

# **Child Protection Policy**

College Park Baptist  
Church

2015

# Table of Contents

Letter from the Pastor

Section 1: Creating a Safe Ministry Environment

Section 2: Screening Procedures

Section 3: Communication Plan

Section 4: Various Policy Statements

Section 5: Forms

## Letter from the Pastor

Dear Church family,

We live in a fallen world. This is something that is stressed, not only in our preaching and teaching, but in the gospel itself (1 Corinthians 15:1-5). As long as there are unpurified people, there will be the problem of sin. We long for the day when our Lord will return and we will all be changed to be like Him (1 John 3:1-3). Until that time occurs, we are forced to deal with the realities of living in a sinful state. As a church, this means trying to develop policies that will enable us to create a safe environment through which the truths of Scripture may be taught.

About ten years ago I sat through a service where a pastor carefully recounted the problem of child sexual abuse in Independent, Baptist Churches. This is something that many had come to expect from other denominations but not this close to home. The truth is that child sexual abuse is real and it occurs in “good” churches all over the United States. It is not the purpose of this policy (or even this introductory letter) to explain all the serious consequences of child sexual abuse. I will just say it plainly. It destroys people. This is something that Satan would love to do. He is the lord of filth (Beelzebub). It is his hope that many gospel preaching churches will have their ministries undermined by reports of abuse. This is something that may not be entirely avoidable, but something that we should actively plan against in our own church. Just in the past few years very public examples of sexual abuse have risen up within ministries that are very much like our own. If they have had to deal with this problem, it would be horribly arrogant for us to think that we are, somehow, above it all.

The policies in this document are not perfect. Aside from whatever quotes of the Bible that are contained in it, this document is not inspired. It is something that will be constantly revisited and revised throughout the life of this ministry. However, even as a work in progress, this provides us a framework from which to begin formally planning to protect our children from child sexual abuse. Some of the policies here are not necessarily things that the leadership of our church would have chosen but are the result of input from insurance companies and legal experts. If a situation were ever to occur, and we pray that this is not the case, I would have to truthfully explain to a judge how we were actively trying to protect our children. Consequently, there may be some aspects of this that make you a little bit uncomfortable. I’m a little bit uncomfortable with it too. It is just the price of being a church in 21<sup>st</sup> century America. So while there may be some aspects to this that are not as you would like them to be, I would encourage you to remember that this is for a very important cause, the protection of our children against child sexual abuse.

## Section 1: Creating A Safe Ministry Environment

It is our responsibility to create as safe ministry environment as possible. This includes congregational awareness of the potential risks of child abuse and a commitment by the leadership and volunteers to adhere to the plan. The three things we would like to state clearly are:

1. Child abuse is always wrong.
2. Children are never responsible for the abuse.
3. Child abuse is the responsibility of the abuser.
4. It is the responsibility of every member of College Park to be involved in keeping our children safe.

*To encourage this within our church we offer the following steps:*

1. At the outset, the church has two important guidelines for every person to work with youth.
  - a. No one will be permitted to work with minors unless they are members of the church.
  - b. No one will be permitted to work with minors until they have been faithfully attending the church for a minimum of six months.
  - c. This precludes people who have been hired specifically to work with our children. These will be screened prior to beginning their ministries.
2. We will make provision for every leader or volunteer who works with youth to be screened. This will include application forms, interviews, and criminal background checks.
3. We will post guidelines for supervising children in the nurseries, children's classrooms, and teen room.
4. We have also created a communication plan for educating church leaders and volunteers about the reality of child abuse. Our goal is to encourage this by going over the child protection policy every year with those who minister to children at our church.
5. This plan is also ongoing. It will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it is effective and being followed.

## **Section 2: Screening Procedures**

**Personal Information:** Included in the application process will be questions about personal information such as name, address, phone number, and driver's license number (if driving is involved in the ministry).

**Background information:** Other than minor traffic offenses, we will be asking about any criminal convictions or guilty/no contest pleas, prior church membership, prior work or service involving children or youth, residence history, employment history, and education.

**Background check authorization:** We will be asking you to authorize the church to complete a background check on you.

**Liability release:** We will be asking you to release the church from any liability that you may incur by your own negligence or criminal conduct.

**Interviews:** Any information that is discovered through the background check will be brought to the attention of the volunteer. An interview will take place to ensure that compliance has been met.

### Section 3: Communication

1. Leadership will regularly evaluate the child protection policy.
2. Leadership will be responsible for ensuring that every volunteer is aware of the policy and in compliance.
3. Leadership will also be responsible for communicating with the church the importance of protecting children against child abuse.
4. Reporting:
  - a. Any volunteer is required to report suspected abuse to leadership.
  - b. Leadership is required to follow up all allegations of abuse.
  - c. If abuse is determined, leadership is responsible to inform the police department.
  - d. Whistleblower laws are in effect. No one bringing allegations of abuse to the attention of leadership will be harmed in any way because of their coming forward.
  - e. False allegations will also be dealt with accordingly, including legal remedies.

## Section 4: Various Policy Statements

1. Counseling:
  - a. In the event that a ministry volunteer or leader offers Biblical advice (note: this is not considered counseling because the volunteer or leader is not a licensed counselor) that member should restrict his words to the specific content of Scripture.
  - b. The member should not offer this advice alone.
  - c. Any session for giving Biblical advice should not take longer than 30 minutes or last any longer than 3 sessions. The pastor is not restricted by this. Pastoral counseling sessions may take longer and occur more than three times.
  - d. For any formal advice, the parents should be notified.
2. Restrictions:
  - a. All children should be accompanied to the restroom by a leader or volunteer of the same gender.
  - b. Younger children may be accompanied by a lady.
  - c. At no time is a leader or volunteer to inappropriately touch a child.
  - d. Workers should avoid the appearance of inappropriate touching.
3. Discipline:
  - a. Workers are never to spank, grab, shake, or otherwise physically discipline a child. Physical restraint is only allowed in situations where it is reasonably necessary to prevent injury to the worker(s) or other children.
  - b. All disciplinary problems should be reported to the parent(s) of the child.
4. Injuries:
  - a. Persons who are ill should not participate in ministry activities.
  - b. Upon the discovery of an injury, leaders should take appropriate actions to help the injured party.
  - c. It may be necessary to call an ambulance.
5. Recordkeeping: Ministry leaders should report any injury or abuse situations to the secretary of the deacons. He should then fill out a report.
6. Law Enforcement:
  - a. All ministry leaders and volunteers must cooperate with law enforcement personnel.
  - b. Leadership should also contact an attorney as soon as possible.
  - c. One ministry leader will be designated to speak to the media.