

## **Creekwood Christian Church Child Protection Guidelines**

Creekwood Christian Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment to promote the religious and social development of children and youth, and will strive to prevent the physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of minors. In our quest to provide a healthy environment where children and youth are safe, and believing that the key to conducting safe programs lies in the quality of adult leadership, the following guidelines for volunteers and staff working with children or youth has been established.

### **Purpose**

- To promote a safe and secure environment for the children and youth of our faith community.
- To train and support volunteers.
- To reduce the legal risk and liability of the church, its staff and its volunteers.

### **Staff and Volunteer Guidelines**

The key to child abuse prevention in any organization is its staff, both employees and volunteers. Careful selection, adequate training and sufficient supervision reduces the likelihood of abuse or neglect. Our goal is to recruit the best people possible to work with children and youth.

**In that effort, all those who work or volunteer with children and youth such as church staff, nursery staff and volunteers (including, but not limited to: Sunday School teachers, youth sponsors, LOGOS leaders, VBS volunteers, and any newly added children/youth volunteer area) must follow the following Guidelines:**

- Church volunteers must have been a church member for 6 months or supply an acceptable staff reference from their previous church.
- Complete an information form.
- Acknowledge (with signature) receipt and understanding of these Guidelines.
- Acknowledge (with signature) receipt and understanding of Code of Ethics (attached).
- Complete training online through Protect My Ministry.
- Give written permission for a background check through the Protect My Ministry. (This consent form will be retained and background checks re-verified at least every three years, for as long as the volunteer is active in work with children or youth.)
- Confidentiality / record storage: All records obtained as a result of the Criminal Background Check will be treated as confidential, limiting the number of people who have access to applicant information to only authorized staff members who are registered with Protect My Ministry.
- Background check reports will be received by the minister.
- Whether disclosed voluntarily or as a result of a Criminal Background Check, any of the following will automatically disqualify an applicant from any staff or volunteer position working with children or youth:
  - History of sexual abuse of children.
  - Conviction for any crime in which children were involved.
  - History of any violent or sexually exploitive behavior.
  - Any other charges or convictions for other crimes not listed above will be reviewed by the minister, taking into consideration:
    - 1) The recency of and circumstances surrounding the conduct in question.
    - 2) The age of the individual at the time of the offense.
    - 3) The probability that an individual will continue the type of behavior in question.
    - 4) The individual's commitment to rehabilitation and to changing the behavior in question.

- Any person with a dispute concerning information that appears on his/her criminal history record should first address the issue with the minister. An investigation will be conducted to determine whether or not an error has been made. This may involve submitting fingerprints to verify that the record is or is not the applicants' own criminal record. If the issue is not satisfactorily resolved, it will be taken first to the Personnel Committee and then to the church board.

**Volunteers working with children or youth will be provided:**

- Job description
- These ‘Child Protection Guidelines’
- Training and support

**Expectations for Training Child and Youth Workers**

- Workers should complete child protection training before beginning work with children or youth. Training can be done online through Protect My Ministry.
- Approved workers should make every effort to attend additional training events or appropriate program workshops when offered.
- All workers will receive a copy of Creekwood's Child Protection Guidelines and must acknowledge in writing that he or she received a copy of the Guidelines.
- All workers will receive a copy of Creekwood's Code of Ethics and must read and sign.

**Youth Leadership**

The church endeavors to provide opportunities for youth leadership experience and training. Realizing that the church has a responsibility to protect all children, including youth serving in the capacity of volunteer youth leader, the following guidelines are set forward:

- Training will be provided for all youth interested in serving as childcare providers (either volunteer or paid).
- The minimum age for youth volunteers assisting an approved adult staff member or volunteer is 6th grade. (Exceptions may be made as part of a particular program.)
- When assigned youth leadership responsibilities, youth will be supervised by adult leader.
- If a child must be disciplined, the adult should have the responsibility for administering appropriate disciplinary measures.
- Adults should monitor leadership techniques used by youth leaders to ensure that they are positive and not punitive.
- Youth must be 18 (and meet adult staff / volunteer requirements) to be assigned in a lead position working with children or youth. Exception: Youth under the age of 18, but no younger than 13, may serve as childcare providers for small group meetings where adults are meeting on church property.

**Guidelines for Drivers Transporting Children or Youth**

All individuals who serve as an approved driver for children or youth must provide documentation of:

- Being licensed to operate an automobile for at least one year
- Meeting the minimum state required liability insurance coverage
- A copy of the individual's driver's license and insurance card will be kept on file

- Driver must not have any convictions during the preceding three years for driving under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance. (Records will be checked through Protect My Ministry.)
- Drivers are to obey all traffic laws and are to make every reasonable effort to assure the safety of their passengers, including a seat belt for every passenger. Texas law requires that every passenger wear a seat belt.
- Every reasonable effort will be made to insure that an approved adult driver is the provider of transportation for official church events, departing from the church.
- Drivers must be given a copy of the Code of Ethics and sign acknowledgment that they have read it and will comply.

## **Program Guidelines**

The church will strive to provide age appropriate programming for children and youth that is designed to promote religious and social growth, while providing for the physical and emotional safety of the participants.

## **Classroom and event guidelines**

- In order to plan age appropriate activities, the church will place children according to their school grade. (There is room for some flexibility on an individual basis where pre-school children are concerned.)
- At least one approved worker should be present with children at all times.
- As often as practicable, two adults will be assigned to supervise or lead all activities involving children or youth.
- Periodic "spot checks" will be made by a minister, ministry coordinator or deacon. This method will be in general use but especially if it is necessary to have only one adult present with a group.
- If private conversation is required, the youth and adult may move out of earshot of others, but not out of sight.
- Adult leaders are expected to model Christian behavior. They should not use bad language and their actions should be non-threatening, safe, gentle, kind, do not make child/youth uncomfortable
- Topical discussions should be appropriate to curriculum selected or approved by the church and to the setting and age of the children/youth.
- Adult leaders will respect the privacy of children and youth (particularly in overnight situations where changing clothes and showering are necessary). The reverse will also be true.

## **Child/Youth Information and Authorization**

An authorization form must be on file for each child or youth. Forms will include:

- Permission to participate in events on and away from church property.
- Transportation release
- Medical information and release.
- Photo release and/or photo opt out

Forms will be reviewed annually and will be included in "New Member Packets".

Any child or youth who does not have a permission/release form on file and who is left to accompany a group on an "away" event will be allowed to participate that one time only. Every effort will be made to first meet with a parent before their departure in order to have them complete the form. Parents will be

notified in writing that the child/youth will not be allowed to participate again until a form is on file. The child or youth will not be allowed to participate in an overnight event without a permission/release form on file.

## **Reporting Suspected Child Abuse**

Under laws of the State of Texas, suspected child abuse is required to be reported. All cases of suspected child abuse must be reported to the appropriate legal authorities. Additionally, all members are strongly encouraged to also notify the senior minister. Employees are required to notify the senior minister. The senior minister may assist any member or worker in reporting suspected child abuse to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

- All cases of suspected child abuse must be reported to the appropriate legal authorities.
- All such reports to the senior minister are treated in confidence to the extent consistent with requirements of the law.
- Reports of suspected child abuse that may have occurred inside the church or on a church sponsored event are to be made as soon as possible (but within 48 hours.)
- If staff or volunteer is reported, that person will no longer be considered an approved worker until the investigation has been concluded and the minister advises the director of the program that the individual may continue as an approved worker.
- Such reports must never be disclosed to any other than those directly responsible.

## **A Word Concerning Appropriate Affectional Behavior in the Christian Community:**

It is widely known that "good touching" is important to life. Numerous studies have shown the importance of holding and touching for infants to survive. Likewise, children do not grow and thrive without the "good touches" of others. We have many examples in scripture where Jesus touched people to heal and to comfort them. The Christian community has a rich heritage of sharing a loving hug, an arm around the shoulder or a squeeze of the hand to say, "you are loved... I care about you".

With good touching, the child feels as if someone has given to them or has shared with them rather than taken from them. Children should not be forced to kiss someone they do not wish to kiss. Nor do all children wish to be hugged by persons outside of their family. It is always wise to ask, "May I give you a hug?" By asking this question, the child is given the permission to refuse if he/she is uncomfortable.

It is important in our concern about child sexual abuse that the importance of good touching is not lost. We need to continue to express Christian love in appropriate ways with children. The healing, comforting, and affirming aspects of good touch should be emphasized.

## **Creekwood Christian Church**

### **Code of Ethics for Staff and Volunteers working with Children or Youth**

Whether paid staff or volunteer, any person working with the children or youth of the church is a role model. While acting in this capacity the following Code of Ethics will apply.

1. Consuming alcohol, smoking or using tobacco products in the presence of children or youth is prohibited.
2. Using, possessing, or being under the influence illegal drugs will not be tolerated.
3. Volunteers and/or staff shall not mistreat children or youth including, but not limited to:
  - A. Physical: strike, spank, shake, slap
  - B. Verbal/Mental: humiliate, degrade, threaten
  - C. Sexual abuse: including inappropriate touching and exposure.
4. Volunteers and/or staff must treat children and youth of all races, religions, and cultures with respect and consideration.
5. Volunteers and/or staff must use positive techniques of guidance, including positive reinforcement and encouragement rather than comparison or criticism.
6. Volunteers and/or staff shall not use or tolerate profanity in the presence of the children or youth.
7. Volunteers and/or staff will refrain from inappropriate display of affection toward others in the presence of children, parents and other staff.
8. Volunteers and/or staff must be free of physical and psychological conditions that might adversely affect children's or youth's health, including, but not limited to contagious diseases.
9. Volunteers and/or staff will portray a positive role model for youth and children by maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, and maturity.
10. Volunteers and/or staff will be expected to act and react with Christian love and understanding in all situations.
11. Volunteers and/or staff will be expected to safeguard and hold confidential any information gained through administrative duties involving supervision of children, youth or volunteers and/or any other information identified as being confidential.
12. Volunteers and/or staff will do everything in their power to avoid being put in a situation where they are alone with a child or youth other than their own.
13. Texas state law requires that all citizens report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child or a youth to age 18 to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, 1-800-252-5400.

#### **Responsibility for Addressing Improper Conduct**

Any suspicion, observation or experience of any conduct deemed improper should immediately be reported to the minister or highest authority present for investigation and evaluation.

#### **Verification and Signature**

I have read, understand and agree to abide by the Child Protection Guidelines of Creekwood Christian Church. I understand that any violation of this code may be grounds for dismissal as a staff or volunteer leader/assistant working with children or youth.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

According to Creekwood's Child Protection Policy, background checks will be re-run at least every three years for volunteers actively working with children or youth. Such consent (separate form) serves as permission for this on-going record maintenance as long as the above signed volunteer is active in work with children or youth at Creekwood Christian Church. In addition, a review of Creekwood's Child Protection Policy, attached, and this Code of Ethics is requested every three years.

\_\_\_\_\_

*Initial*

\_\_\_\_\_

*Date*