

Grace Baptist Church

Safe Child Policy

General

I. Goal

It shall be the goal of Grace Baptist Church to provide a safe environment for the physical and emotional well-being of all children participating in Church activities. The Church's goal is to inform workers and enforce policies to ensure that all children are safe and well protected while attending scheduled activities.

Future revisions to this policy may be made with the authorization of the Pastors and the Deacons.

II. Definition of "Children"

The term "child" or "children" shall include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

Selection and Screening Process

III. Pre-employment procedures for paid and volunteer workers

It is the goal of Grace Baptist Church (herein referred to as "The Baptist Church" or as "Church") to adequately screen the applications of persons desiring to work with children participating in all Church programs.

IV. Volunteers Must Be Members of the Church

All volunteers who work with children must first be members of Grace Baptist Church. Under certain circumstances, the Pastors and Deacons may authorize an exception to this rule for a specific planned event.

V. Classification of Workers

In order to screen workers appropriately for their responsibilities, the ministerial staff person responsible for each division will categorize workers into two categories: primary and secondary. These terms refer to the relative levels of responsibility and risk, not to the ages of the children being served.

Primary volunteer workers: Includes all paid staff members plus those volunteers in roles with greater responsibility or risk are classified as primary workers and should meet the primary screening standards. Primary volunteer workers must be twenty-one (21) years of age.

Secondary volunteer workers: Persons who occasionally interact with children and/or do so in less risky circumstances. For example: Sunday school teachers and volunteers who see children only in a group setting, on Church premises, or who interact with children in the presence of an approved primary worker are classified as secondary workers. This category may also include parents of participants who help supervise activities. All volunteer workers under the age of eighteen (18) will be considered secondary workers.

VI. Minimum Age

All primary volunteer workers must be twenty-one (21) years of age or older. Younger persons may assist adults, but may not take the place of adult workers. The Church may employ responsible teens (under the age of 18) only in positions with and under the direct supervision of an approved adult worker.

VII. Six-Month Rule

No volunteer will be allowed to work with children as a primary volunteer worker in any capacity until they have been an active and participating member of the Church for a minimum of six (6) months. The applicant must have been a regular attendee and involved in Church activities for that period of time. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

VIII. Volunteer Applications

Volunteer applicants must complete and sign an *Application for Volunteers*.

Applications will be submitted to the administration office. The minister in charge of the division in which the volunteer will work, will be responsible for the interview process and reference checks. If an applicant needs additional confidentiality they may choose to submit their application to the minister in charge of their division or directly to the Pastor.

All information received in the application selection process will be kept confidential by the Church. Such information will be stored with access afforded only to appropriate Church staff on a need-to-know basis.

If the Church learns of false, misleading or amended information on an application that could cause potential danger to children or liability to the Church, that person will be terminated.

IX. References

The minister in charge of the division in which the person will work must check and document at least three (3) references for each primary worker applicant and must conduct a reasonable inquiry into the character of secondary worker applicants. Reference may be checked by phone, mail or in person.

Whenever possible, the three (3) references should include:

- **a person who has known the applicant for an extended period;**
- **a former supervisor; and,**
- **a member of the applicant's immediate family**

Information gained in these checks should be noted directly on the application.

X. Survivors of Child Abuse

Survivors of childhood sexual or physical abuse need the love and acceptance of the Church family. Their experience with abuse and their recovery process may be pertinent to their work with children. Survivors of abuse may, if they choose, request confidential counseling either from the Pastor or from a professional counselor. It will not necessarily disqualify them from service. The desire of the Church is to assist and care for survivors of abuse as well as fulfill our obligation to protect the children left in our care.

XI. Confidential Interviews

All applicants desiring to work with children must be interviewed for suitability for the work they desire to do. The ministry leader of the program in which the applicant will work conducts interviews. Church policy concerning prevention and response to child abuse and neglect must be discussed during the interview.

XII. Criminal Background Check

A criminal background check shall be required for all children's worker positions, both employee and volunteer workers. **No one who has been convicted of a crime involving misconduct with children will be allowed to work with children.** When completing the *Application for Volunteer Workers* a request form for a background check will be required for the Church to conduct these checks; the Church will complete background checks every three years. Background checks will be kept confidential in a locked file with access afforded only to appropriate Church staff on a need-to-know basis.

The designated Church representative will conduct criminal background checks notifying the appropriate minister if a negative report is received.

XIII. Vehicle Safety

Persons who drive Grace Baptist Church owned or privately-owned vehicles for conducting Church business or transporting children on a regular basis must maintain a current valid North Carolina drivers license, provide proof of insurance in such amounts as may be required by the Church and comply with all other Church transportation policies.

XIV. Acknowledgment of Church Policies

All applicants must acknowledge in writing that they understand the Church's policies pertaining to the protection of children and that they agree to abide by them. This requirement will be met by having applicants sign the *Acknowledge of Receipt* form.

Supervisory Requirements

It is the policy of the Church to provide adequate supervisory control of all persons working with children participating in all Church programs. The following regulations shall be applicable to all primary and secondary workers having contact with children participating in all Church programs:

XV. Safety of Children

It is the responsibility of all persons having contact with children participating in Church programs to promote the emotional and physical safety of the participants giving regard to all factors and circumstances known to them. If in their opinion, an unsafe condition exists, such person shall immediately take appropriate precautions under the circumstances to protect all children. Nothing contained in any other Church policy, procedure or instruction shall be construed to relieve persons having contact with children from this responsibility.

XVI. Identification System for Church Activities

To reduce the possibility of a kidnapping, the Church will have in place an identification system so that the worker will have a list of people who have been approved to pick up the children. The ministry leader in charge shall maintain the list to identify persons authorized to pick up and take responsibility for children leaving a Church activity. The identification system will not be necessary for children above the grade of Kindergarten unless a parent specifically requests it in writing.

XVII. Two Adult Rule

It shall be the goal of Grace Baptist Church that a minimum of two (2) workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during a Church activity regardless of the number of participants, location or activity. At least one of these must be a primary worker.

Some Youth Sunday school classes may have only one adult in attendance as the teacher while the class is in session. In these instances, doors to the classrooms will be either removed or will remain open and windows may be installed for full visibility. At no time should an adult ever be in a closed room or alone with one child.

XVIII. Observation of Children

Church activities for children should be scheduled in areas visible from adjoining areas. Such visibility will be maintained by leaving curtains and blinds open and, wherever possible, by leaving the door to the room open. Reasonable exceptions to this rule may be made by the minister in charge where seclusion is necessary for rest provided two workers are present in the room at all times.

At no time will an adult meet alone with a child in any room where the door is closed or in an area where they cannot be seen.

XIX. Nursery Guidelines

The nursery will be available during regularly scheduled Church services and special Church services. The nursery is available for children Birth-3 years old and available for use by members and visitors. The expectation is to operate on a rotating schedule with two workers attending to children at all times, unless a married couple is assigned to the rotation. If a married couple is assigned, the preference is for nursery workers to work on teams, with three to a team and married couples should always work with a third person who is a non-relative.

Parents, legal guardians, caregivers are expected to pick up their children immediately after the service and adhere to the processes put in place by the nursery coordinator; children will not be allowed to leave with anyone other than the parents, legal guardians, caregivers unless prior arrangements have been made with the nursery workers. In order to minimize distractions for children being cared for in the nursery, parents, legal guardians, caregivers will be notified when a child experiences extreme distress and cannot be comforted. Only assigned workers should be in the nursery. The only exception to this would be a mother nursing her child and a parent, legal guardian, caregiver who has been called to the nursery to calm an upset child.

XX. Ratio of Workers to Children

It is required that a reasonable ratio of adults to children is maintained at all times involving the supervision of children. The ministerial staff member responsible for the division shall be primarily responsible for setting and maintaining a reasonable ratio of workers to children giving due regard to all factors present, including the number and age of the participants, the nature of the activities and the location where the activities are taking place.

XXI. Worker Training

Each new worker will be given a copy of the Grace Baptist Church's Child Protection Policy. They must sign a statement indicating they have received and read both before they can begin working with children. All children/youth workers will be expected to attend *Darkness to Light* training which will be offered on an as needed basis.

XXII. Ministerial and Staff Oversight

The ministerial staff member responsible for each division shall coordinate with the respective ministry coordinators to ensure ongoing supervision of all workers. This should include regular unannounced visits into classes and other program sites.

XXIII. Children's Pickup on Church Campus

Children are not permitted to leave the area of the Church activity at the conclusion of the scheduled activity until a parent or legal guardian arrives. If their parent or legal guardian does not pick up their child on time, the child will be kept by their teachers in the children's area where safe supervision can be continued until the parent or legal guardian is located. A child shall not be taken from or allowed to leave Church property, either unattended or in a group without specific parental permission.

XXIV. Release of Claims

Participation Consent: Prior to any activity away from the Church a consent form will be necessary to be signed by the child's parent or legal guardian. Without the form signed and in the possession of the Church, the child will not be allowed to participate in the away activity.

Photograph/Video Consent: A Parent or Legal Guardian will sign a release on the consent form for their child/children to be photographed or videotaped at Grace Baptist Church for any promotional materials or social media postings. Any parent or legal guardian who desires for their child or children not to be in photographs or videos which may be disseminated by the Church or others, must make special arrangements with Church staff or appropriate volunteers.

Reporting and Responding to Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect

XXV. Reporting Policy

It is the Policy of the Church to report any incident of child abuse or neglect toward any child in the Church.

- Do not treat any suspicion as frivolous, notify the appropriate authorities first.
- Notify your leaders immediately. Commence the investigation right away.
- The staff member in charge should suspend the accused person from the performance of duties involving children until the official investigation has been completed.
- Cooperate fully with law enforcement officials.
- The Pastor or associates will inform victim and victim's family of the steps that are being taken, and continue to keep them advised of the status of the investigation.
- If child abuse is confirmed, ask the victim and the victim's family what action they would like to take in the matter and fully cooperate to address their requests within the bounds of a legal and prudent response. (Church legal counsel should assist in this determination).
- In an instance where child abuse is confirmed, the Church will immediately dismiss the worker from their position. Termination will be considered appropriate in the circumstance.
- In instances where evidence is inconclusive, the Church should take action with the advice of legal counsel in consultation with law enforcement officials depending on the strength of the evidence available and after consideration of the victim and the victim's family requests.
- The Pastor, in consultation with legal counsel, will determine the amount of information he believes is appropriate to relate to the congregation. Usually commenting in detail on an ongoing investigation is not wise.
- The Pastor or his associates, will notify the Church's insurance agent that an abuse report has been filed with the appropriate local or state agency.

XXVI. Reporting Obligation

By North Carolina law, anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that a child is being physically abused, sexually abused, and/or neglected is required to report this information to the appropriate authorities.

XXVII. Reports Required

Any worker of the Church who has cause to believe that a child's physical or emotional health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect, shall report that belief according to the following procedures:

- A. In addition to the legal requirement that the worker report such abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities, the worker shall also report such belief to one of Pastors.
- B. The Pastor or his associates will work with the local law enforcement agency.
- C. The Pastor or his associates, will notify the parents of the child (unless the parent is the person responsible for the abuse or neglect).
- D. The Pastor or his associates, in consultation with the Deacons will notify the appropriate legal counsel.
- E. The Pastor or his associates, will notify the Church's insurance agent that an abuse report has been filed with the appropriate local or state agency

XXVIII. Confidentiality

All reports of child abuse or neglect shall be held in absolute confidence. No person shall communicate any information concerning the alleged event to any person except as necessary to cooperate with any official investigation. Any breach of this confidentiality by an employee of the Church shall be cause for immediate dismissal. The Pastor, in consultation with the official conducting the investigation, may authorize limited additional disclosure if necessary to protect other children from harm in the near future, particularly where the person responsible for the abuse cannot be identified. In no case shall the identity of the victim or the accused person be disclosed except as required by law.

XXIX. Investigation of Alleged Abuse or Neglect

No person shall attempt to conduct a detailed investigation either through examination or interrogation of the child, the accused person, or a witness. It is acceptable to obtain a reasonable amount of information to have cause to believe a child has been abused or neglected. Interviews shall be conducted only by authorized officials of the agency to who the suspected crime has been reported or, when appropriate, by legal counsel or persons representing the Church in an official capacity. All employees and volunteers of the Church shall cooperate with the official investigation as requested.

XXX. Suspension of Church Related Duties

A person accused of child abuse or neglect will be suspended from all Church related duties involving children. This would include all childcare, teaching, and transportation duties. The person accused should be suspended on 'paid leave' until the investigation is completed. This removal from duty occur in such a way that an innocent person is not immediately deemed guilty. There are false claims made each year. If the allegation is determined to be unsubstantiated, the employee can be returned to their prior position.

XXXI. Preservation of Records

Copies of all documents relating to an event of abuse or neglect, including a list of all persons known to be present or in the vicinity shall be transferred to the Pastor or associates. They will review them to determine if the documents are complete in accordance with Church policy.

XXXII. Ministerial Care

The ministerial staff shall encourage and assist the child and the parents in securing appropriate counseling, care and support. In the event the abuse or neglect involves a member or employee of the Church, the staff shall encourage and assist the individual in securing appropriate Pastoral care and support, including third party counseling, being mindful of the potential for a conflict of interest. All persons shall act towards the child, the parents and the accused, in accordance with the principles of Christianity at all times.

XXXIII. Liaison with the Community

The Pastor, or his associates, will serve as the Church's sole access to the media. The Church should emphasize to the public its position on child abuse, its concern for the victim and the extensive steps being taken to address the safety of all children.

Acknowledgment of Receipt of the Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect Booklet and the Child Protection Policy Statement

I have been given a copy of Grace Baptist Church's Child Protection Policy.

I have read and understood the documents. I understand that my services as an employee of Grace Baptist Church or as a volunteer worker who works with children at Grace Baptist Church is dependent on my strict adherence to these policies.

NAME (please print) _____

Signature _____

Witness _____

Date _____

Application for Volunteer Workers

This application is to be completed by all applicants for positions involving the supervising or custody of children. It will assist Grace Baptist Church in providing a safe and secure environment for all preschoolers, children and youth.

The term "child" or "children" includes all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

Date_____

Full Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip Code_____

Home Phone_____ Cell Phone_____ Business Phone_____

Driver's License #_____ State_____ Expiration Date_____

Birthdate_____ Social Security #_____

Position applying for_____

Date you would be available_____ Days of the week available_____

When did you make your profession of faith in Christ? When baptized?

Are you a member of this Church? Yes_____ No_____

List the names and locations of other Churches you have attended regularly within the last 10 years

Please list the names of three (3) other members of the Church who know you:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

List the names and addresses and phone numbers of three (3) personal references:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Youth (K – 5th Grades) Parental Consent Form

Please print:

Date _____

Child's Name _____ Age _____ Birthdate _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

School _____ Current grade in _____

Name of Parent(s) or Legal Guardian(s) _____

Parent(s) or Legal Guardian(s) business phones _____

Parent(s) or Legal Guardian(s) cell phones _____

I hereby affirm that my child shall be participating in the Church sponsored activities and certify that I am cognizant of the inherent dangers associated with participation in the 2019 Church sponsored activities. And with the fact that participating in the Church activities may take place outside of, or off of, Church premises. I hereby give permission for our (my) child to ride in any vehicle designated by Grace Baptist Church or its designated volunteers.

I understand and agree that neither **Grace Baptist Church**, nor its trustees, representatives, instructors or agents may be held liable in any way for any occurrence in connection with my child's participation in Church activities which may result in injury, harm or other damages to my child, myself or my family. As a part of the consideration for being allowed to enroll and participate in the Church activities, I hereby personally assume all risks in connection with my child's participation in and transportation to and from any activity. I further release **Grace Baptist Church**, its trustees, instructors, agents and representatives for any injury or damage which may befall my child while my child is enrolled in or participating in and transportation to and from any Church activity. I further agree to save and hold harmless **Grace Baptist Church**, its trustees, instructors, agents and representatives from any claim by me or my family, estate, heirs or assigns arising out of my child's enrollment and participation in and the transportation to and from any Church activity. I also authorize **Grace Baptist Church** to render or obtain such emergency medical care or treatment as may be necessary should any injury, harm or accident occur to my child while participating in any Church activity.

I understand that as a participant, my child may be photographed or videotaped during normal Church event activities and these photos/videos may be used for promotional materials or social media posts. **Note: Any parent or legal guardian who desires for their child or children not to be in photographs or videos which may be disseminated by the Church or others, must make special arrangements with Church staff or appropriate volunteers.**

Health Insurance Yes _____ No _____ Policyholder _____

Health Insurance Company _____ Policy Number _____

Please list any of the following:

Allergies _____

Special Medical Problems _____

Other Information Needed _____

I further state that I am of lawful age and legally competent to sign this affirmation and release; that I understand the terms herein are contractual and not a mere recital; and that I signed this document of my own free act and volition. I further state and acknowledge that I have fully informed myself of the contents of this affirmation and release by reading it before I have signed it.

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian _____ Date _____

State of North Carolina County of _____ This _____ day of _____, 2019.

I certify that the following person(s) appeared before me this day and acknowledged to me that he/she signed the foregoing document: _____.

Notary Public

(Official Seal)

My Commission Expires: _____

Children (6-12th Grades) Parental Consent Form

Please Print:

Date_____

Child's Name_____ Age_____ Birthdate_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip Code_____

Name of Parent(s) or Legal Guardian(s)_____

Parent(s) or Legal Guardian(s) business phone_____

Parent(s) or Legal Guardian(s) Cell Phone_____

School_____ Current grade in_____

I hereby affirm that my child shall be participating in the Church sponsored activities and certify that I am cognizant of the inherent dangers associated with participation in the 2019 Church sponsored activities and with the fact that participating in the Church activities may take place outside of, or off of, Church premises. I hereby give permission for our (my) child to ride in any vehicle designated by Grace Baptist Church or its designated volunteers.

I understand and agree that neither **Grace Baptist Church**, nor its trustees, representatives, instructors, or agents may be held liable in any way for any occurrence in connection with my child's participation in Church activities which may result in injury, harm or other damages to my child, myself or my family. As a part of the consideration for being allowed to enroll and participate in the Church activities, I hereby personally assume all risks in connection with my child's participation in and the transportation to and from any Church activity. I further release **Grace Baptist Church**, its trustees, instructors, agents and representative for any injury or damage which may befall my child while my child is enrolled in or participating in and the transportation to and from any Church activity. I further agree to save and hold harmless **Grace Baptist Church**, its trustees, instructors, agents and representatives from any claim by me or my family, estate, heirs, or assigns arising out of my child's enrollment and participation in and the transportation to and from any Church activity. I also authorize **Grace Baptist Church** to render or obtain such emergency medical care or treatment as may be necessary should any injury, harm or accident occur to my child while participating in any Church activity.

I understand that as a participant, my child may be photographed or videotaped during normal Church event activities and these photos/videos may be used for promotional materials or social media posts. **Note: Any parent or legal guardian who desires for their child or children not to be in photographs or videos which may be disseminated by the Church or others, must make special arrangements with Church staff or appropriate volunteers.**

Health Insurance Yes_____ No_____ Policyholder_____

Health Insurance Company_____ Policy Number_____

Please list any of the following:

Allergies _____

Special Medical Problems _____

Other information needed _____

I further state that I am of lawful age and legally competent to sign this affirmation and release; that I understand the terms herein are contractual and not a mere recital; and that I signed this document of my own free act and volition. I further state and acknowledge that I have fully informed myself of the contents of this affirmation and release by reading it before I have signed it.

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian _____ Date _____

I certify that the following person(s) appeared before me this day and acknowledged to me that he/she signed the foregoing document: _____.

State of North Carolina County of _____ This _____ day of _____, 2019.

(Official Seal)

Notary Public

My Commission Expires: _____