

Child Protection and Abuse Prevention Policies

Children's Ministry of Sugar Creek Baptist Church

Overview of Child Protection and Abuse Prevention Policies

Because we value children and desire to protect them, Sugar Creek Baptist Church requires all staff members and volunteers working with minors (and other vulnerable populations) to complete three Safety Steps before ministry placement or volunteer placement begin.

STEP ONE: Screening Process.

Staff members and volunteers are required to complete the Sugar Creek Baptist Church Screening Process, which requires a staff member or volunteer to:

- Complete an Employment Application (employees only) OR
- Complete a Ministry Application (volunteers only)
- Complete a personal interview (employees and volunteers)
- Provide references to be checked (employees and volunteers). Institutional references are preferred over individual references.
- Attend/participate in Sugar Creek Baptist Church ministries for a period of six months before serving in positions providing access to minors OR provide a minimum of two references from a previous church (volunteers only)

STEP TWO: Criminal Background Check.

Sugar Creek Baptist Church requires that all staff members as well as volunteers who work with minors undergo a criminal background check. Criminal background checks should be repeated every two years.

STEP THREE: Policies and Procedures.

All volunteers with children are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

Policies and Procedures Regarding Selection of Workers

In addition to complying with the screening procedures, volunteers in Childrens Ministry at SCBC must meet the following qualifications:

- Be a born-again believer in Jesus Christ
- Be a growing disciple of the Lord Jesus
- Be regular in attendance at training events
- Be regular in attendance at weekly worship services
- Be at least 14 years of age
- Must not have been convicted of or ever entered a plea of guilty or nolo contendere to a crime involving a child, including, but not limited to, sexual abuse, physical abuse, or neglect.

Policies Regarding Child Abuse

Sugar Creek Baptist Church supports and maintains a zero tolerance against child abuse and neglect. Child abuse and neglect include physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment, or maltreatment. Sexual abuse is defined as the use, persuasion, or coercion of any child to engage in any sexually explicit conduct (or any simulation of such conduct) for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct or rape, molestation, prostitution, or incest with children.

It is against the law and against the policies of Sugar Creek Baptist Church for any volunteer or employed staff, male or female, to physically, sexually, or mentally abuse or neglect any child.

Sugar Creek Baptist Church will neither condone nor tolerate:

- Infliction of bodily injury upon any child or physically or sexually abusive behavior towards a child.
- Physical neglect of children, including failure to provide adequate safety measures, care, and supervision in relation to church activities.
- Emotional mistreatment of children, including verbal abuse and/or verbal attacks.

Sugar Creek Baptist Church Children's Ministry staff members have been trained to recognize behaviors intended to "groom" children for sexual abuse. These behaviors will be immediately investigated and reported to the appropriate authorities.

In the event that staff or volunteers observe any inappropriate behavior (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is their responsibility to immediately report their observations to their immediate supervisor, the Minister to Children, or the Pastor of Administration.

Policies & Procedures Regarding Reporting and Responding

The focus of Sugar Creek Baptist Church Children's Ministry will be on the prevention of any type of child abuse. However, in the event of any questionable or inappropriate activity involving a child, it is our policy to deal with that situation immediately and forthrightly, following these guidelines:

- 1) *Any* violation of these policies, questionable behavior toward a child, or observed indicators of abuse should be immediately reported to the Children's Minister.
- 2) The Children's Minister will inform the Administrative Pastor.
- 3) The Administrative Pastor and the Children's Minister will investigate the situation, with every consideration for privacy and confidentiality.
- 4) The incident and all efforts to deal with it should be thoroughly documented in writing.
- 5) If appropriate the Children's Minister or the Administrative Pastor will inform the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (1-800-252-3400) or Child Protective Services (817-321-8680).

In the event of an actual allegation of abuse:

- 1) The incident should be immediately reported to the Children's Minister.
- 2) The Children's Minister will report the allegation to the Administrative Pastor.
- 3) The incident will be immediately reported to the church insurance company and the church attorney.
- 4) Following the guidance of the church attorney, civil authorities will be notified. The Texas Family Code stipulates that all allegations of child abuse *must* be reported. Failure to do so is a misdemeanor. Contact may be made

through the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (1-800-252-3400) or Child Protective Services (817-321-8680).

- 5) The parents of the child will be notified by the Children's Minister, Administrative Pastor and/or the Lead Pastor.
- 6) The safety of the child will be secured before the accused is confronted.
- 7) Every effort will be made to minister to and relieve the pain of the victim and the victim's family.
- 8) The accused will be treated with dignity and support. If the accused is a volunteer at Sugar Creek Baptist Church, that person will be temporarily relieved of his or her duties until the investigation is finished. If the accused is a paid employee of Sugar Creek Baptist Church, that person will also be relieved of his or her duties until the allegations are cleared or substantiated. The Children's Minister and/or Pastor of Administration will make the decision whether to maintain or suspend the employee's income for the duration of the investigation.
- 9) One spokesperson will be designated to represent Sugar Creek Baptist Church to the congregation, the media, and the public at large. All other persons involved should refer questions to this spokesperson. The privacy and confidentiality of all parties should be safeguarded without fail.

Policies and Procedures Regarding Supervision

It is the policy of Sugar Creek Baptist Church Children's Ministry to exercise reasonable care in the supervision of church workers, both volunteer and compensated, for all church activities. Therefore we adhere to the following:

- A minimum of two non-related supervisors will be present with any group of children during any church related activity.
- The following ratios are the preferred supervisor: child ratios. Sugar Creek Baptist Church Children's Ministry strives to maintain these ratios at all times. If a classroom supervisor is "out of ratio" he/she is responsible to notify the program coordinator or Children's Ministry staff person. Diligent efforts will be made to immediately bring ratios into compliance with this policy.
 - Infants – 1:2
 - Toddlers – 1:3
 - Twos and Threes – 1:4-5
 - Fours and Fives – 1:5-6
 - 1st – 3rd Grade – 1:6-8
 - 4th – 5th Grade – 1:8-10
- An identification security system will be used for all children left with Sugar Creek Baptist Church personnel. Adults will check children in and receive a security tag along with a name tag for the child. The child can only be picked up when the matching security tag is presented by a person age 14 or older. The security numbers are randomly assigned each week. When computer check-in is not available, a manual system will be substituted.
- There will be easy visibility in all children's classrooms. Windows will be installed on classroom doors when feasible. When windows are not feasible, doors will be left open.
- There will be adequate supervision by church leadership. The Children's Minister and other staff members of volunteer leaders designated by the Children's Minister will make random visits to all classrooms and frequently visit or inspect any areas of the Sugar Creek Baptist Church campus that might be isolated from view.
- Supervision of children will be maintained before and after all church activities until all children are in the custody of their parents or guardians.

Policies and Procedures Regarding Protection

It is the policy of Sugar Creek Baptist Church Children's Ministry to take reasonable precautions for the protection of children and ministry staff and volunteers. Therefore we adhere to the following:

- No volunteer or staff member should have one-to-one communication with a child outside of church, whether by telephone, email, text, or other forms of communication. All such outside contacts should also involve the parent or guardian of the child.
- Sugar Creek Baptist Church will not condone any unauthorized ministry event involving children. All church events involving children should be approved by and authorized in advance through the appropriate staff department.
- All transportation of children to off-campus events must be in church approved vehicles, such as chartered buses or vans. Otherwise, the parents of each child are responsible for his or her transportation. Chartered vehicles must be chartered from a reputable transportation company. Vans are limited to nine passenger vans, and all occupants must wear seat belts at all times.
- Games and physical activities that are unsafe and create a reasonable risk of personal injuries to children cannot be tolerated. Games and physical activities must be approved in advance by the Children's Ministry staff.
- Volunteers should refrain from singling out individual children to receive gifts. When treats or gifts are given, the gifts should be for each child in a group.
- No oral medication may be given to a child by a staff member or volunteer. An epinephrine autoinjector may be used by a trained staff member or volunteer when there is prior written permission from a parent on file along with a doctor's prescription.
- Volunteers should provide restroom assistance to a child only if the child is preschool age or younger or has special needs requiring assistance.
 - Where restrooms are located between classrooms, one volunteer may provide assistance for a child preschool age or younger as long as the door is open or there is visibility into the restroom.
 - Volunteers should accompany older children to hallway restrooms, check the restroom before a child enters, and wait outside for the child.
- Physical contact is part of a positive, nurturing environment. However, physical contact in any form should be above reproach. The following are actions a volunteer should never take:
 - Never touch a child in anger or disgust
 - Never touch a child in any manner that may be construed as sexually suggestive
 - Never touch a child's private parts (with the exception of diapering procedures)
 - Never force physical contact on a reluctant child
- The Children's Ministry staff is responsible for documenting participants in all church or church-related activities.