

GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH SAFE SANCTUARY

A Child Abuse Prevention and Adult Worker Protection Policy

Jesus said, "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me"
(Matthew 18:5)

On March 22, 2001, Amended Ohio Senate Bill 187 became law (Ohio Revised Code sections 109.574-577, 121.401, 121.402). The legislation's purpose is to help ensure that youth-serving organizations that place volunteers in positions requiring "unsupervised access to children on a regular basis" use appropriate screening methods. In accordance with the law, the Ohio Community Service Council, the state government unit responsible for administering AmeriCorps and promoting community service and volunteerism throughout Ohio, was mandated to develop a set of "best practices" for organizations to use when screening volunteers who work with children.

"Unsupervised" means that "no other person 18 years or older is present in the same room with the child and/or if outdoors, no other person 18 years or older is within a 30 yard radius of the child or has visual contact with the child" (Section 109.574). A child is defined as an individual under age 18 or a mentally and/or physically handicapped individual under the age of 21.

(source: *Best Practices for Screening Volunteers who Work with Children in Ohio*,
www.cdeducation.org/oym/safe/bestpractices.pdf)

It is the goal of Grace Baptist Church to provide facilities and activities that are safe and free from the risk of child abuse and to protect workers from false accusations. To accomplish this, the church leaders and staff have established policies and procedures for adults working with children and youth. The policies and procedures cover all programs and activities for children and youth sponsored and/or supervised by our church.

The purpose of this policy is to protect:

- The children and youth of the church from child abuse
- The workers in the church from the risk of accusation of child abuse
- The church's integrity, both internally and within the community
- The church from litigation concerning child abuse

Grace Baptist Church will not tolerate any occurrences of child abuse, and will report violators to legal authorities.

The policy covers all minors from birth through high school who participate in any program or activity that is sponsored and/or supervised by the church.

The policy establishes requirements for all persons, regardless of age, who work in the church and have contact with children/youth.

Providing a safe environment:

-> Grace Baptist Church will provide annual orientation and training for all workers in children's and youth activities. This orientation will include:

- church policies for prevention of child abuse,
- procedures to be used in ministry with children and youth,
- appropriate steps to report an incident of abuse,
- details of state laws regarding child abuse.

-> All volunteer workers will complete a brief renewal application once each year.

-> All children's and youth workers must be associated with Grace Baptist Church for at least six months before they can work with youth or children and provide at least three references from other Grace Baptist Church members. In specific cases of a college student/intern, written recommendation from the student/intern's home church must be obtained and they must successfully pass a background check in addition to completing GBC Safe Sanctuary training.

-> The primary or lead worker in all areas of children's and youth ministries will be at least eighteen years of age, and must be a "registered worker" (see General Procedures). Youth are permitted to assist an adult with children who are at least five years younger than they are. No worker under the age of 18 will have sole responsibility, nor be alone, with any children. They will be welcomed and nurtured as volunteers to help the adults.

-> No fewer than two adults (at least one over the age of 18) will be present at all times during any church-sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children or youth to prevent "unsupervised access" to children or youth. The two adults may be husband and wife. "Unsupervised access" will be defined as meaning that no other person 18 years or older is present in the same room with the children and/or if outdoors, no other person 18 years or older is within a 30 yard radius of the child or has visual contact with the child. Adults must be at least five years older than the youth and children being supervised. In the event that the above criterion is not possible, classroom doors will be left open with an adult roaming the area, checking periodically in each classroom.

-> Grace Baptist Church will take reasonable precautions to provide and maintain safe, appropriate equipment and supervision during church-sponsored activities on church property.

-> Any situations that involve transportation of children away from the church, or any special activities away from the church, must first be discussed and approved by the pastor in charge of youth activities. Parents/guardians should always be given advance notice and full information regarding events in which their children will be participating. Parents and guardians will be informed of details and must give written permission for children and youth to participate in ministry activities that take place away from the church. Leaders will see that parents are informed of any changes made in plans otherwise published. Volunteers providing transportation for programs, activities, or events for children and/or youth will:

- a. Hold a valid driver's license and be able to provide a copy to the church
- b. Not have more than two moving violations in the past year
- c. Use a vehicle in good mechanical condition
- d. Carry no more people than can be secured in seat belts or appropriate restraints
- e. The church's auto insurance guidelines will supersede these when they differ

Workers are to release children in their care only to parents, guardians, or persons specifically authorized to pick up the youth/child.

-> A list of people who have been trained in CPR and First Aid will be compiled and posted in the sanctuary, fellowship room, kitchen and classrooms. If requested, training will be offered periodically for those staff and volunteers who wish to be proficient in these areas (please see the Safe Sanctuary Administrator for details). A First Aid kit is located in the kitchen. Emergency phone numbers are listed beside the telephones in the kitchen and church office.

-> During the Sunday School timeframe, the Sunday School Superintendent and/or other church leaders will monitor classroom activity by roaming the hallways. Where possible, classroom doors shall be left open.

-> Anyone engaging in suspicious activity or loitering at any time will be reported to a church leader. No children or youth are to be left unattended or allowed in any area without adult supervision.

-> Only children and youth in the specified classroom age level are permitted to be in the classroom. No younger or older children are allowed.

-> If children are being taken outside or to areas of instruction other than the classroom, they must be accompanied by at least two workers (one must be a registered worker).

-> Any counseling sessions or visits with children or youth should be done with the door open for the entire session. Ideally, sessions should be scheduled at times when other people are nearby.

General Procedures:

-> Any person working with children and/or youth shall be required to submit an application. Each person may be subject to part or all of the following screening: fingerprint checks, reference checks, criminal records, motor vehicle records, and a personal interview. *No credit history or financial information will be obtained.* All screening will be documented by the church, and all documents pertaining to a volunteer who works with children or youth will be kept in a securely locked and confidential file.

-> All paid church employees are required to undergo a background check.

-> All workers must attend a training seminar and sign a statement that they will abide by the policy and procedures.

-> "Registered workers" have completed the application, screening, and training. A registered worker is approved to work with children and youth.

-> Workers, as a general rule, must observe the "two adult" rule. At least two workers must be present in the classroom at all times, and one of these workers must be a registered worker. Where two adults are not present, the classroom door is to remain open if it doesn't have eye-level windows.

-> Parents are welcome to visit a classroom at any time to observe. Pastoral staff may visit a classroom at any time.

-> Workers may not have children sit on their lap while the room is darkened or when other workers are not present.

-> Physical contact must be limited to appropriate touch. Appropriate touch is defined using the Salvation Army rule: *"No touching where a bathing suit covers"* except in cases of children in diapers, pull-ups, or accidental soiling. Workers should avoid the appearance of impropriety, such as seating "older" children on their lap, inordinate embracing, etc.

-> Activities involving transportation will require a signed parental permission form. No driver is to transport any child/youth alone.

Rest room procedures:

-> Children second grade and younger should be escorted by a children's leader (preferably of the same gender) to the rest room door.

-> If the child needs direct assistance in the rest room, assistance should be provided by registered worker in the presence of another worker.

-> Only adult workers may accompany a child to the restroom, and then only after notifying another worker. In no event shall a male worker take a female child into the restroom.

Procedures for activities in nursery and toddler areas:

-> Only trained, assigned workers will be allowed in the nursery or toddler areas. No other individuals are allowed in the nursery or toddler areas without an identified need and the approval of the nursery supervisor.

-> No worker may remove a child from the nursery or toddler areas, unless it is for restroom use or identifiable need.

Sandy Piehl will oversee the implementation of this Safe Sanctuary policy and provide for the safe-keeping of the consent forms at the church. The policy will be reviewed at least annually by volunteers, workers, and church administration, so that all will be reminded of the rules and so that any needed modifications may be made to the policy. Additional reviews will occur if deemed necessary by the Pastor and/or the Deacon Board.

This congregation is committed to showing and sharing the love of God through Jesus Christ to all who come to the church, including children and youth.

This policy is adopted by the congregation of Grace Baptist Church at its annual business meeting held on October 10, 2005. Lynn Wilkins moved to adopt the policy; motion seconded by Harold Cox. Motion was carried.

(signed document on file)
Signature – Chairman of the Deacon Board, Grace Baptist Church

(signed document on file)
Signature – Pastor, Grace Baptist Church

DEFINITIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

(As defined by "The National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse")

Physical Abuse:

Non-accidental injury, which may include beatings, violent shaking, human bites, strangulation, suffocation, poisoning, or burns. The results may be bruises and welts, broken bones, scars, permanent disfigurement, long-lasting psychological damage, serious internal injuries, brain damage, or death.

Neglect:

The failure to provide a child with the basic needs including food, clothing, education, shelter and medical care; also abandonment and inadequate supervision.

Sexual Abuse:

The sexual exploitation of a child by an older person as in rape, incest, fondling of the genitals, exhibitionism, or pornography. It may be done for the sexual gratification of the older person, out of a need for power, or for economic reasons.

Emotional Maltreatment:

A pattern of behavior that attacks a child's emotional development and a sense of self worth, such as constant criticizing, belittling, insulting, manipulation; also, providing no love, support, or guidance.

REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

1. Familiarize yourself with the definitions and descriptions of child abuse as listed above.
2. If you suspect that a child involved in any programs of Grace Baptist Church has been abused while in the care of church workers, at a church function, or otherwise, the following steps are to be followed:
 - ◆ Report the suspected abuse to a Pastor or deacon of the church.
 - ◆ Do not discuss the suspected abuse with the other workers, parents, etc. All information regarding the situation must be kept confidential with the church leadership and the proper authorities. The local Children's Services Board can be notified anonymously by calling (419) 227-8590.
3. An *Incident Report* must be completed in this situation and for all cases of accidental injury. These forms will be kept in First Aid kits. Confidentiality will be maintained as much as possible. This report must be completed within twenty-four (24) hours and given to the pastor in charge of education.
4. After the suspected child abuse case has been reported by a worker, proper steps will be taken to report the suspected abuse to the proper authorities.

STEPS IN RESPONDING TO A REPORTED INCIDENT

The volunteer or worker will:

- ◆ Ensure the privacy and safety of the alleged victim
- ◆ Treat the accused individual with dignity and honor
- ◆ Immediately remove the accused individual from further involvement with children and youth
- ◆ Notify the Pastor as soon as possible
- ◆ If the Pastor is not available, notification shall be made to the Chairman of the Deacon Board
- ◆ Complete an Incident Report for each incident, accidental or abusive, situation reported
- ◆ Cooperate fully with the investigation conducted by law enforcement personnel

Upon Notification, the Pastor will:

- ◆ Notify the parents of the alleged victim
- ◆ Notify each of the following:
 - ◆ The proper law enforcement agency
 - ◆ The Church's Insurance Agent
 - ◆ The Church's legal counsel
- ◆ Serve as the news media liason for the local church
- ◆ Keep a written record of each step taken, including times and dates
- ◆ Prepare a brief, carefully worded statement to the congregation regarding the situation, while withholding the names of the alleged victim and the accused
- ◆ Cooperate fully with the investigation conducted by law enforcement personnel