

POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR MINISTRY WORKERS

Watts Street Baptist Church

Approved on February 22, 2015

POLICY STATEMENT

Watts Street Baptist Church has always operated in an atmosphere of trust. This document provides structure to the exercise of that trust in our ministry to our children and youth. To provide as safe and secure an environment as possible for our children and youth and their Caregivers, the following procedures apply to the conduct of the Watts Street Baptist Church Children's and Youth Ministries.

PROCEDURES

I. DEFINITIONS

1. "Abuse" means any non-accidental injury; any sexual activity or sexual exploitation, including but not limited to molestation; and neglectful treatment or maltreatment that harms the health, welfare, or safety of a child or youth within the church community.
2. "Approved Volunteer" means a person approved to work as a Caregiver in activities sponsored by the church for youth or children.
3. "Approved Youth Volunteer" means a person under 18 who is approved to work in activities sponsored by the church for children.
4. "Caregiver" means any employee of the church or Approved Volunteer who is working in an activity sponsored by the church for youth or children.
5. "Child" means those persons who are eligible for and participating in church programs for anyone from birth through fifth grade.
6. "Children's Minister" means the Minister with Children and their Families.
7. "Review Committee" means a committee of up to three persons appointed by the Church Council, as needed, to advise the Children's Minister and Youth Minister regarding a particular Approved Volunteer or volunteer candidate if concern arises. The appointment shall last as long as necessary to resolve any issues associated with the Approved Volunteer or volunteer candidate to the satisfaction of the Review Committee.
8. "Youth" means those persons who are eligible for and participating in church programs for anyone in the sixth through twelfth grades.
9. "Youth Minister" means the Minister with Youth and their Families.

II. VOLUNTEER SCREENING PROCEDURES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH MINISTRY

1. To become an Approved Volunteer with children or youth, a volunteer candidate will attend a mandatory training and submit a ministry application.

2. The Children's Minister and/or the Youth Minister will review the ministry application to ensure that the applicant is qualified and suited to work in the church's children's and youth ministry. Upon request of the Children's Minister or the Youth Minister, the applications may be reviewed by any persons authorized to review background check information pursuant to Paragraph 5(d) of this section.
3. The reviewer may check the applicant's references to confirm the information in the application and to inquire about the applicant's experience that is relevant to the determination of the applicant's suitability to work with children and youth in the church's ministry.
4. A background check will be performed for all applicants through a private provider of record check services or a state law enforcement agency.
5. Evaluation of applicants:
 - a. If the review process or background check reveals any credible information that an applicant poses a threat of abuse to children, youth or any adult working in the children's or youth ministry, the Children's Minister or Youth Minister will remove the applicant from consideration.
 - b. Any information indicating that an applicant has any prior history of abuse directed against another person will create a strong presumption that the person should be removed from consideration, but if the circumstances of the incidents reflected in the information suggest that the abusive behavior has been adequately addressed or was too remote in time to be relevant to the decision to remove the applicant, that person may nonetheless be approved as a volunteer.
 - c. The Children's Minister or Youth Minister will also remove an applicant from consideration if the review process or background check reveals problems that do not involve abuse but indicate that the applicant is otherwise not qualified or is not suited to work with children and/or youth in the church's ministry.
 - d. In the process of evaluating an applicant, the Children's Minister or Youth Minister may consult with the Senior Minister and/or a Review Committee appointed for that purpose.
6. The Children's Minister or Youth Minister may approve youth to work in children's ministries, using procedures they deem to be appropriate to make that decision. To become an Approved Youth Volunteer, a youth must be screened, but no background check is required.
7. The Children's Minister and Youth Minister will develop and implement a mandatory training program to ensure that new Approved Volunteers and Approved Youth Volunteers understand and are able to apply these procedures and any other procedures they determine to be necessary to orient the volunteer to the church's ministry.

III. EMPLOYEE SCREENING PROCEDURES

1. The relevant hiring authorities will screen any potential employees of the church using procedures at least as comprehensive as the procedures applicable to volunteers.

2. A background check will be performed for all potential employees through a private provider of record check service or a state law enforcement agency.
3. If the screening process or background check reveals any credible information that the applicant poses a threat of abuse to children, youth or others in the church, or has a history of abuse directed against another person, the hiring authority will remove the applicant from consideration for employment with the church.

IV. CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION

1. Background check information and information contained in the application will be kept in a confidential location and may not be revealed to any unauthorized person. Authorized persons are the volunteer candidate, the Children's Minister, the Youth Minister, the Senior Minister, and anyone appointed by the Church Council to serve on a Review Committee. Background check information and information contained in the application will also be disclosed in any situation where disclosure is required by law.
2. Members of a Review Committee shall only be authorized to access background check information and application information associated with the particular volunteer candidate or Approved Volunteer for which they have been appointed.

V. WAITING PERIOD

No Approved Volunteer may serve in a primary position of responsibility involving contact with children or youth, including working as one of the Caregivers identified in Section VI, paragraph 1, until the candidate has been regularly involved in the church for six months. However, an Approved Volunteers may participate in children's or youth ministries in another capacity before this six month waiting period is observed. There is no waiting period applicable to the other ministries of the church.

VI. SUPERVISION

1. Except for the exceptions listed in this paragraph, at least two Caregivers will be present at every function, and in each classroom, vehicle, or other enclosed area, during children or youth ministry activities. Under ordinary circumstances, the two Caregivers should not be spouses or from the same family unless a third unrelated Caregiver is present, but the Children's Minister and Youth Minister may approve exceptions under special circumstances. A single adult Caregiver may supervise children or youth during brief periods when the second adult Caregiver is required to leave the area to accomplish a ministry-related purpose (for example, to accompany a child to the restroom, or to obtain cleaning supplies to address a problem in the classroom). A single adult Caregiver may supervise small group youth meetings held in an openly visible space; however there will also be another adult Caregiver serving as a floater between the small groups. A single adult Caregiver may provide supervision in a vehicle when the Caregiver is transporting a group of children in a caravan in which there are multiple children in each vehicle and the adult drivers are aware of the location of other drivers in caravan. When necessary for pastoral or disciplinary counseling, a Caregiver may meet alone briefly with a child or youth group member.

2. Caregivers become responsible when the scheduled activity begins. Until then, parents or guardians are responsible for their children. Caregivers remain responsible until the children or youth have been picked up by a parent, guardian, or a person authorized by a parent or guardian to pick up the child or youth. Children in third grade or above and youth may be released without a parent or guardian present, if such a release has been approved by a parent or guardian; however, Caregivers will not leave a child or youth alone or unsupervised at the church after scheduled activities have ended.
3. Parents are responsible for their children when at church and the children are not in a scheduled activity. Caregivers are not responsible for children or youth when the children or youth are present at church for programs or ministries for which no formal activities are planned for children or youth. During those times, the supervision of the children or youth is the responsibility of the parents or guardians.
4. For children under eleven, a Caregiver will accompany children to the restroom as needed. The Caregiver will ensure that the facility and hallway to the restroom is safe, and be responsible for children returning from the restroom. A Caregiver may assist any child under six in the restroom. No Caregiver may touch a person's private areas unless necessary to change a diaper or take any other therapeutic measure.
5. Caregivers will avoid any improper and unwelcomed touching of children or youth, and should be particularly sensitive to the age of the children or youth with whom they interact.

VII. DISCIPLINE

1. Caregivers may not spank, hit, , shake, or otherwise engage in corporal punishment.
2. Caregivers will report significant disciplinary problems to the Children's Minister or Youth Minister.

VIII. INJURIES OR ILLNESS

1. Caregivers who are seriously ill may not participate in any ministry activity while the disease may be transmitted.
2. If a Caregiver determines that a child or youth has a serious or communicable illness, the child or youth will be returned to his or her parent or guardian as soon as feasible. If this is not possible, then the ill person will be separated in a manner that will allow supervision to continue until the parent or guardian can assume responsibility for the child or youth.
3. All persons supervising children or youth are expected to take reasonable steps to prevent any person involved in the ministry from coming into contact with any body fluids.
4. If a child or youth receives an injury that does not require medical treatment beyond simple first aid, the Caregiver should provide first aid as needed at the time of injury. The Caregiver should notify the parent or guardian of the injured child or youth.
5. If a child or youth receives an injury that requires medical treatment beyond simple first aid, the Caregiver should provide immediate attention to the injured child or youth. The Caregiver will also notify the Children's Minister or Youth Minister as soon as possible,

and if appropriate, should seek emergency medical assistance or an ambulance. The Children's Minister or Youth Minister shall notify the parent or guardian of the injured child or youth as soon as possible. The Children's Minister or Youth Minister shall also prepare a report as stated in Section IX, Paragraph 2 below.

6. The Children's Minister and Youth Minister will ensure that any injury which requires medical treatment beyond simple first aid is reported to the church's insurance carrier.

IX. RECORD-KEEPING

1. At every function of the children's and youth ministry, a Caregiver will keep a record of the date of the function, and the names of all participants and volunteers.
2. If an injury that requires medical treatment beyond simple first aid occurs during a ministry function, the Children's Minister or Youth Minister will work with a Caregiver who was present at the time of the injury to prepare a written incident/notice of injury report.

X. ABUSE OR VIOLATIONS OF THIS POLICY

1. Any person who becomes aware, has reason to believe, or suspects that a child is being abused or neglected should take whatever steps that person's conscience dictates. Under North Carolina law, any person who has cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused or neglected, or has died as the result of maltreatment, must report it to the Director of the Department of Social Services in the county where the juvenile resides or is found. The following paragraphs are not intended to restrict the actions taken by a Caregiver but to set out the steps Watts Street Baptist Church will take to evaluate allegations of abuse against Caregivers.
2. Caregivers who become aware of any allegation that any other Caregiver has abused a child or a youth, regardless of whether the allegation relates to a ministry function, will immediately inform the Children's Minister or Youth Minister of the allegation.
3. Treatment of Allegations of Abuse:
 - a. Notice to Parent or Guardian. If the allegation is of abuse of a child or youth participating in a ministry function, the Children's Minister or Youth Minister who becomes aware of an allegation of abuse will ensure that the participant's parent or guardian is immediately informed of the allegation.
 - b. Internal Review.
 - i. The Church Staff will promptly conduct a preliminary review of any allegation of abuse to determine if there is a reasonable basis for the allegation. Documentation of each allegation will be maintained by the Children's Minister or Youth Minister. During the preliminary review, the Church Staff may consult with a Review Committee appointed for that purpose.
 - ii. If there is a reasonable basis for the allegation, the Church Staff will refer the matter to the appropriate investigative authority or authorities and will comply with any legal requirements.

- iii. If the allegation involves abuse by an employee of the church, and there is a reasonable basis for the allegation, the employee will be immediately suspended from employment, pending completion of the review or investigation. If termination of an employee is ultimately determined to be the appropriate remedy, the personnel policies and church bylaws will be followed in pursuing that remedy.
- iv. If the allegation involves abuse by a Caregiver, and there is a reasonable basis for the allegation, the Caregiver will be immediately prohibited from participating in children's and youth activities until the review or investigation is completed.
- v. Any person who is found not to be responsible for the act of alleged abuse may be reinstated if the Church Staff determine that the best interests of the ministry are served by the reinstatement.
- vi. All matters related to each internal review will remain confidential in accordance with this policy and its provisions for limited access to information by the individuals identified in Section IV above, unless an external investigating agency requests access the information.
- vii. The Children's Minister and Youth Minister will develop training materials to ensure that Caregivers are informed about how to respond to allegations of abuse.

c. External Communication.

- i. If the Church Staff determine that there is a reasonable basis for an allegation pursuant to Section X, Paragraph 3. b. i. above, the Staff will refer the allegation to the Department of Social Services and/or appropriate law enforcement authority. That decision will be made without unnecessary delay. The Staff may consult an attorney for assistance in deciding whether or where to refer an allegation, but that consultation will be done in a manner that minimizes any delay in referring an allegation. Material that the church otherwise treats as confidential may be revealed to an attorney consulted by the church.
- ii. All Church Staff will cooperate fully with any law enforcement or governmental agency that may be investigating allegations of abuse in connection with activities of the church. Material that the church otherwise treats as confidential may be revealed to the external agency if requested to do so by the agency.
- iii. A single church leader, designated by the Church Council, will be designated as spokesperson following notice of any abuse in connection with activities of the ministry. This spokesperson will be the only person to convey information concerning the situation to external audiences, and, to avoid compromising any ongoing investigation, will convey only such information as is necessary under the circumstances.

- 4. Anytime the Children's Minister or Youth Minister becomes aware of a violation of the policy or procedures, he or she will take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance

with the policy and procedures. Documentation of each allegation of violations of this policy should be maintained by the Children's Minister or Youth Minister. The Children's Minister or Youth Minister may remove Caregivers as warranted based on violations of the policy or procedures or other information indicating that the Caregiver is not qualified and suited to work in the church's children's and youth ministry. In carrying out this paragraph, the Children's Minister or Youth Minister may consult with a Review Committee appointed for that purpose.

5. The Children's Minister and Youth Minister will ensure that any incidents of abuse and allegations of abuse that have a reasonable basis are reported to the church's insurance carrier.

XI. PERIODIC VOLUNTEER REVIEW

A new background check will be performed for each Approved Volunteer no more than five years after the prior background check, on a schedule determined by the Children's Minister and Youth Minister. The Children's Minister and/or Youth Minister may, at their discretion, ask Approved Volunteers to submit a renewal application.

XII. REVISION OF POLICY/PROCEDURES

The Policy and Procedures will be reviewed regularly by the Church Council or those committees designated by the Church Council. They may be modified by the Church Council, and any modifications will be publicized in a manner to provide notice to the entire congregation of the church.