

*Please read the attached Child/Youth Protection Policy and sign this page stating you have read the policy. Return this page to Cheryl Bosch or Jennifer Dokken directly or place in a sealed envelope in the church office and keep the policy for your reference.*

-----

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have read and understand the Child/Youth Protection Policy and agree to follow the guidelines as stated.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## General Purpose Statement

Valley Bible Church's goal is to provide an opportunity where ministry can be done with excellence in a safe environment. In serving our children, our desire is to offer a place where the participants, volunteers, and paid staff can experience growth in their relationship with Jesus Christ and one another. The following procedures have been adopted and will be enforced.

*"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ."  
Colossians 3:23-24 NKJV*

## Definitions

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

A children's worker, volunteer, helper or assistant is one who directly trains or cares for a child.

## Selection of Workers

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

### a) Three / Three Month Rule

No volunteer will be considered for any position involving contact with children until s/he has been involved with Valley Bible Church for a minimum of three (3) months, consistently. This will be followed by three (3) months of supervised ministry with children. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation of the applicant's suitability for working with children.

### b) Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children on a consistent basis (not temporary such as a children's one-day event or being a chaperone) must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, current ministry involvement at Valley Bible Church or previous churches, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the church.

### c) Statement of Faith

All persons seeking to work directly with children must complete and sign a statement of faith.

## **d) Personal Interview**

Upon completion of the application, an interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

## **e) Criminal Background Check**

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and for the following categories of volunteers every two years:

- Those involved in our children's ministries working directly with children;
- Those who will be involved in overnight activities with children;
- Those counseling children;
- Those involved in one-on-one mentorship of children; and
- Chaperones or vehicle drivers of children during children/youth events.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by one of the pastors or elders on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. 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 the church in a locked secure place. Appropriate measures will be taken to secure the personal information of all applicants.

## **f) Returning Volunteers**

If a volunteer leaves the church and returns again wishing to serve in children's ministries, s/he may be asked to go through a rescreening process.

## **Two Adult Rule**

It is our goal that a minimum of two adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. One child should not be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation, with the door open. There must be at least one female adult working in the nursery at all times.

## **Teenage Workers**

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for Children's Ministry volunteers who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to such workers:

- Teenage workers must be at least age 14.
- Teenage workers will fill out a Children's Ministry Application and Statement of Faith.
- Teenage workers must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.
- A teenage worker may serve as the second adult to fulfill the requirement of the Two Adult Rule in supervising children fifth grade or younger.
- Male teenagers are not allowed to work in the nursery.

## **Check-in/Check-out Procedure/Supervision of Children**

Workers should arrive at least 20-30 minutes before a scheduled activity, and at least two workers must remain until all children have been released. Children through fifth grade must be checked in at the Children's Check-in desk in the foyer prior to class starting, where they will receive a customized name tag. Children must have this name tag on in order to be permitted into the classroom. If they do not have a name tag they must be sent out to the check-in desk with their parent to receive one. Children must remain in the classroom until a parent or authorized person presents a pickup tag with a matching number to the child's nametag. At this time the teacher will remove the child's nametag and place it in the check-out book. If the parent arrives without a pickup tag, the teacher must send the parent to get a new one at the check-in desk.

Children sixth grade or older may be released from the classroom to find their parents or await transportation if appropriate. Two adults should remain at the building until all students have departed.

Workers may NOT appoint additional workers who have not been properly screened.

There must be one adult female volunteer in the nursery at all times. Male teenage volunteers are not allowed to work in the nursery.

## **Restroom Guidelines**

Preschool children should be escorted by a children's worker in pairs or as a class to the hallway restrooms. The worker should ensure that the restroom is empty before allowing the children to enter, and the worker must remain to escort both children back. If a child needs assistance, only a female worker may assist the child and the hallway door must be left open. A worker should never be alone with a child or children in a restroom with the hallway door closed. A worker under the age of 18 is not allowed to escort children to the restroom unless accompanied by another adult.

Children first grade or older may be sent to the hallway restrooms in same-gender pairs without a children's worker; however, the pair should remain together at all times and return to the classroom together.

When available, children should utilize a classroom restroom rather than a hallway restroom. A child may be escorted singly if simply crossing the hall to a supervised room with a classroom restroom, and then escorted back by a worker from the second room.

Parents should be encouraged to have their children visit the restroom prior to each class.

If an accident occurs, the child is to be escorted to the nursery where a female worker can assist in changing clothing. Teenage female workers can assist in changing clothing in the event of an accident and change diapers with the direct supervision of a female adult. Male workers cannot change diapers or clothing.

## **Sick Child Policy**

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at Valley Bible 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
- An eye or skin infection/rash that has not been diagnosed as non-contagious
- A runny nose with colored discharge
- A cough or chest congestion

Children who are observed by 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. To prevent illnesses from being spread, children's workers should wash hands prior to the start of each class, before handling food, after examining an ill child, after wiping noses, before and after each diaper change, and after using the toilet. All children should wash hands before and after eating or drinking, after using the toilet, and after touching a child who may be ill.

Children's workers should use disposable gloves when changing diapers or if coming in contact with bodily fluids (blood, mucus, etc.). Disposable changing pads should be used for each diaper change. Infant and toddler toys should be washed and sanitized on a regular basis and as needed when they have been put in mouths.

## **Medication/Allergy Policy**

It is the policy of Valley Bible Church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent or guardian. Children who have a life threatening condition (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions) and are trained on how to self-administer medications will be allowed to do so. In situations where children have life threatening conditions but cannot self-administer medications, we will make a medical plan with a church nurse and parent. Children on youth retreats or overnight trips will need to sign a medication authorization form to allow workers to administer medications.

With the increase in nut allergies, it is our policy at Valley Bible Church that we will not allow or serve snacks that contain nuts of any kind or snacks that were manufactured around nuts. It is the teacher's responsibility to be aware of any allergies or medical conditions of the students in their classrooms. All allergies and medical conditions will be printed on the child's check-in tag. Teachers must check nametags before serving snacks.

# Discipline Policy

It is the policy of Valley Bible Church not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children.

When a child does not meet the expectations of the class, the following plan will be followed:

1. **1<sup>st</sup> time - Verbal Warning/Refocus:** The purpose of a verbal warning is to remind a child that s/he is not meeting reasonable expectations. Verbal warnings should be given simply and calmly. Workers should not embarrass a child, or express anger or disappointment. Children should be taught that a warning means: "I am giving you a chance to take responsibility for your own behavior." This is a good opportunity to refocus the child.
2. **2<sup>nd</sup> time - Time Out:** Move child to another area of the room where they can no longer participate in the disruptive behavior. When the teacher feels that the child is ready, they may be allowed to return to the group.
3. **3<sup>rd</sup> time – Removal from Classroom:** If child continues in disruptive behavior, the child may be removed from the classroom. Here the teacher, helper, or Children's Ministries Director may talk and pray with the child. After discussing the situation and receiving appropriate correction, the child may be allowed to return to the classroom. If a child does need to be removed from the classroom, have the child sit right outside the classroom with the door open and a teacher standing near the door. Never leave a child unsupervised.
4. **4<sup>th</sup> time - Referral to parents:** If the child is unwilling to comply submit to the rules of the classroom, the Children's Ministry Director may remove the child from the classroom for the remainder of the class. Removal may be done by the Children's Ministry Director keeping the child with him/her or by taking the child to sit with his/her parents. After the class, the children's parents should be contacted and the problem explained to them. Parents should be asked to discuss the problem with their child and provide necessary correction.

Workers should consult with the Children's Ministries Director if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

# Youth Events/Field Trips/Overnighters

During a youth event away from the church, children will be transported by approved drivers, and one child will never be left alone with a driver. The two adult rule will be followed on all youth events and field trips away from the church premises.

Written permission from parent/guardian is required for all events away from the church and for all overnighters. During a co-ed overnighter, both female and male adult volunteers are required to be present.

# Injuries

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. First Aid Kits are available in the office on the wall behind the back door, in the kitchen on the wall, in the nursery bathroom on the wall, and in the Children's Ministry office on the wall.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent or guardian will immediately be contacted. An ambulance will be called if warranted.
3. For all injuries, once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed.

# 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.

- Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- 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.

For the protection of our children and childcare workers, it is our policy to refrain from holding children above nursery age on their laps, hugging, and other invasive physical touch. Workers will allow children to initiate affection such as hugging. It is okay to pick a child up to comfort him/her if needed but do not hold on your lap.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that any individual involved in the care of children at this church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child, this must be reported immediately to the Children's Ministry Director, and then to pastors or elders for further action, including the reporting of information to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

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

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. 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.
3. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report.
4. We will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists.
5. We 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, a team will be formed to investigate the circumstances of the incident. The team should act only in consultation with our insurance company and/or attorney.

6. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position with children or youth.
7. An elder to be designated at that time will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless s/he is alleged to be involved. All other workers should refrain from speaking to the media.
8. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.

## **Training**

Valley Bible 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 strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

***\*\*\*Exceptions to this policy will only be made on a case-by-case basis and will be approved by the elders.***

***Please remember to sign the front page of this document.***

*Updated September 2015*