Persistent cough
- Eye or skin infections
- Lice
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

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

Medications Policy

It is the policy of Crievewood Baptist 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 for children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the Minister of Spiritual Growth and Administration to develop a plan of action.

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of Crievewood Baptist Church not to administer corporal punishment. There will be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children.

If a child is removed from the group for disciplinary reasons, he will never be out of a worker's sight. The separation will be for no longer than one minute per year of the child's age. Workers should consult with the Minister of Spiritual Growth and Administration or designated representative if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Restroom Guidelines

Children five years of age and younger should utilize 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, 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 is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall door open as he/she assists the child.

Crievewood Baptist Church

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, then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside 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.

Accidental Injuries to Children

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

1. 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.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the event coordinator. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. 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.

Training

Crievewood Baptist Church will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are expected to attend these training events.

Acknowledgement of church policies

After being screened, all workers must acknowledge in writing that they understand the policies pertaining to the protection of children and that they agree with and will abide by them.

Media Involvement

In the event the news media contacts the church, all employees should refrain from making any comment to the media and direct them to the Pastor or Minister of Spiritual Growth and Administration. If neither is available, questions should go to another minister.

Weekday Preschool and Pre-K Ministries

The Weekday Preschool and Pre-K Ministries of Crievewood Baptist Church follow state-mandated policies for child protection. Inquiries for more information on these policies should be directed to Paula Webb, Weekday Preschool Director.

All situations not covered by these policies shall be referred to the Minister of Spiritual Growth and Administration for consideration.