



Child Protection Policy

December 2017; Revised May 2018

Purpose

Harvest Baptist Church (HBC) exists to help people know God and make Him known. We feel strongly that all functions of the church, from corporate worship to fellowship events, should be focused on glorifying God. In keeping with this vision, we desire to see children grow to love and trust Jesus Christ for their salvation. We offer Sunday School classes, Praise Factory and Youth Group to help children and their families know, trust, and share Christ. HBC welcomes children in corporate worship, small groups, service, and church wide events.

We believe that children are made in the image of God and that our love and care for them reflects our love for the Father. Our church values children as image-bearers, and we are committed to protecting children from harm. To do so, we have implemented the following measures to prevent child abuse and neglect.

General

Every person who volunteers with children in the nursery, Sunday School, Praise Factory, or youth group will be required to adhere to the Child Protection Policy. Screening requirements apply to all adults and teens in volunteer positions within HBC. HBC may require periodic trainings and/or screenings throughout a volunteer's time in a children's ministry. Refusal to comply with training and screenings will disqualify a person from volunteering.

Screening

Before being allowed to work with children, a volunteer will have been regularly attending Harvest for **at least six months**.

All persons seeking to work with children must complete a **written application** supplied by HBC. The application will request basic information and inquire about previous experience with children, and prior church affiliations. Applicants must provide **references** and will be asked to disclose any previous criminal convictions. Applications will be kept confidential in accordance with church policy.

Included with the application will be the Child Protection Policy with mandatory consent. Refusal to sign the policy will disqualify a person from a volunteer position with children.

A **criminal background check** is required for anyone wishing to work with children at HBC. Applicants must give consent for this check to be performed. Those who decline permission will not be permitted to work with children.

Those with a past conviction or pending proceeding related to an allegation of child abuse or neglect may not work with children and youth at HBC. Disqualifying offenses may be determined

on a case-by-case basis in light of surrounding circumstances, but a conviction of any of the following will generally disqualify an individual from volunteering with children: pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assault, indecent exposure, the making/possessing/distributing of child pornography, or abuse of a minor. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction will disqualify a candidate. Authorization and results of background checks will be kept confidential in accordance with church policy.

Due to a pastor's privileged knowledge of the congregation, we ask that children's ministry leaders seek approval from the pastor before reaching out to recruit new volunteers for their ministries.

Key Definitions

Physical Abuse – Physical injury (not necessarily visible) of a child under circumstances that indicate that a child's health or welfare is harmed or at substantial risk of being harmed.

Sexual Abuse – An act or acts involving sexual molestation or exploitation, whether or not physical injuries are sustained.

Neglect – The failure to give proper care and attention to a child, leaving a child unattended where the child's health or welfare is harmed, or a child is placed in substantial risk of harm.

General Procedures for Safety

It is essential to practice healthy boundaries with children, for their safety and the safety of the volunteers. These guidelines exist to protect children from harm and protect the volunteer from false allegations. Volunteers are expected to display the highest Christian values and morals in all formal and informal activities, behaviors and conversations.

Open Door Policy:

In the event that a volunteer is the only adult supervising children (i.e. Sunday school), the door to the classroom should remain open and/or the leader should be visible from the hallway, seen through a window in the door if the door is closed.

Two Adult Rule:

Whenever possible, any adult who is present in a church-sponsored activity for children or youth should be accompanied by another adult. HBC volunteers should not, during a church-sponsored program, be alone with a single child where they cannot be observed by others. This includes an adult riding alone in a car with a youth.

In order to avoid situations where an individual is alone in a room with children, all children's and youth activities should be supervised by at least two adult/teen leaders. The presence of two adults is to protect children and youth against situations where abuse may occur and to protect volunteers against false allegations of abuse or neglect.

Adult to Child Ratio:

The number of volunteers to children ratio should be maintained so that there is adequate supervision based on the numbers below:

Infants	(1:3)
Young Toddlers	(1:4)
2 Year Olds	(1:6)
Preschool	(1:10)
School Age	(1:15)

Discipline:

HBC does not permit volunteers to physically discipline a child in their care. Appropriate disciplinary methods include verbal warnings, time outs, removal from an activity or event, or returning the child to their parents' care.

Physical Touch:

Certain types of touching should be avoided:

- Extended or prolonged physical contact
- Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (except when changing a diaper or properly assisting a child in the bathroom)
- Kissing a child or coaxing a child to kiss
- Allowing a child to touch volunteer in an inappropriate way

Bathroom Use:

Diaper Wearers:

- Volunteers changing diapers should always be females. (However, a man may change his own child's diaper.)

Preschool:

- Adult female volunteers will accompany children to the bathroom and assist as needed.

Elementary:

- An adult volunteer will accompany children to the bathroom.
- If a child needs assistance in the bathroom, the volunteer should be female. Male volunteers cannot assist children in the bathroom alone.

Check-in/Check-out:

Under no circumstances should volunteers release children to anyone other than the authorized parent, guardian, or other individual authorized by the parent or guardian.

Emergencies:

If a medical or other sort of emergency arises, volunteers will contact emergency services first if it is warranted and then the parents. The incident will also be reported to the elders and documented with the incident report attached with this document.

Evacuation:

In the event of an evacuation for fire or other disaster, the volunteers will assist in getting the children to safety. The rover will be responsible for letting volunteers know that an evacuation is taking place and tell them know where to go.

Shelter in Place / Lock Down:

If the order from the rover is to shelter in place in the event of a tornado or other event, then the volunteers will try to keep the children calm and away from windows. The doors to the room will be shut and locked.

Abuse Reporting

Any person who becomes aware of or suspects child abuse or neglect should report it immediately to the local department of social services, regardless of whether the abuse occurred at HBC or as part of a church-sanctioned activity. Reports should be made to the agency that has jurisdiction where the abuse occurred. Local agency information and instructions on making a report are provided at the end of this section.

There may be situations in which a volunteer has concerns but is not certain that these concerns warrant a Child Protective Services (CPS) report. This includes noting signs of abuse or neglect in a child in the absence of an allegation or evidence, or overhearing a questionable, but not outright inappropriate, comment from an adult to a child. Err on the side of caution. Report the concern to Social Services, and permit them to decide if the situation deems investigating. Volunteers should NOT question the child or make other attempts to investigate. Nor should they discuss their concerns with others, including other volunteers and church members.

In the event that a child discloses abuse or neglect, the volunteer must make a report. It is not the duty of the volunteer to determine the truthfulness of a disclosure. If the volunteer makes a report, they should notify an elder letting them know a report was made.

If you are nervous about making a report, it is an option to have an elder sit with you while you call in your concerns.

When making the oral report to CPS, be prepared to provide the following information over the phone:

- Name and home address of the child and the parent or other individual responsible for the care of the child
- The present location of the child
- Age/approximate age of the child
- Names and ages of other children in the home
- Nature and extent of injuries, abuse or neglect of the child – provide the information as it was provided to you by the child or describe what you have observed or suspect. Do NOT conduct your own investigation or interview child.
- Information available to the individual reporting that may aid in establishing the cause of the injury or neglect
- The identity of the individual or individuals responsible for abuse or neglect

Reporting Agencies:

Wicomico County

(410) 713-3900 (option #1)
(410) 548-4890 (after hours – Sheriff's Office)

Worcester County

(410) 677-6800 or (410) 641-0097
(410) 632-1111 (after hours – Sheriff's Dept.)

Somerset County

(410) 677-4200
(410) 651-0707 (after hours – Somerset Central)

Delaware

(800) 292-9582

Other

Call Childhelp: (800) 422-4453

Reports of child abuse and neglect can be made anonymously. Reports of suspected child abuse are immune from civil liability unless they are purposefully erroneous or malicious.

HBC leadership will cooperate fully with law enforcement during the investigation and will adhere to the guidelines or mandates put in place by authorities. Anyone who interferes or refuses to cooperate with the investigation or does not maintain confidentiality will no longer be permitted to work with HBC children.

**Steps
in the
Reporting
Process**

- There is concern for child's safety, supported by evidence - verbal or physical.
- Volunteer calls in report to local Child Protective Services agency.
- An elder is notified.

- An Incident Report is completed and turned in to the church office.
- Child's Parent/Guardian is notified, unless volunteer is worried this may endanger the child. In that case, volunteer will permit law enforcement do so.

- The volunteer or member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be suspended from their volunteer position pending an investigation and is instructed to remain off premises during the investigation. He or she should be instructed to have no contact with the victim or the witnesses.
- A report will be filed with the church's insurance agency and documentation provided.
- Pastor/Elders will determine best way for church to offer care/support for victims and family members. This may include counseling, advocacy, and resources.

Sex Offenders

As Christians, we believe that the blood of Christ is sufficient for all sin, including sexual abuse. However, we acknowledge that forgiven sin has earthly consequences, and that we must be diligent to protect children given the high rate of recidivism among child abusers. Each individual is different and the cases surrounding them will vary.

When a sexual offender comes to HBC, the pastor will meet with the person and clarify any details needed to establish a clear history of their prior offense(s). These discussions will be kept confidential in accordance with church policy. The pastor/elders will establish ground rules for the individual while they are in attendance at HBC. If these rules are violated they will be grounds for removal from the premises.

Under no circumstances will an offender be permitted to attend church with their victim.

Children's Ministry Worker Application

All information disclosed will be kept secure and confidential.

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

References (Guidelines: No family members. At least one reference must be outside Harvest.)
Names of two people we can contact that would be a reference for your character and conduct:

	Name	Email
Reference 1:	_____	_____
Reference 2:	_____	_____

NOTE: Please inform your references that they will be receiving an email from admin@harvestbc.com containing a short questionnaire to complete in Google Forms.

Do you consent to a background check? Yes No

Have you read and consent to the Harvest Child Protection Policy? Yes No

Have you ever abused or neglected a child? If so, please explain.

Has anyone ever accused you of hurting a child? Is so, please explain.

Accident Report

Date: _____ Time: _____

Name of Injured _____ Age _____ Sex _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Parents' Names: _____

Phone: _____

Area Where Accident Occurred: _____

Describe Injury (Be Specific): _____

How Did The Accident Occur: (Include time log) _____

Action Taken: _____

Witness To The Accident: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

This Report Made By: _____

The Good Shepherd Policy

~Matthew 18:1-20~

Here in the HBC nursery, we believe the 1 is just as important as the 99. We seek to serve our children like Christ does the church. We know each child is unique and requires different levels of care.

If a child is facing anxiety, behavioral challenges, or requires special care, we invite a parent or guardian to join us in the nursery, following the same safety screening as volunteers. An application must be submitted to our Church Administrative Assistant, and a background check will be facilitated by the Church.

There will be a two-week grace period for each new attendee before we ask you to refrain from remaining in the nursery room for the duration of the service until the application is submitted. This policy ensures the greatest level of security and care for our little ones.

Additionally, an incident report will be made if a child's behavior puts them or others at risk of harm (See Child Protection Policy). If the harmful behavior continues for three or more nursery visits, the attending parent or guardian will be asked to remain in nursery until safe participation is established.

We look forward to providing gentle, respectful, and spiritual growth centered care to the children of Harvest Baptist Church.