



# MINISTRY SAFE POLICY

PROPOSED: JULY 2023

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# Northwood Baptist Church Ministry Safe Policy<sup>1</sup>

## Policy Purpose

Northwood Baptist Church ("NBC") is committed to providing a Christ-honoring and safe environment for those who participate in its church-related ministries. NBC adopts these policies and procedures not only to maximize safety and prevent inappropriate behavior and sexual abuse from occurring within its church community, but also to guide and protect volunteers and employees from unwarranted allegations<sup>2</sup>.

## Terms and Definitions

Abuse - An act committed by someone that is not accidental and which harms or threatens harm to an individual's physical, mental, or spiritual health or welfare. Types of abuse may include physical abuse (e.g., physical injury, threat of injury), physical neglect (e.g., failure to provide necessary care), sexual abuse (e.g., mental abuse or neglect), emotional abuse, and spiritual abuse. Additional examples of abuse and explanations are provided below:

Neglect of Basic Needs - Denial of food, water, cleanliness, clothing, and sleep. These are not appropriate means of discipline.

- Physical Abuse - Any physical force applied by someone in a position of care or authority to someone else (e.g., child, student, vulnerable adult).
- Sexual Abuse - Any sexual contact, interaction, or harassment with perpetrators exerting power over another, making threats, or taking advantage of victims. Or, in the case of an adult with another adult, contact that is non-consensual or unwanted. Abuse may be physical in nature to include unwelcome casual touch or inappropriate hugs and kisses. In addition, sexual abuse may involve non-physical contact such as risqué jokes, innuendo, unacceptable visual contact, pornography, voyeurism, and sexually suggestive pictures deemed inappropriate by any reasonable adult.
- Emotional Abuse - Inappropriately belittling, hateful, or angry words and/or actions directed toward someone. Discipline by humiliation is also emotional abuse.
- Spiritual Abuse - Using religious references to shame or guilt to motivate someone to perform a particular action or behavior.

Action of Intimidation - Coercive or threatening behavior, emotional manipulation, verbal abuse, humiliation, purposeful embarrassment and/or actual physical assault.

Caregivers and the Elderly - Under South Carolina law, caregivers must report suspected elder abuse within a 24-hour period to law enforcement. South Carolina law requires that anyone who fails to report the abuse is subject to possible criminal charges.

Child - As defined by South Carolina law, a child is a person under 18 years old and considered a minor under the law. Though the law defines a "child" as someone under 18 years old, this policy uses the term "child/children" to refer to minors in grades 1-6 (elementary school) and "student/students" to refer to minors in grades 7-12 (middle school and high school).

Church Sponsored Activity - Includes any and all gatherings that arise from any worship, educational, childcare, fellowship, administrative, pastoral, mission, or recreational event generated or organized by NBC, whether on-campus or off-campus.

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<sup>1</sup>This policy is a revision of Providence Baptist Church's (Raleigh, NC) Child and Student Protection Policy. Additional sources consulted include policies/documents from First Baptist Church of Eutawville (Eutawville, SC), First Presbyterian Church (Columbia, SC), Riverbluff Church (North Charleston, SC), and the SCBC Sexual Abuse Task Force Response (2022).

<sup>2</sup>This policy does not constitute a contract between NBC and its employees, volunteers, or any other party. It is a statement of policy and guidelines for NBC to follow. Although NBC will strive to ensure compliance with this policy, it makes no guarantee to any party that all aspects of the document will be followed in every situation. NBC is not responsible for intentional or willful acts of any employee or volunteer who violates this policy.

Credibly Accused - A credibly accused pastor, denominational worker, or ministry employee or volunteer includes one who has confessed in a non-privileged setting, who has been convicted in a court of law, or who has had a civil judgment rendered against them. Additionally, an independent third party who has been hired by any church or other Baptist body, may determine, by preponderance of the evidence following an inquiry, that a pastor, denominational worker, or ministry employee or volunteer is credibly accused. A "preponderance of the evidence" is the legal standard required for a civil judgment.

Employee - Any person who works for a salary or wages at NBC.

Lay Leader - An adult designated by NBC or a sponsoring organization to have responsibility for a ministry. The adult must be a minimum of 18 years of age. It is suggested that lay leaders be a minimum of four years older than the children or youth they are supervising.

Mandated Reporters - According to the South Carolina law, certain professionals (e.g., clergy, doctors, nurses, teachers, counselors) are required to report suspected child abuse or neglect when, in their professional capacity, they receive information giving them reason to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect. The South Carolina Attorney General's Office has concluded that "professional capacity" is not limited to a particular physical location, but applies when mandated reporters are working within the scope of their employment when they receive the information. The mandate to report child abuse and neglect does not require the reporter to know for certain that a child has been abused or neglected. The requirement to report is triggered when the mandated reporter has a reasonable belief that a child has been or may be abused or neglected.

If one discovers or suspects sexual abuse due to observable marks of abuse on a child such as: bruises, scars, broken bones, a flinch reflex to movements from a nearby adult, highly sexualized or aggressive behavior in a child too young to understand the significance of their actions, artwork or writing with themes that reveal an awareness of abusive behaviors and pain that are beyond what is age appropriate, the law requires individuals to make a report as soon as they have REASONABLE SUSPICION. Note: a report is not an accusation; it is a request to investigate a situation.

Ministry Safe Committee - The Ministry Safe Committee provides leadership to foster a Christ-honoring and safe environment for those who participate in NBC's ministries. Though committee members will include both men and women who serve for a limited time, a designated member of the pastoral team (church staff) will remain a permanent member.

The committee's duties will include: 1) to review the NBC Ministry Safe Policy annually and make recommendations for improvement to the church; 2) to educate the congregation through training opportunities regarding all policies and procedures; 3) to provide leadership by responding to incidents of alleged inappropriate behavior and/or abuse as outlined below (see Action Plan for Responding to Allegations); and 4) to attend training events to strengthen NBC's efforts to provide a safe ministry context. The designated member of the pastoral team (church staff) serving on the Ministry Safe Committee will provide quarterly updates of the committee's work to all church staff members (e.g., Lead/Senior Pastor, Student Pastor) at a regularly scheduled staff meeting.

Pending Charge - In some instances, a sex abuse crime does not show up as a sex abuse crime. Church leaders should request that anyone with a "pending charge" explain the specific crime he or she committed previously.

Volunteer - Any person not employed by NBC who, at any time during the year, serves in a NBC ministry. This includes, but is not limited to, lay leaders.

Vulnerable Adult - Persons 18 years or older who have a physical or mental condition which substantially impairs the person from adequately providing for his or her own care or protection. This includes a person who is impaired in the ability to provide adequately for their own care and protection because of the infirmities of aging including, but not limited to, organic brain damage, advanced age, and physical, mental, or emotional dysfunction.

Volunteer Ministry - Includes any church-sponsored activity engaged in by a volunteer.

## **Screening and Qualifications**

### **Employees: Background Requirements**

NBC's pastors or staff will carefully screen all applicants for full-time or part-time paid employment at the church. Applicants for full-time or part-time paid employment at NBC will be required to provide, complete, or undergo the following prior to being hired:

- A written Employment Application which will include information regarding: 1) all previous past places of employment for full-time applicants and the past three jobs for part-time applicants; 2) all previous church memberships for full-time applicants and the past three church memberships for part-time applicants; 3) any/all prior work or service involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults; 4) the name and contact information for at least three references (applicants seeking full-time employment should submit at least one professional reference); and 5) prior convictions and allegations of crimes.
- One or more pastors or staff members will conduct personal interviews using pre-determined/pre-written questions.
- All applicants (i.e., those seeking full-time or part-time employment) will be asked if they have ever abused anyone in the past at any time or engaged in inappropriate behavior toward a child, student, or vulnerable adult.
- Applicants seeking full-time employment will be asked if they have ever received a formal reprimand, correction, or warning from a supervisor for any reason or been required to follow a personal/professional improvement plan as part of an employment-related disciplinary process.
- Applicants seeking full-time employment will be asked if they have ever been terminated from a job.
- All applicants will be required to provide a statement that they have no prior convictions or allegations for child abuse or sexual misconduct.
- NBC will obtain a criminal record report for the individual. At least once every three years, NBC will perform national criminal database searches and national sex offender registry searches on existing employees, and each employee shall be required to execute any documents that NBC might request for such purpose. Any individual who has lived outside South Carolina in the last five years may be subject to additional county or state court search.
- Upon being hired, each new employee will be required to sign an acknowledgement that he or she has received a copy of the Northwood Baptist Church Ministry Safe Policy, has read it carefully, and agrees to comply with all requirements.
- Upon being hired, each new employee will be required to sign an acknowledgement that he or she has received a copy of the Northwood Baptist Church Employee Handbook, has read it carefully, and agrees to comply with all requirements.

Within the first month of employment, the employee will complete the following as part of their orientation:

- Each new employee will be provided training on inappropriate behavior and abuse (e.g., child, vulnerable adult). Training will include how to recognize and prevent inappropriate behavior and abuse, and a more thorough review of the Northwood Baptist Church Ministry Safe Policy.
- Employees working with children or students must have a profile picture that includes the employee's full name in church online database.

Any candidate for employment who has a past conviction of or pending proceeding addressing an allegation of child abuse or neglect or any candidate listed on the National Sex Offender Registry cannot be employed by NBC (See Appendix A). Conviction for any of the following will automatically disqualify an individual from employment: pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assault, indecent exposure, child pornography, or sexual abuse of any kind.

### **Volunteers: Background Requirements**

NBC's pastors or staff will carefully screen all volunteers working with children, students, or vulnerable adults in any volunteer ministry. All volunteers will be required to provide, complete, or undergo the following prior to serving:

- A Volunteer Ministry Application which will include information regarding past employment and prior convictions for crimes;
- A specific statement that the individual has no prior convictions or allegations for child abuse or sexual misconduct;
- All new volunteers who desire to serve with children or students (ages birth- until 18 years/student ministry) or vulnerable adults will submit the name and contact information of two references. NBC will contact the references

to ensure that prospective volunteers pose no threat to the safety of children or students. When speaking to the references, NBC will ask at minimum these two questions: "Do you have any concern about \_\_\_\_\_working with children (students, vulnerable adults)?" "Is there any reason whatsoever why \_\_\_\_\_ might pose of threat to the safety and/or security of children (students, vulnerable adults)?"

- All new volunteers will be screened through a personal interview with the ministry leader in the volunteer's area of intended service.
- NBC will obtain a background check for the individual. At least once every three years, NBC will perform national criminal database searches and national sex offender registry searches on existing volunteers and each volunteer shall be required to execute any documents that NBC might request for such purpose. Any individual who has lived outside South Carolina in the last five years may be subject to additional county or state court search.
- Each new volunteer, prior to beginning any volunteer role, will be required to sign an acknowledgement that he or she has received a copy of Northwood Baptist Ministry Safe Policy, has read and understands it, and will comply with its terms.
- Each new volunteer will provide photographic identification (e.g., SC Driver's License).

#### **Volunteers will complete the following:**

- All volunteers will attend one of the two in-person policies and procedures trainings during the year in addition to taking the Darkness to Light training (in person or online) once every 3 years.
- On-boarding volunteers will take a 30-minute video training provided with a background check (within the first month) and will take the Darkness to Light training in-person when offered. A church staff employee will lead two Darkness to Light training session per year for volunteers.
- All volunteers must have a profile picture in church online database.
- Names of volunteer applicants will be sent to all NBC employees. Employees will notify NBC HR within one week if they have an issue or concern regarding the applicant.

Any candidate for volunteer service who has a past conviction of or pending proceeding related to an allegation of child abuse or neglect or any candidate listed on the National Sex Offender Registry may not work with children and students at NBC (See Appendix A). Refusal to complete the Volunteer Application process or a conviction for any of the following will automatically disqualify an individual from volunteer service with children and students: pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults, indecent exposure, child pornography, or sexual abuse of any kind.

#### **Qualifications**

All employees and volunteers must complete the membership process within 6 months of starting to serve in children and student ministries. Also, all employees and volunteers must be a member or active attenders of NBC for a least 6 months and be in good standing before serving in children or student ministries at the church. The Executive Pastor shall have the authority with the consensus of the Lead/Senior Pastor, to waive this six-month rule upon request, when appropriate. The employee/volunteer shall conduct himself or herself daily in a lifestyle pleasing and acceptable to the Bible. The employee/volunteer must be willing to follow the pastoral leadership of NBC.

#### **General Procedures - On Campus**

##### **Two-Adult/Open-Door Policy**

In order to avoid situations where an adult individual is alone with children, students, and/or vulnerable adults, all activities (e.g., Discipleship Group, Life Connection Group, other events) and related circumstances (e.g., traveling in a vehicle) associated with these groups will be supervised by at least two unrelated, screened adults. The presence of two, unrelated, screened adults is intended to protect children, students, and vulnerable adults against situations in which abuse might occur, and to protect individuals against false allegations of abuse or neglect.

In circumstances when two unrelated adults are not present for an event, the ministry leader (adult) in charge should cancel the event or join with a larger group. For example, if only one adult and student show up for a Discipleship Group,

the adult should cancel the study or move the group to a public area (i.e., the gym, outside, etc.). Or, if only one adult and one student are present for a Life Connection Group, the adult and student should join with another Life Connection Group.

Our volunteers should adhere to a 2:1 ratio at all times when escorting children to areas that are not scheduled for the entire group (i.e. restroom breaks, first aid). There must either be two unrelated adults per one child or two children per one adult.

### **Restrooms and Diapering**

Multiple stall restrooms in the children's center are to be used by children only. For multiple stall restrooms located outside of the children's center, volunteers should make sure there are no adults in the restroom prior to students going in. The volunteer should remain outside of the restroom with the door propped open in order to supervise while also providing privacy to the children. Volunteers may not assist toilet trained children in the restroom stalls for any reason. Children who are toilet training may be assisted with the door open and another adult within view. Diapers will be changed in plain view with another adult present following our procedures. (Appendix B)

### **Married Couples Serving Together**

Beginning September 2023, married couples serving in Children's Ministry or Student Ministry, will be counted as 1 adult in the two-adult rule. In these classroom settings the following must apply when a married couple is serving together:

- Birth through 7 years of age- 2 married adults and one 18+ year old
- 8 years of age through 10 years of age- 2 married adults and one 15+ year old
- 6th-12th Grades- 2 married adults and one 18+ year old

### **Visitors**

Classrooms, childcare rooms, and any area in which programs for children or students are taking place may be visited without prior notice by church employees or other volunteer church workers. Parents must be escorted by a church employee or church volunteer. Volunteers are not to have "visitors" to the classroom where they are serving, including spouses and personal children. No windows may ever be blocked to prevent visual observation into the classroom.

### **Ratios**

In order to maintain the safety of all children and students to whom we minister, the following ratios should be followed when possible. The expectation is still that there are always two approved adults when children or students are present.

- Infants: 1 adult: 2 children
- Toddlers: 1 adult: 4 children
- Preschool- Age 5 (Kindergarten): 1:5
- Age 5-11 (Kindergarten- 5th grade): 1:8
- Age 12-17 (Middle/High School): 1:10

### **Emergencies**

As stated above, an NBC employee and volunteer should not be alone with a single child at an NBC event or program where he/she cannot be observed by others. In the rare event that two adults cannot be present in a room momentarily (e.g., emergency requires one adult to leave a room briefly), and one adult is alone in a room with one or more children or students, a door from the room must be left open. The adult should not position himself or herself in the room such that other adults passing in the hallway cannot see him or her.

### **SWAT Team (Students Working Alongside Teachers- Student Volunteers)**

The SWAT Team refers to students who are active participants in the NBC Student Ministry. SWAT Team members will be required to apply to serve and must receive a recommendation from the Student Pastor and/or Student Ministry Volunteer who knows the student. SWAT team members are never allowed to be left alone with children or escort children without an adult volunteer present. SWAT team members should never take children to the bathroom or assist with diapering procedures. SWAT team members are expected to refrain from use of technology while serving, engage with children, and participate in activities. Failure to adhere to these expectations should be reported to the Student Pastor or Children's Director and may result in the SWAT Team member being removed from his/her position.



## **Counseling**

At any counseling session with one child or student, the door of the room used must remain open for the entire session. The session should be conducted at a time and location when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance.

## **Security**

All children should have a name tag from NBC's current security system. All parents, grandparents, or guardians should be directed to the desk to "check-in" their children or use the self-check-in stations provided. With the permission of parents, middle school or high school siblings may check in or check out a sibling providing that they have the proper security tag. A sibling still in children's ministry is not allowed to check in or check out a sibling also in children's ministry.

- **Children's Ministry**  
A guardian receipt must be used when picking up children who are 5th grade and under. The guardian receipt must be matched with the child's name tag before dismissing the child to the parent.
- **Student Ministry**  
These students may be released on their own from the classroom unless parents, grandparents, or guardians specify otherwise. Parents, grandparents, or guardians of middle school visitors should be asked if they desire their child to be released or held until picked up.

Anyone attempting to pick up a child without the proper tag must contact the Children's Director or another ministry employee for assistance.

## **Off-Site Trips & Events**

### **Permission Forms**

Parent/Guardian Permission Forms and Medical Consent Forms must be completed prior to all trips. Leaders of overnight trips must be at least 21 years of age if not accompanied by lay leaders or employees that are above 21 years of age. The two-adult rule must be followed throughout the trip with any foreseeable exceptions clearly stated and approved in advance by the ministry leader and parent or guardian. The total number of adults on each trip will be adjusted according to the requirements of the planned activities. Under no circumstances may one adult alone take or accompany minors on an overnight outing.

### **Rooming Arrangements**

Rooming arrangements should provide for children and students of the same sex to room together and adults of the same sex to room together.

- When possible, adult rooms shall be next to student rooms and students.
- Ordinarily, an adult should not share a room with an individual child. An individual minor may share a room with an individual adult if the two are related (parent/child) or if written permission has been granted prior to the event by a parent or guardian and a ministry leader.
- In situations where one large sleeping area is provided, two adults of the same sex shall accompany children or students of the same sex.
- Children/students and adults (other than the child/student's parent) should not sleep in the same bed.

### **Medical**

- Each child, student, adult volunteer, and employee must submit a completed medical/insurance form. Each minor's form must have a parent or guardian's signature.
- Whenever possible, all activities with children and students shall have an employee or volunteer adult leader with current-certification first aid/CPR training.
- Group leaders should have a copy of all medical forms for overnight or off-site events. Forms will be kept on the event site for the duration of the event.
- First Aid supplies will be available on the event site. All workers, employees, and volunteers will be informed of the



location of First Aid supplies/equipment and have access to information concerning specific medical conditions and concerns of participants.

- A written report will be completed in the case of any accident, medical emergency, or injury with a copy sent to the parent/guardian.

### **Driving Rules/Travel**

When a child is transported in any vehicle, the driver must be either the child's parent/guardian, a screened adult who is at least 21 years old, or a paid staff person who is at least 18 years old. Exceptions may be made by lead or executive pastor if it is in correlation with local and state laws.

- All employees and volunteers shall abide by safe driving laws when transporting children and students.
- When one vehicle is used for an event, the two-leader rule still applies unless parental permission for each child/student is obtained prior to the trip. When several vehicles are taken for an event and two leaders are not available for every vehicle, keeping the other vehicle in sight at regular intervals is an acceptable substitution for the two-leader rule and no adult should be transporting just one child/student.
- Travel arrangements for off-campus events will be coordinated through the ministry that oversees the event.
- All adult drivers of children and students will be screened through a driving history search. A valid driver's license will be required.
- Seat belts will be provided for all passengers and seat belts must be worn by all passengers, except in the case of chartered buses.
- If it is necessary for an adult to take children or students home after an event, two adults must be present.
- Employees and volunteers should not transport one child or student. In the event that a one-on-one child/student to adult scenario arises, (i.e. unexpected transportation needs, mentoring) or otherwise, prior parent permission should be granted to both the employee and volunteer in writing (text is permissible). Exceptions may be made for a medical emergency.

### **Outside Groups**

All leaders of non-NBC sponsored groups and events that use NBC facilities and supervise children and students are expected to adhere to these policies. Upon receipt of the policy from NBC, the leaders must review the Northwood Baptist Church Ministry Safe policy and sign the Outside Group Leaders Release Form (Appendix C) to acknowledge their review of it and to confirm their agreement to follow the policy.

Leaders of outside groups will be required to complete NBC's online training classes and are expected to conduct their own due diligence in this regard. Outside groups must provide a Certificate of Liability Insurance to NBC. If a Certificate of Liability Insurance is unavailable, the hosting of the group must be approved by the Executive Pastor.

Given the nature of outside groups that are authorized to use NBC's facilities, NBC will not seek personal or professional references, review employment records, or obtain civil and criminal records of employees or volunteers of such groups. Leaders of outside groups are expected to conduct their own due diligence in this regard.

Outside groups must either provide Background Checks for every employee and volunteer or if the organization cannot provide a background check for all employees and volunteers, then they may order one through Northwood Baptist at the cost of \$20 per background check. Background check requests must be made through the Northwood Baptist facility contact.

### **Mission Trips**

Mission trips leaders and participants of NBC mission trips are required to sign and adhere to the Ministry Safe policy and to the policies of the sending organization (i.e., NAMB, IMB, GenSend, etc.). Participants must complete a background check and required training. All rooming arrangements and should comply with the rooming arrangements portion of the ministry safe policy.

## Code of Conduct for Employees and Volunteers Regarding Children and Students

1. Employees and volunteers are required to adhere to the NBC's policies and expectations in their interactions with children and students.
2. Employees and volunteers will respect the rights of children and students not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable or that disregard their right to say no.
3. Employees and volunteers may not discipline children or students with physical punishment or failure to provide the necessities of care.
4. Physical restraint is used only in situations necessary to protect a child/student, other children/students, or an employee or volunteer from harm. If such restraint is used, written notification of the parent or guardian should be made as soon as possible.
5. While supervising children and students participating in NBC programs, employees and volunteers should know where participants are at all times.
6. Restroom Supervision: Whenever possible, those supervising *children and students* will maintain situational awareness and make sure a restroom is not occupied by a suspicious or unknown individual before allowing them to use the facility. An employee or volunteer should not be alone with a *child* in the restroom. The employee or volunteer will stand in the doorway while a *child* uses the restroom. This policy allows privacy for the child and protection for the employee or volunteer (not being alone with a child). Employees and volunteers will strongly encourage parents to take their child to the restroom whenever possible. Employees and volunteers will adhere to all restroom and diapering policies.
7. Diapering and assisting young children in the restroom should be done by female employees and volunteers over the age of 18 and should follow the nursery guidelines posted in each appropriate classroom (See Appendix B).
8. Employees and volunteers should be alert to the physical and emotional state of children and students. Any signs of injury or possible child abuse must be reported to the ministry leader supervisor (e.g., Children's Director, Student Minister).
9. Employees and volunteers are not allowed to be alone with children or students and will adhere to the two-adult/2:1 ratio guidelines.
10. Employees and volunteers should only release children to individuals who have the proper security tag with matching numbers. Anyone attempting to pick up a child without the proper tag must contact the Children's Director or appointed ministry volunteer for assistance. Photo ID may be required in order to release the child to an individual not possessing the proper security tag.

**Note: Any identified violation of Items 11-15 below shall be reviewed by the appropriate church ministry employees and shall be subject to disciplinary action including termination of employment or volunteer status.**

11. Consuming, using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while working or volunteering with children or students is prohibited.
12. Being impaired by legally prescribed drugs while working or volunteering with children or students is prohibited.
13. Unless given permission by the church, possessing, or using concealed weapons or firearms while working or volunteering with children or students is prohibited.
14. Smoking, vaping, or use of tobacco in the presence of children, students, or parents while working or volunteering is prohibited.
15. Communication in any form (e.g., verbal, social media) that fails to honor Christ, respect others as individuals made in God's image, or falls short of the Bible's expectations for communication is prohibited (e.g., sexual innuendo, racist remarks, profanity, intimate details of one's personal life of a sexual nature).
16. Employees and volunteers will be mindful of the content on any portable electronic device, social networking pages, or other electronic media that might be accessible to any children and students.
17. Employees, volunteer adults, and student leaders will wear appropriate dress when volunteering with children and/or students.
18. All media and resources of any kind (e.g., movies, music, social media, books, handouts, electronic resources) used at a ministry event (on or off campus) must be approved by the NBC minister leader supervising the event.
19. Employees and volunteers may not date or become romantically involved with church members or participants who are younger than 18 years of age or who are still active students in the student ministry.

20. Employees and volunteers are required to read, sign, and adhere to all policies related to preventing, identifying, documenting, and reporting child abuse and will attend training sessions on the subject annually.
21. Employees and volunteers are required to report any concerns or suspicions to the supervising ministry employee (e.g., Children's Director, Student Minister) regarding their observations of an individual's interaction with a child or student, whether that interaction is mild (e.g., questionable comment) or more serious (e.g., sexual abuse) in nature. In circumstances of a more serious nature, the Ministry Safe Committee, in consultation with the Lead Pastor or a staff member, will ensure that a formal written report is prepared and the appropriate authorities (e.g., law enforcement) are contacted as required by South Carolina law.
22. Any off-campus ministry contact with leaders and students must be of the same sex and with prior approval by parents.
23. No employee or volunteer is allowed to message an individual student. All communication must be group chats.
24. It is necessary for an NBC employees or volunteers to abide by safe driving laws when transporting children, students, or vulnerable adults to/from an event.
25. Volunteers should refrain from use of technology and social media while serving with children and students so that they can focus all of their attention on the children and students in their care.
26. We know that there are many photographic moments when serving with children and students, however, photos of minors may not be shared on volunteers' personal social media accounts unless measures have been taken to remove identifying features. Volunteers may share photos with an employee or approved person to ensure proper permissions have been acquired so that approved photos can be posted through the official church social media accounts.
27. Volunteers serving in Children's Ministry will be provided with a lanyard/nametag. This must be worn at all times while serving for identifying purposes.
28. First Aid and Trauma Kits are available at the children's desk and the welcome desk. An incident report should be made if first aid more extensive than a simple band aid is required.

Revised July 17, 2023 (previously revised June 16, 2023; February 1, 2023)

## Appendix A

### NBC Policy for Registered Sex Offenders

#### Purpose

Northwood Baptist Church accepts as central to its mission the establishment and maintenance of a caring environment for every child of God, not least our own children and a place of grace for all sinners, including those whose crimes are public. Knowing that children are at risk, not yet having the ability to protect themselves, we determine to provide protection for them by carefully monitoring any known Registered Sex Offender participating in the life of this congregation.

#### Policy

When anyone attending NBC is informed that a registered sex offender is seeking to attend or is attending the church, reasonable steps must be taken to manage the risk while continuing to minister to all people. Steps include the following:

1. Members or attendees should notify a NBC staff member that a sex offender is seeking to attend or is attending the church.
2. A member of the pastoral staff as determined by the Lead Pastor will contact the offender and obtain a release to contact his/her probation officer for specific information about the offense.
3. In most cases, the offender will be welcomed into the body at NBC and may apply for membership. The application process will confirm that the offender has repented of sins and trusted in Christ alone for salvation and is seeking to walk in a manner worthy of Christ.
4. The offender, whether pursuing membership or not, must sign a "Conditional Attendance Agreement" that imposes at least the following conditions for participation in church life:
  - The offender is not permitted on the church campus when minors are gathered and/or organized for educational, recreational, or social programs specifically designated for these groups (e.g., special children's event).
  - The offender is never permitted to be in buildings where children and/or youth activities are taking place unless they are the approved guardian of a child or youth being picked up or dropped off. At NBC, this would include the Children's Building and Family Life Center.
  - The offender will not work with minors in any capacity in the church.
  - The offender will not transport minors to or from church or any church activity unless they are the offender's own children.
5. Should the offender not comply with the Conditional Attendance Agreement, the offender will be removed from membership and asked to discontinue participation in church life on the church campus.
6. There will be ongoing and full disclosure of the offender to the pastoral staff, children and student workers and other church leadership deemed appropriate by the Lead Pastor and Executive Pastor until such time as is no longer deemed necessary.

#### Conditional Attendance Agreement for Sex Offenders at NBC

NBC affirms the life changing power of the gospel, the forgiveness and justification of sins for those who have trusted Christ for salvation regardless of their backgrounds and life experiences. NBC is committed to being a community of faith open to those who desire to worship Christ and grow up to maturity in Him. However, based on your prior choices and criminal convictions, we have concerns about your contact with minors when they gather and organized for educational, recreational or social programs. This would include but is not limited to Sunday mornings, most Sunday nights, and Wednesday night.

- The offender is never permitted to be in buildings where children and/or youth activities are taking place unless they are the approved guardian of a child or youth being picked up or dropped off. At NBC, this would include the Children's Building and Family Life Center.

- The offender will not work with minors in any capacity in the church.
- The offender will not transport minors to or from church or any church activity unless they are the offender's own children.
- The offender will not sit next to a minor and if such a person sits next to the offender, the offender must move, unless the minor's parents are aware of the offender's status.
- The offender will not place himself into, or accept any position of leadership or authority within children's ministry or student ministry.
- The offender will not go to a church member's or attendee's home where minors are present unless the minor's parents or guardian are present at the home and are aware of the offender's status.
- The offender will agree to comply with any court-mandated restrictions or other legal restriction or conditions such as conditions of probation, treatment, and/or requirements and recognize that these shall supersede any conditions in this Conditional Attendance Agreement that are less restrictive or contradictory.
- The offender understands that the provisions of this Conditional Attendance Agreement do not create any personal and/or legal rights against the church that would afford him any claim or right of redress in any legal or administrative proceedings, nor does this agreement in any way preclude the church from exercising its right to exercise freely its faith as set forth in the United States Constitution and the Constitution of the State of South Carolina with respect to church governance in matters relating to church membership and/or discipline.
- This agreement shall remain valid as long as the offender attends and/or participates in the activities of NBC unless the church, in its sole discretion in matters pertaining to membership and discipline, determines that the allegations against the offender were unfounded. The offender understands that dismissal of criminal charges will not constitute exoneration of an allegation of sexual misconduct for purposes of these restrictions but may be considered by the church in making that determination. Should the offender wish to transfer attendance, participation, or membership to another congregation, the offender specifically agrees and consents that a copy of this document may be sent to the subsequent congregation.
- The offender understands and accepts the church leadership will inform the church body of this policy annually. In addition, new members will be notified on the policy.
- The offender authorizes the church to notify the following church leaders of the offender's current status as a Registered Sex Offender:
  - Pastoral Staff
  - Deacon
  - Children and Student Volunteer Worker
  - Security Team Members
  - Facility Service Workers

The offender agrees that he has read and understands the above guidelines and agrees to abide by them. If at any point the offender fails to adhere to any of the above conditions, the offender recognizes that participation may be terminated or otherwise restricted. Such failure shall be at the sole discretion of the pastoral staff of NBC.

Dated this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lead Pastor's Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lead Pastor's Signature

## **Appendix B**

### **Diapering Policy**

- Check each child's diaper at least once during your time with them.
- 
- Collect all supplies before placing the child on the changing table.
- 
- Place protective paper on the changing pad before placing the child on the table.
- 
- Always use disposable gloves when changing a diaper.
- 
- Two teachers should be present when diapers are being changed.
- 
- Only female teachers ages 18 and above should change diapers.
- 
- Never turn away or walk away from a child on the changing table.
- 
- Note when the diaper was changed and what type of diaper on parent card or sticker.
- 
- Immediately after changing, place the child securely on the floor.
- 
- Place gloves, soiled diaper, wipes, and protective paper in the diaper pail.
- 
- Clean up diapering area with a Clorox wipe and/or replace changing pad paper.
- 
- Use a new pair of gloves before changing another child.
- 
- Wash hands after diaper changes.

**Appendix C**  
**Outside Group Leaders Release Form**

I have read Northwood Baptist's Church's Ministry Safe policy and agree to abide by all regulations and requirements.

\_\_\_\_\_ (Name of the Organization)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Name/Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

PROPOSED



## Appendix D

### Reporting/Investigation/Response

Any individual who observes or becomes aware of any alleged or potential incident of inappropriate behavior or sexual abuse must, as soon as possible, report the matter to the employee in charge of the program (e.g., Director of Children's Ministry, Student Pastor).<sup>3</sup>

When there is reasonable suspicion of abuse involving children, it is mandatory that a report is made in a timely manner. If a minor discloses abuse, the report must be made. The volunteer to whom a disclosure has been made or has reasonable suspicion of child abuse, must be the one to report. The Children's Director, or Student Pastor may help the volunteer file the report, or the volunteer may make the report and then immediately make an appointed church employee aware of the report. Initial Reporting of Incidents should be made to local law enforcement prior to any in-house investigation.

The employee in charge of the program will then contact the pastoral staff member (e.g., Executive Pastor, Children's Director) currently serving on the Ministry Safe Team, which is the official group tasked with responding to allegations. The Executive Pastor will also be included in the discussion to provide direction and guidance. However, if the Executive Pastor has been accused of inappropriate behavior or sexual abuse, he will not be included. The Ministry Safe Team will proceed independently.

The staff member serving on the Ministry Safe Team will discuss the alleged incident with one or more members of the Ministry Safe Team. The Ministry Safe Team will take care to follow the church-approved Action Plan for Responding to Allegations (see below).<sup>3</sup>

#### **Action Plan for Responding to Allegations**

After an official report is made, the Ministry Safe Team will:

1. Review the Church-Approved Plan

After being informed of an allegation, members of the Ministry Safe Team will review the Action Plan for Responding to Allegations to ensure that they understand the steps they are to take. *The Lead Pastor may also participate in this review and/or any of the steps outlined in the action plan for responding to allegation. Note: If the Lead Pastor is the one accused, he may not participate in the process outlined below. Rather, he must allow the Ministry Safe Team to conduct their review independently.*

2. Assess the Situation and Determine an Initial Course of Action

The Ministry Safe Team will assess the situation and determine an initial plan of action. Team members will consider the following questions:

- What are the facts (e.g., timeline, key events, participants)?
- What evidence might support the apparent facts (e.g., text messages, phone calls, specific comments made by someone)?
- Is anyone in immediate danger or is there a threat to the congregation?
- Is there reasonable suspicion that a crime has been committed against a minor? South Carolina law mandates individuals to report if he or she has reasonable suspicion. Note: a report is not an accusation, but rather a request to investigate a situation.
- Is there *reasonable suspicion* that a crime has been committed against an adult? Some argue that all crimes must be reported; however, some victims' rights advocates argue that the victim alone should have the right to report. It is best to work with a victim and pursue a path that allows them to report the crime yet also provides support and protection.
- Who may need to join the investigation (e.g., personnel committee)?
- Does a staff member need to be put on leave or fired immediately?
- Should a volunteer be removed from serving in his/her role?

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<sup>3</sup>There may be times when members of the Ministry Safe Team members are unavailable (e.g., vacation) to respond to an allegation. In these situations, those who have been informed of an allegation will contact the Lead Pastor or chair of the deacons for guidance as to who should provide leadership (i.e., respond to an allegation). In these unique circumstances, following approved-church policy, obeying South Carolina law, protecting those who may be in danger, and keeping church leadership informed are most important.

- How will the church minister to the victim(s)?
- How will the church minister to the one responsible for the abuse?
- What course of action seems appropriate for this situation?
- What should be the short-term plan (24 hours to 2 weeks) and long-term plan (6 months to a year)?<sup>4</sup>

After the committee members have assessed the situation, they should prepare an initial action plan. It would be wise to write down the plan to ensure that it: 1) is well-conceived, 2) everyone understands it, and 3) all members are in agreement.

Finally, keep in mind that team members must document everything that takes place in their investigation of what happened. For example, if the victim calls a Ministry Safe Team member on a certain date and time to report an alleged incident, the team member should keep a record of the call and include all details (e.g., time, what was said). Document everything.

### 3. Meet with All Parties Separately

At least two Ministry Safe Team members should meet with all parties involved separately to get their version of the incident(s). The goal of these separate meetings is to obtain an accurate record of what transpired.

During the separate meetings, the two Ministry Safe Team members should pay attention to details, listen carefully with an open mind, and (after the meeting) compare notes to make sure they understood what was communicated. They should also pay attention to such things as the timeline, what was allegedly said, and any physical contact or communication between the two parties (e.g., texts, phone calls).

The two Ministry Safe Team members should respond to victims (especially children) with care and compassion, making every effort not to re-traumatize them. Here are some suggested guidelines:

- **Show Care and Compassion to the Victim**  
A Ministry Safe Team member might say, "Thank you for telling me what happened. I believe you. It took great courage for you to share this. You're bringing something dark and evil into the light. What happened to you is NOT okay and it is NOT your fault. I am so sorry you have suffered. This grieves the heart of God. He loves you and cares deeply about you. He will carry you through this and we're going to walk through this with you. We're going to do whatever we can to keep you safe. I'm going to call people who will help make sure you're safe."
- **Ask Open-Ended Questions**  
"Would you like to tell me more?" or "What happened next?" Take care to listen to what is said. Let the victim direct the conversation. Do not prod or ask evasive questions that might cause pain.
- **Give the Victim Control**  
Look for opportunities to allow the victim to make choices, have a voice, or control the discussion. Back off if they get upset.
- **Summarize and Clarify**  
Take the time to summarize and clarify.
- **Offer Practical Resources**  
Recommend a church-approved counselor to the victim or other resources. Assure the victim that you will attempt to provide ongoing support and encouragement.

As suggested above, during the separate meetings, the Ministry Safe Team members should (ideally) seek to obtain a written, signed version of events from each party. Requesting that all parties provide a written, signed account of their version of events may seem excessive (and indeed it may be inappropriate in some situations). Nevertheless, here are several benefits: 1) it helps church leadership make sure they understand all perspectives accurately, 2) it holds church leadership accountable for how they handle the incident, 3) it provides a written record should another church request the personnel file of a terminated employee, 4) it vindicates those falsely accused, and 5) it can serve to protect church leaders if required to testify in court.

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<sup>4</sup>It is not necessary to answer every question listed. These are included merely to help Ministry Safe Committee members think through the key topics of discussion at the first meeting. Additional questions will need to be asked at future meetings.

Of course, **Ministry Safe Team members should use common sense based on the situation as to whether to obtain a written, signed statement from a child.** When children are involved, a Ministry Safe Committee member might simply listen to the child (with the parents' approval) and summarize their understanding of what happened later in a written document. The church should always seek to avoid victims experiencing pain or trauma. Finally, it is expected that the parents or guardian of any minor involved in any allegation of abuse shall be immediately notified.

#### 4. Conduct Another Meeting

The Ministry Safe Team members should conduct another meeting that includes additional church leaders (e.g., Lead/Senior Pastor, deacons). At this meeting, the Ministry Safe Team members will present the facts as gathered from both sides and make/ask for recommendations for moving forward.

#### 5. Execute Approved Course of Action

Ministry Safe Team members will carry out the approved course of action as determined by church leadership (e.g., staff termination, removal from position of leadership, contact police). Note: This is a crucial step and should not be taken until: 1) the appropriate leadership has been consulted, namely, the Lead Pastor and/or personnel committee leadership; 2) all appropriate policies have been reviewed; and 3) in some special cases (e.g., termination) a lawyer has been consulted.

Whatever approved course of action is taken, ideally, church leadership will: 1) **not allow** the perpetrator on campus, 2) **keep the perpetrator and victim apart** so as not to re-traumatize the victim and 3) **reject any suggestion** that the two parties participate in a "reconciliation" meeting or process.

#### 6. Communicate with Confidentiality, Respect, and Transparency

The leadership team will communicate what has taken place to as many people as appropriate, letting them know what has transpired and how the church leaders responded. Communication must be marked by confidentiality and respect for the victim, but also transparency.

#### 7. Review

Church leaders will review and assess how the incident was handled and prepare a final report for their files. Based on what transpired, it may be necessary to revise current policies and procedures.

### **Additional Considerations**

#### **Response to the Victim and Alleged Perpetrator of Sexual Abuse**

##### **Victim**

A proper response toward the victim and his/her family is critical. Do not do anything to minimize, deny or blame the victim. Every effort must be taken to let the victim and his/her family know that the pastoral staff is taking the allegations seriously. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the church's first priority. Also, the family will need ongoing support and assurance of acceptance. NBC should help the family find professional counseling.

NBC will keep on file a list of qualified Christian counselors in the state of South Carolina.

The SCBC might serve as resource for the church as it seeks to help a victim.

NBC may consult the SCBC and Charleston Baptist Association when needing to obtain recommendations for qualified, independent, third-party investigators for issues that are inappropriate or immoral but not illegal.

##### **Alleged Perpetrator**

NBC will treat accused of sexual abuse with dignity and support. The church will immediately remove the accused individual from his or her position until the investigation is finished (if they are a staff member or volunteer).

NBC will solicit the help of professionals outside the church to determine if he or she is telling the truth. A process of healing and restoration should be pursued when the accused confesses or is convicted of wrongdoing. Scriptures clearly states that forgiveness and reconciliation is the long-term goal for such a case (Matthew 18).

Future restoration to a church fellowship is a delicate issue. The feelings of the victim and his/her family must be considered. The perpetrator should go through a lengthy period of restoration, which should include extensive counseling with a qualified therapist.

If imprisonment occurs, the accused should receive ongoing support and concern from committed friends. Restoration may allow the convicted to return to the church fellowship at some point. However, restoration does not mean resumed trust.

Under no circumstances should church leadership ask the survivor and participate in a "reconciliation" of both parties or any other meeting involving the perpetrator and victim.

The church will encourage the perpetrator's spouse and children to participate in biblical counseling.

### **Media**

If any accusation of abuse is brought against an employee, volunteer, or member of NBC and the media becomes involved, the Lead Pastor will speak on behalf of the church (provided he is not the one accused). All other employees, volunteers, or church members will refrain from speaking to the media.

### **Formal Reporting**

NBC will report individuals who are prosecuted or credibly accused to the SBC database, the SCBC, and the local Charleston Baptist Association.

### **Important Contact Information**

Ministry Safe Team Chair:

North Charleston Police Department:

South Carolina Baptist Convention (\*SCBC will add a staff member in 2023 who will address needs):

Trident Medical Center: