

# **CHRIST CHURCH OF MT AIRY CHILD PROTECTION POLICY For Fiscal Year 2012**

In order to protect the children who participate in Children’s Ministry at Christ Church of Mt Airy, (hereafter referred to as “CCMA” or “Christ Church”) and other activities under CCMA’s Children’s Ministry, this Child Protection Policy has been developed, which contains screening requirements for individuals who desire to serve in employee or voluntary positions with children (“Children’s Ministry Workers”) and youth (“Youth Ministry Workers”) guidelines for reducing the likelihood of child abuse within the CCMA Children’s Ministry, and the reporting requirements for child abuse in CCMA’s Youth and Children’s Ministry.

This Document includes the following sections:

1. Definitions—Child Abuse
2. Screening Requirements for Children’s Ministry and Youth Ministry Workers
3. Screening Process for Children’s Ministry and Youth Ministry Workers
4. General Guidelines for Children’s Ministry Workers
5. Reporting Requirements for Children’s Ministry and Youth Ministry Workers

## **Section 1: Definitions — Child Abuse**

1.1 Maryland Regulations. As of October 15, 2012, the Code of Maryland Regulations § 07.02.07.02, which are developed by the Maryland Department of Social Services for the specific purposes of guiding Child Protective Services' investigation of child abuse and neglect, contains the following definitions:

- 1.1.1 "Child" means an individual younger than 18 years old.
- 1.1.2 Child abuse means one or more of the following by a parent, caretaker, or household or family member:
  - Physical injury, not necessarily visible, or mental injury of a child, under circumstances that indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or at substantial risk of being harmed; or
  - Sexual abuse of a child, regardless of whether the child has physical injuries.
- 1.1.3 Child neglect means one or more of the following by a parent or caretaker:
  - A failure to provide proper care and attention to a child, including leaving a child unattended, under circumstances that indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or placed at substantial risk of harm; or
  - Mental injury or a substantial risk of mental injury of a child that is caused by the failure to provide proper care and attention to a child.
- 1.1.4 Sexual abuse means any act that involves sexual molestation or exploitation of a child. Sexual molestation or exploitation includes, but is not limited to:
  - Exposure, voyeurism, sexual advances, kissing, or fondling;
  - Sexual crime in any degree including rape, sodomy, or prostitution; or
  - Allowing, encouraging, or engaging in obscene or pornographic display, photographing, filming, or depiction of a child in a manner prohibited by law.
- 1.1.5 Mental injury means the observable, identifiable, and substantial impairment of a child's mental or psychological ability to function.
- 1.1.6 Indicated means a finding that there is credible evidence, which has not been satisfactorily refuted, that abuse or neglect occurred.
- 1.1.7 Unsubstantiated means a finding that there is insufficient evidence to support a finding of indicated or ruled out.
- 1.1.8 Ruled Out means a finding that abuse or neglect did not occur.

## 1.2 Maryland Law.

As of October 15, 2012, the Maryland Code Family Law, which authorizes the Maryland Department of Social Services to enforce child protection laws and to develop regulations to effect the same, provides the following definitions in § 5-701:

"Abuse" means:

(1) the physical or mental injury of a child by any parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for supervision of a child, or by any household or family member, under circumstances that indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or at substantial risk of being harmed; or

(2) sexual abuse of a child, whether physical injuries are sustained or not.

In addition:

"Sexual abuse" means any act that involves sexual molestation or exploitation of a child by a parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for supervision of a child, or by any household or family member.

(2) "Sexual abuse" includes:

(i) incest, rape, or sexual offense in any degree;

(ii) sodomy; and

(iii) unnatural or perverted sexual practices.

Further:

"Neglect" means the leaving of a child unattended or other failure to give proper care and attention to a child by any parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for supervision of the child under circumstances that indicate:

(1) that the child's health or welfare is harmed or placed at substantial risk of harm; or

(2) mental injury to the child or a substantial risk of mental injury.

## **Section 2: Screening Requirements for Children's Ministry and Youth Ministry Workers**

Such screening will consist of the following safeguards:

- 2.1 Only CCMA members or children of members will be eligible for consideration to serve as Children's Ministry Workers. The current CCMA membership process includes a pastoral interview and the completion of a confidential "Membership Questionnaire." This form will provide an initial assessment of the character of any member of the church prior to their becoming a member. A child of a member who is serving must complete the New Members class prior to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, or obtain approval of the Board of Governing Pastors to continue to serve after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- 2.2 Each CCMA member interested in serving as a Children's Ministry Worker must submit a completed application form for volunteer services. Children's Ministry Workers will submit an updated Application for Volunteers/Update form annually during the recruiting cycle.
  - 2.2.1 CCMA will check every prospective Children's Ministry worker against the online U.S. Department of Justice sex offender registry:  
<http://www.nsopw.gov/Core/Conditions.aspx>
- 2.3 Any individual with a known or discovered past history of child abuse, child neglect, physical abuse, sexual misconduct or abuse, and any other criminal activity that suggests any risk to children or youth will generally not be permitted to volunteer or otherwise serve as a Children's Ministry Worker or Youth Worker. Any exception must be approved by the Board of Governing Pastors.

## **Section 3: Screening Process for Children’s Ministry and Youth Ministry Workers**

This process applies to the following:

- a. Church Meeting Children’s Ministry Workers
- b. Other Children’s Ministry Workers
- c. All CCMA Employees
- d. Volunteer Leaders
  - Children’s Ministry
  - Youth Small Group Leaders
  - Other volunteers and leaders who serve in close contact with children.

### **The Process:**

**STEP 1:** Membership – (ALL)

- a. All workers in this capacity will be a member of CCMA, or a child of a member.

**STEP 2:** Application to Serve

- a. Children’s Ministry or Youth Ministry Volunteer Worker 18 years of age or older (adult) - submit Application for Volunteer Positions Involving Childcare.
- b. Children’s Ministry or Youth Ministry Worker Volunteer under the age of 18 – parents will fill out and sign Application for Volunteer Positions Involving Childcare for the child.
- c. Key Volunteers or Volunteer Leaders
- d. CCMA Employees

**STEP 3:** Screen the applications

- a. Answers of “yes” to any question involving a past history of child abuse, child neglect, physical abuse, sexual misconduct or abuse, and any other criminal activity will generally not be permitted to volunteer or otherwise serve as a Children’s Ministry Worker or Youth Worker.
- b. The Board of Governing Pastors will review any circumstance where a person who has answered “yes” to determine if the members should be allowed to serve. This decision will be documented in the Board of Governing Pastors Meeting minutes.

**STEP 4:** Sex offender registry check (all workers over 18)

- a. Conduct sex offender registry check using the following U.S. Department of Justice web site: <http://www.nsopw.gov/Core/Conditions.aspx>. Any search is dependent on accuracy of county and state records. The search will identify sex offender information

that could put children at risk.

**STEP 5:** Screen the sex offender registry accomplished in step 4.

- a. If Record Checks indicate a past history of sexual offense, the applicant will generally not be permitted to volunteer or otherwise serve as a Children's Ministry Worker.
- b. If Record Checks indicate a history of sexual offense, the application will be brought to the Board of Governing Pastors. The Board of Governing Pastors will discuss and approve/disapprove serving on a case-by-case basis. Any decision to allow a worker to serve with a sexual offense will be documented by the Board of Governing Pastors.

**STEP 6:** For applicants:

- a. Conduct Criminal Record check
- b. Conduct Criminal Record Search using a commercial online record search firm (Intellicorp: <http://www.intellicorp.net/marketing/home.aspx>). Any search is dependent on accuracy of county, state and federal records. CCMA will utilize a firm that has a broad access to the most crucial information. The record search will identify sex offender information and criminal histories that could put children at risk. The firm utilized will have access and report on sex offender registry data. Criminal Background Checks identifies specific searches that will be conducted.
- c. If Record Checks indicate a past history of child abuse, child neglect, physical abuse, sexual misconduct or abuse, and any other criminal activity of a sexual nature, the applicant will generally not be permitted to volunteer or otherwise serve as a Children's Ministry Worker.
- d. If Record Checks indicate a history of criminal convictions, the application will be brought to the Board of Governing Pastors. The Board of Governing Pastors will discuss and approve/disapprove serving on a case-by-case basis. Any decision to allow a worker to serve with a criminal record will be documented by the Board of Governing Pastors.

## **Section 4: General Guidelines For Children's Ministry**

This section applies to Church meeting Children's Ministry. It will also apply to any other ministries requiring a similar context for childcare. This context is one in which CCMA assumes care for a child when the parent or guardian places the child in the custody of CCMA, including a check-in/check-out process. This context refers to children ranging from birth to 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

- 4.1 **Security System**. CCMA will follow the security system for registering children outlined in Children's Ministry Security Procedures.
- 4.2 **Two-Worker Rule**. There shall be a minimum of two Children's Ministry Workers in each classroom at all times.
- 4.3 **Visibility**. Each room in which a Children Ministry class or other event occurs must have a window or an open door permitting CCMA staff and parents and guardians to view the children or youth's activities.
- 4.4 **Toilet/Diaper Changes**. Only adult Children's Ministry Workers are permitted to toilet or change the diapers of an infant or toddler.
- 4.5 **Correction**. Any correction provided to a minor in the context of Youth and Children's Ministry activities shall be done verbally, graciously, and reflective of biblical values. Children's Ministry Workers may not implement corporal punishment.
- 4.6 **Gifts**. Children's Ministry Workers shall not give personal gifts or money to individual children or youth without first notifying and obtaining permission from parents and guardians. Gifts to entire classes or as part of the classroom instruction are acceptable, with approval of CCMA Children's Ministry Administrative Staff.
- 4.7 **Retrieval**. Only the known parent, known family member, or custodian designated by the parents of a child may retrieve the child from the Children's Ministry classroom. Any other individual retrieving a child from a classroom must be authorized by one of the child's parents, who must fill out and sign the Children's Ministry Pickup Permission Form and give it to the CCMA Children's Ministry Administrative Staff prior to that non-parent pickup.
- 4.8 **Reporting Violations**. All Children's Ministry Workers must notify, as appropriate, one of the Youth or Children's pastors, Youth Ministry Coordinator, or Children Ministry Coordinator of any violations of these General Guidelines. See Section 5 of this document for specific guidance.

## **Section 5: Reporting Requirements For Children's Ministry Workers**

### A. Reporting requirements under Maryland State Law

In any context where childcare is provided, the individual serving in a care-taking capacity has a responsibility to exercise sound judgment in reporting suspicions of child abuse. Normally, these duties are discharged by reporting to the supervisory personnel. **However, an individual may report directly if they feel the supervisory staff is not reporting as appropriate.** Presence of indicators that are listed in paragraphs 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4, but that have reasonable explanations, and do not contribute reason to believe a child has been abused, need not be reported to the state. They should be reported to the supervisor in accordance with the next paragraph.

**Under Maryland law, any person who has reason to believe a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect must notify the department of social services that has jurisdiction in the county or the appropriate law enforcement agency, except such notice would violate certain privileges and/or rights to confidentiality listed in the Maryland Code.**

### B. Internal Reporting Requirements

If there are any suspicions of child abuse, CCMA Children's Ministry Workers should notify their supervisor in accordance with this section. If there is a sense that child abuse may be occurring, the CCMA Children's Ministry Staff will take actions to report this abuse to the appropriate authorities.

Children's Ministry Workers should be alert to the physical and behavioral signs of child abuse, child neglect and sexual abuse. Some of the more common indicators are summarized below:

#### 5.1 Physical Abuse.

##### 5.1.1 Physical indicators may include:

- (1) unexplained bruises on face, torso, back, buttocks, thighs
- (2) multiple injuries in various stages of healing
- (3) bruises/welts
- (4) human bite marks
- (5) injuries regularly appearing after absence, weekend, etc.
- (6) unexplained fractures, lacerations, abrasions

##### 5.1.2 Behavioral indicators may include:

- (1) Reports he or she has injury caused by his or her caretaker
- (2) uncomfortable with physical contact
- (3) complains of soreness or moves uncomfortably
- (4) wears clothing inappropriate to weather (to cover body)
- (5) afraid to go home
- (6) chronic runaway (adolescents)
- (7) behavior extremes (e.g., withdrawn, aggressive)
- (8) apprehensive when other children cry

#### 5.2 Physical Neglect.

- 5.2.1 Physical indicators may include:
- (1) consistent hunger, poor hygiene
  - (2) unattended physical problems or medical needs
  - (3) consistent lack of supervision
  - (4) abandonment

- 5.2.2 Behavioral indicators may include:
- (1) reports that he or she has no caretaker at home
  - (2) begs, steals food
  - (3) constant fatigue, listlessness, or falling asleep in class
  - (4) extended stays (early arrival and late departure)
  - (5) shunned by peers

5.3 Sexual Abuse.

- 5.3.1 Physical indicators may include:
- (1) sexually transmitted disease
  - (2) pregnancy
  - (3) difficulty walking or sitting
  - (4) pain or itching in genital area
  - (5) torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
  - (6) bruises/bleeding in external genitalia

- 5.3.2 Behavioral indicators may include:
- (1) reports sexual abuse
  - (2) highly sexualized play
  - (3) detailed, age inappropriate understanding of sexual behavior
  - (4) role reversal, overly concerned for siblings
  - (5) chronic runaway
  - (6) seductiveness
  - (7) suicide attempts (adolescents)
  - (8) deterioration in academic performance
  - (9) sudden, noticeable behavior changes

5.4 Emotional Maltreatment.

- 5.4.1 Physical indicators may include:
- (1) speech disorders
  - (2) delayed physical development
  - (3) learning problems

- 5.4.2 Behavioral indicators may include:
- (1) habit disorders (sucking, biting, rocking an older child)
  - (2) antisocial, destructive
  - (3) passive and aggressive behavior extremes

(4) appears to derive pleasure from hurting others or animals

Children's Ministry Workers should report these indicators to their supervisors (appropriate Children's Ministry pastor, administrator, coordinator, or other supervisor), especially if they appear in combination with one another, recognizing that in and of themselves, such indicators do not prove abuse.

Allegations of abuse or neglect should be reported immediately to one of the Children's Ministry pastors, administrators, coordinators, or other supervisors. To the extent that he or she knows the following, the person reporting should state:

- (1) the name, age, and home address of the child;
- (2) the name and home address of the child's parent or other person who is responsible for the child's care;
- (3) the whereabouts of the child;
- (4) the nature and extent of any suspected abuse or neglect of the child, including any evidence or information available to the reporter concerning possible previous instances of suspected abuse or neglect; and
- (5) any other information that would help to determine (i) the cause of the suspected abuse or neglect; and (ii) the identity of any individual responsible for the suspected abuse or neglect.