

Wake Chapel Christian Church Risk Management Policies and Guidelines

Introduction:

As Christians, we believe that God creates us to live in community with one another. We understand that life in the church is to be lived according to the rule of love. Jesus said “You shall love God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest commandment. And a second is like it ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Matthew 22:37-39). As members of Wake Chapel Christian Church (WCCC), we are called to create a loving and safe community of faith that seeks the welfare of all its members and visitors. This includes a commitment to the protection of all children, the elderly and any other persons participating in the activities and programs of WCCC. Abuse, exploitation, or harassment in any form—physical, emotional, or sexual—is improper and should be prevented by whatever appropriate means possible.

The WCCC Board of Deacons and the Board of Christian Education jointly recognize the need and responsibility to establish formal, written policies and guidelines designed first and foremost to protect children and prevent the opportunity for, or the appearance of, any type of abuse to a minor. Establishment of such policy and guidelines is not intended to be judgmental or based on any lack of trust in a particular member or volunteer worker. Instead, the policies and guidelines are needed for the general protection of infants, pre-schoolers, children, youth, members, employees and volunteers involved in various activities at WCCC. Ultimately, we believe that fostering awareness of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors will exhibit an environment of love, respect and honor toward others.

Requirements:

In order to provide a safe community for children and adults, the church will require all employees and volunteers working with children to comply with the “Requirements of Employees and Volunteers in Child Ministries” and the “Risk Management Guidelines and Procedures” adopted by WCCC. By so doing, those individuals will be asked to comply with at least the Basic Screening Procedures and possibly more depending on the level of interaction with a child during service to the church (see Part 1) and review the attached “Guidelines and Procedures.” All qualifying volunteers will be under the direction of the respective program staff persons and/or appropriate church board(s).

Review:

The Board of Christian Education will receive oral or written reports at least once annually from program staff persons and respective ministries as to the effectiveness of the church’s Risk Management Policies and Guidelines. The Board of Christian Education will then consider any modifications or improvements to the policy and will report to the Board of Deacons at least annually as to the status and effectiveness of the policies and guidelines.

ASSESSING THE RISK RELATIONSHIP OF VOLUNTEERS

- I. *CATEGORY A Relationships* includes those individuals volunteering in situations where there will be at least two or more adults present in the company of children at all times, such as AWANA Games assistants, group youth events, Upward referrees, and other positions which supervise group events. All employees and volunteers who qualify for the *Basic Risk Relationship* category will undergo Basic Screening Criteria for suitability and protection to work with children.
 - A. Basic Screening Criteria include the following:
 1. Completing and signing a written application for volunteers (see Volunteer Application) or a resume for employees
 2. Providing at least two personal references for volunteers and at least two employment references for employees (see Reference Check Form)
 3. Provide addresses for last five years of residences
 4. Review Sex Offender Registry for applicant's name and address
 5. Successfully completing a training and/or educational event arranged by the church as outlined in Part 4.

- II. *CATEGORY B Relationships* includes those individuals volunteering in a position that may include one-on-one interaction and/or instruction with children such as Sunday Teachers, Children's Church Leaders, Vacation Bible School teachers, Nursery workers, AWANA small group leaders, Upward Coaches, chaperones for any overnight activity with children (e.g.. chaperoning camping trips, ski trips, music conferences or retreats), any work with infants, and positions that involving driving or transporting a minor off church campus in either a personal or church vehicle.
 - A. Employees and volunteers meeting the criteria for *High Risk Relationship* positions will undergo additional screening which includes the following:
 1. All Basic Screening Criteria (listed above).
 2. Agreement to undergo a National Criminal Records Check and/or any other background checks that are deemed necessary by the church.
 3. Provide a copy of a valid North Carolina driver's license if driving is a requirement for a particular area of service.

Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures

I. General Guidelines

- A. At no time should one employee or volunteer be alone with a child. The only exception would occur in a situation in which the contact occurs in a public place or other persons are able to clearly witness the interaction by being in and out of the area where the employee or volunteer is working with the child. If a situation unexpectedly does not meet this criteria of the policy, then alternatives must be put into place so that the event is in compliance.
- B. Volunteers and employees should read the “Risk Management Policies and Guidelines” of this church, agree to it by completing and signing the appropriate application form(s), and undergo the appropriate level of screening and training as listed in Part 1 of this policy.
- C. All church volunteers working with children in instructional or one-on-one capacity on Sundays or Wednesday evenings should be a member of Wake Chapel Christian Church for a period of at least six months prior to beginning in any volunteer position.
- D. For overnight activities, it will be the responsibility of the program director to determine how best to use the facility and comply with the church policy. Males and females will be segregated during sleeping time. Head counts will be performed regularly to ensure that all children and staff are accounted for at all times. If it is deemed necessary for adults to share sleeping accommodations with the children, a minimum of two adults, the same sex as the children being chaperoned, will sleep in each area. All volunteer and staff persons who drive and/or chaperone on off-site trips involving children will be in conformance with all aspects of the Risk Management Policies and Guidelines.
- E. In accordance with Part 3 of this document, employees and volunteers are required to report immediately any suspicious or inappropriate behavior that suggests (1) sexual abuse or exploitation, (2) neglect, (3) physical abuse, or (4) emotional abuse.

II. Prohibited Acts

- A. Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct toward a child, youth or at-risk adult;
- B. Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any adult and a child, youth, or at-risk adult;
- C. Infliction or physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a child, youth, or at-risk adult;
- D. Physical neglect of a child, children, youth, or at-risk adult including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of the church;
- E. Causing mental or emotional injury to a child, children, youth, or at-risk adult by word or deed;
- F. Displaying, possessing, or distributing obscene or pornographic materials at any function of the church;

- G. Possessing, advocating the use of, distributing, or being under the influence of any illegal drugs;
- H. Consuming or being under the influence of alcohol while leading or participating in a children's or youth function or while engaging in ministry with at-risk adults at the church;
- I. Removing any dress or clothing from another person except where appropriately required under necessary circumstances;
- J. Deny anyone who is not a threat to a child access to a room, vehicle, or private place where you are alone with a child;
- K. Wearing inappropriate attire to sponsored events;
- L. Swearing or using obscene, sexually explicit, or foul language;

Reporting and Responding to Reports of Inappropriate Activity

In order to maintain an environment free of destructive acts toward all children, youth, and at-risk adults, the staff, employees, teachers, parents, and volunteers of Wake Chapel Christian Church must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation thought to be in violation of this Policy, including any allegations made by the child toward third parties such as parents, teachers, etc. In the event anyone personally witnesses an occurrence of or suspected violation or by the child's statement of same, the reporting process outlined below shall be followed.

- I. Initial reporting of suspicious or inappropriate activity
 - A. Suspicious or allegations of suspicious activity brought to the attention of an employee or volunteer must be reported immediately to the appropriate staff person in charge of the event.
 - B. The person receiving the report of the alleged abuse or suspicious activity will then document the date, time and circumstances of the alleged incident on the attached Incident Report Form.

- II. Responding to the initial report of suspicious activity
 - A. The person receiving the initial report of suspicious activity will report immediately to the Senior Pastor who will inform the church legal counsel and the church insurer. In the case where the Senior Pastor is the alleged perpetrator, the Pastor of Music and Education will replace that person as the individual to receive the report and on the Responding Committee.
 - B. The Senior Pastor and the Board of Deacons will make up the *Responding Committee* and shall then report to the appropriate authorities the suspicion that abuse or neglect to a child may have occurred. If the allegation involves an employee, the chair of the Board of Deacons will be informed.
 - C. The *Responding Committee* must comply with all state laws and will not further investigate the reported incident to avoid compromising, interfering with, or delaying a legal investigation.
 - D. All allegations will be regarded as serious, and due consideration will be given to the rights and privacy of both the alleged victim and the person being accused.
 - E. The accused individual, whether staff or volunteer, will be required to refrain from participating in all child activities until it is determined if further action will be taken. Care will be taken to respond to all allegations in a professional manner.
 - F. If a reported incident does not provide reasonable suspicion of abuse, the *Responding Committee* has the option to recommend appropriate action, which could include removal from the program, a review of the processes in that program, and/or further education.

III. Staff response to allegations of abuse or neglect

*If the *Responding Committee* receives a report of child abuse or neglect, then the following steps will be taken;

- A. A report will be made immediately to the proper authorities, either law enforcement or the North Carolina Department of Social Services¹
- B. All allegations will be taken seriously and will be responded to in a professional manner.
- C. If necessary, the committee will incorporate additional persons to assist the Senior Pastor and Board of Deacons in responding to the situation. Those individuals may include; 1) one other member of the Church appointed by the Senior Pastor and Board of Deacons, 2) legal counsel, 3) others as deemed appropriate by the Senior Pastor (i.e. additional pastoral counseling or mental health officials).
- D. If appropriate under the law, under the strict guidance of the church's legal counsel and insurance carrier, the *Responding Committee* may also;
 1. Assign a person to the *Responding Committee* for each of the accused individuals and the alleged victim as a contact and for support.
 2. Contact the alleged victim's parents, if it will not put the child in jeopardy.
 3. Maintain documents of all efforts to handle the situation.
 4. After the committee has fulfilled its legal reporting requirements, a committee member shall be assigned to be the spokesperson. This person will be the sole individual communicating to outside authorities or other persons (including the congregation and the media) regarding the incident.

IV. Staff Care of Documents

- A. All information shall be treated in a confidential manner. Except in the case of a response to a report of suspicious activity, only the *Responding Committee*, including the appropriate legal counsel, will have access to the information on these documents.
- B. The documents will be kept temporarily in secure locked storage and once appropriately reviewed by a designated staff member and/or the Board of Christian Education will then be destroyed via shredder.
- C. Application reviews, reference checks, and background checks will be conducted by members of the Risk Management Committee. All information will be documented on the attached form(s) prior to any individual beginning service.
- D. Volunteers will be required to complete a Volunteer Application form once every year and attend the educational and/or training event every three years.

¹ Wake County DSS child abuse and neglect reporting number is (919) 212-7433.

Education and Training

- I. All employees and volunteers meeting any of the “at risk” assessment guidelines should complete child and youth protection training. The training will...
 - A. Address critical aspects of Wake Chapel Christian Church’s Risk Management Policies and Guidelines and ensure that all employees and volunteers understand and are in compliance with the policy.
 - B. Take place at least once a year; with attempts to ensure that scheduling of training is done at times that maximize participation. Training will occur
 1. Prior to the beginning of the traditional “school year” for Church activities,
 2. As a part of Vacation Bible School training and preparation for youth summer activities, and
 3. Possibly during the winter for new members or to fill in as more staff or volunteers are needed.
- II. Training should be renewed every three years, no matter the role played by the adult.
- III. In addition to the policy’s procedures and guidelines, Child Protection training for working with children will...
 - C. Include reasoning and biblical/theological support for the training, as well as connections to our responsibilities as members of the Body of Christ.
 - D. Include awareness training on issues related to child abuse, an overview of scope of the problem possibilities infractions and occurrences, strategies for the protection of children, recommendations about provision of support, and guidance for the victims of abuse
 - E. Have trainees participate in interactive discussions and learning for:
 1. Work with children/youth,
 2. Instructions to children and parents on guidelines and any other potential situations that might require one-on-one time with a child/youth,
 3. Child/youth responses to any portions of the Risk Management Policies and Guidelines.
 4. Procedures for handling disclosures of abuse versus suspicions of abuse,
 5. Referral issues for those being trained, and
 6. Any other thoughts and feelings that might be stimulated by discussion of child/youth abuse and its effects.
 - F. Include a question and answer time to address all trainee questions, needs for clarification, resources, helps, or concerns.
 - G. Conclude with prayer for children/youth and all those interacting with and discipling them in any way.