

CHILD & WORKER PROTECTION POLICY

Summit Woods Baptist Church Lee's Summit, MO

Summit Woods Baptist Church desires to be a safe place for all children and adults who attend any activity. Each year children are victimized by individuals they know and trust. The church is not immune to the potential for such abuse or neglect of children, either by its members or by those in leadership positions. Incidents of child abuse or neglect cut across every racial, social, economic, and religious boundary. This *Child & Worker Protection Policy* reflects Summit Woods Baptist Church's commitment to protect children from harm. The policy applies to all volunteer and compensated workers of Summit Woods Baptist Church.

Summit Woods Baptist Church will not tolerate child abuse or neglect. Your cooperation in this policy not only reflects your concern about children's safety in this society, but also your willingness to take steps toward halting child abuse and its detrimental effects.

For the safety and protection of our children and workers, all people who participate in church-sponsored activities with children will be required to comply with this policy.

APPROPRIATE TOUCH

"Good touch" is important to each of us. Children do not grow and thrive without the good touch of others. Touch was important to Jesus as he healed people and comforted them. Our Christian tradition shares love with each other through hugs, placing an arm around another's shoulder or squeezing a hand to say, "You are loved."

It is imperative that the Christian community not lose the importance of "good touch." We need to continue to express Christian love in appropriate ways with children. To a child who is upset, a warm hug and kind word can be most comforting. In the midst of our caution, let us not forget that good touch is just that – *good!*

DEFINITIONS

In this policy the following definitions will apply:

- A. **Child:** Any person under the age of 18.
- B. **Special Needs Person:** Any adult or child requiring direct adult supervision as a result of mental or physical limitations.
- C. **Adult:** Any person age 18 and over.
- D. **Child abuse and neglect:** Physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or neglect of a child by an adult or adolescent caregiver responsible for the child's welfare.
- E. **Physical abuse:** Maltreatment which results in physical injury, including but not limited to bruises, cuts, welts, fractures, and internal injuries. This definition does not imply that all events resulting in physical injury is physical abuse.
- F. **Emotional abuse:** Maltreatment which results in impaired psychological growth and development, including, but not limited to, belittling, rejection, constant unequal treatment, verbal assaults, excessive demands on child's performance, and isolation from normal social activities.
- G. **Sexual abuse:** Maltreatment which consists of sexual contact or interactions with a child, including, but not limited to, physical contact (fondling, genital/oral stimulation, sexual intercourse) and non-physical contact (exhibitionism, child prostitution, pornography, and voyeurism).
- H. **Neglect:** Failure or inattention on the part of the caregiver to provide for a child's basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and supervision. This is not a strict standard but one of a reasonable person under the circumstances.
- I. **Compensated workers:** Hourly, salaried, part-time, or full-time employees who work with children at any church-sponsored activity.
- J. **Volunteer workers:** Any non-compensated individual who works with children at any church-sponsored activity.
- K. **Caregiver:** Any compensated, volunteer or temporary worker, seventh grade or older.
- L. **Mandated reporter:** Any person with responsibility for the care of children is a mandated reporter. Missouri law states that if a caregiver has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect, or observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances which would reasonably result in abuse or neglect, that person shall immediately report or cause a report to be made to the Division of Family Services.

- M. **Temporary Worker:** Any worker enlisted on a temporary basis to assist any compensated or voluntary worker in discharge of their duties and responsibilities.

SCREENING FOR VOLUNTEER AND COMPENSATED WORKERS

The following procedures reflect our commitment to provide protective care for all children and caregivers who participate in church-sponsored activities.

1. Volunteer workers must be members of Summit Woods Baptist Church for at least one year. Any caregiver must be members or regular attendees of Summit Woods Baptist Church for at least three months.
2. All volunteer and compensated workers must complete the following procedures before participating in any church-sponsored children's or special needs activity.
 - A. All volunteer and compensated workers must complete an application and background check form. References, if asked for, will be checked.
 - B. An interview will be conducted.
 - C. Applicants must sign a written acknowledgement stating they have received and reviewed a copy of the *Summit Woods Baptist Church Child & Worker Protection Policy*.
3. Any adult member of the congregation, volunteer, or compensated worker who has been convicted of a misdemeanor or higher crime against a child or a misdemeanor or higher crime against another adult, shall not provide service in any church-sponsored activity or program for children or special needs persons.

*Those who have been convicted of either sexual or physical abuse can be forgiven for, and cleansed of their sin. However, sin does have consequences and while such persons may serve in certain other areas of ministry at Summit Woods Baptist Church, they will be prohibited from serving in the children's and special needs ministries.
4. All volunteer and compensated workers shall be screened by a background check for the purpose of obtaining information regarding criminal history or abuse findings.
5. This application and the results of any screening shall be kept confidential by authorized church staff.

GENERAL POLICIES FOR SUPERVISION OF CAREGIVERS

Preschool Ministry (Birth – Kindergarten)

1. Caregivers shall not engage in any form of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect.
2. Every effort will be made to maintain a minimum of two caregivers (one being an adult) with each group regardless of how few children are in attendance. If only one caregiver it will be an adult.
3. The windows of classroom doors shall remain uncovered to allow a clear view of classroom activities.
4. When possible, children are to be encouraged to take care of their own bathroom needs. Should assistance be required, another adult should be present or the outer bathroom door must remain ajar while the caregiver assists the child.
5. Children shall be released to parents or guardians at the reception counters or door. Parents or guardians must sign their name to pick up his or her child. Persons other than the child's parents or guardians must be authorized to pick up the child.
6. When children are taken out of the room (playground, etc.), the caregivers shall take a count of the children upon leaving and upon return, to ensure all are present.
7. A positive approach to discipline shall be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits will be established to help the children function appropriately.
8. The Director of Children's Ministry must approve any preschool activities that are held off site. Parent or guardian permission shall be obtained and there shall be a minimum of two adult caregivers present.

Children's Ministry (First Grade – Sixth Grade)

1. Caregivers shall not engage in any form of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect.
2. Every effort will be made to have a minimum of two adults working together with children. In a Bible Study or similar teaching environment, it is acceptable to have individual classes/groups with only one adult caregiver provided the department/group leaders are present in the general area. This protects the children and the adults, as well as providing a safer situation in the event of an accident or emergency.

3. The windows of classroom doors shall remain uncovered to allow a clear view of classroom activities.
4. Children shall take care of their own bathroom needs. No assistance should be provided by caregivers.
5. A positive approach to discipline will be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits shall be established to help the children function appropriately.
6. The Director of Children's Ministry must approve any children's activities that are held off site. Parent or guardian permission shall be obtained and there shall be a minimum of two adult caregivers present.
7. For camps, retreats, or similar activities, two adult caregivers shall work as a team when it is not possible to have two adults in the same sleeping room. The team approach shall be encouraged and coordinated by the supervisory staff person. The supervisory staff person shall be aware of and responsible for such activities.
8. For organized events on or off site (Summit Woods Baptist Church) every attempt will be made to staff with a minimum ratio of 1:10, adult caregiver to child.
9. Overnight events that are attended by children of both genders must be chaperoned by adult caregivers.

Student Ministry (Seventh Grade – Twelfth Grade)

1. Caregivers shall not engage in any form of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect.
2. Every effort will be made to have a minimum of two adults working together with children or students. In a Bible Study or similar teaching environment, it is acceptable to have individual classes/groups with only one adult caregiver provided the department/group leaders are present in the general area. This protects the children and the adults, as well as providing a safer situation in the event of an accident or emergency.
3. For organized events on or off site (Summit Woods Baptist Church) every attempt will be made to staff with a minimum ratio of 1:10, adult caregiver to child.
4. The Minister of Students shall be informed in advance of all activities held off site.
5. Overnight events that are attended by children of both genders must be chaperoned by adult caregivers.
6. A positive approach to discipline shall be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits shall be established.

7. It is recognized that certain counseling and ministerial situations may preclude the presence of two adult caregivers and that the general guidelines for supervision of caregivers should not restrict situations where individual counsel and guidance is necessary. In this case the door must be left open or the window of the door shall remain uncovered.
8. For camps, retreats, or similar activities, two adult caregivers shall work as a team when it is not possible to have two adults in the same sleeping room. The team approach shall be encouraged and coordinated by the supervisory staff person. The supervisory staff person shall be aware of and responsible for such activities.

REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT

Summit Woods Baptist Church has determined that it is the responsibility of the ministerial staff to report all cases of suspected child abuse or neglect to the proper legal authorities with 24 hours of it being discovered. When it becomes necessary to report suspected child abuse or neglect, the protection of children must be the most important concern.

As a caregiver, you are a mandated reporter of child abuse or neglect. It is the legal responsibility of a mandated reporter to report all cases of child abuse or neglect they observe, and further, to report visible signs of alleged abuse or neglect. Failure to report could lead to liability on the part of the church, the observer, or both. The confidentiality of the minister/member relationship is very important. Reporting probable cause of child abuse or neglect has the potential for helping individuals receive help for a previous problem and may prevent further harm to self and others.

What is probable cause? Probable cause means that the available facts when viewed in the light of the surrounding circumstances would cause a reasonable person to believe a child was abused or neglected. A report based on probable cause does not require proof that abuse or neglect has actually occurred; rather, it is a request for an assessment of the condition of a child.

Because we believe children are our most important concern, Summit Woods Baptist Church has adopted the following guidelines for reporting suspected abuse:

1. Upon observing or suspecting abuse, the caregiver shall immediately do the following:
 - A. Make sure the child's safety and comfort are secured.
 - B. Make sure the suspected abuser is safely away from the children.
2. Report the abuse or neglect promptly to the authorized staff person in your area listed below:
 - A. Pastor
 - B. Associate Pastor
 - C. Minister of Music

- D. Youth Minister
- E. Director of Children's Ministry
- F. Director of Congregational Care

To preserve confidentiality, it is important to discuss the incident only with your authorized staff person.

RESPONSE OF SUMMIT WOODS BAPTIST CHURCH

Summit Woods Baptist Church's primary function in responding to allegations of sexual abuse or neglect are to attempt to provide pastoral care to all who are affected, to attempt to ensure the safety and protection of persons who have been or may be harmed, to seek healing by providing pastoral care and other needed assistance to all who are affected, and, to the extent possible, to respect the privacy and rights of the parties involved and the confidentiality of communications.

If Summit Woods Baptist Church receives an allegation of child abuse or neglect, the ministers will respond with the utmost concern to the victim, parent, or other party making such an allegation. The accused will be treated with dignity and support. Without clear and convincing evidence to the contrary, Summit Woods Baptist Church will assume that such complaints are made in good faith. Persons making such complaints should have no doubt that Summit Woods Baptist Church takes them seriously and will take appropriate action.

If an alleged abuser contacts the church officials about a complaint, Summit Woods Baptist Church personnel may confirm that they have received such a complaint only if they are certain the alleged abuser already knows this. They should avoid discussing the allegations or making any further comments until the proper authorities have an opportunity to conduct their investigation. They should not identify the alleged victim or complainant during an investigation.

If the media or other parties contact a church official about a pending allegation of child abuse, they should be referred to the Pastor. Only the Pastor or his designee shall make comments about the allegation.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The Church Administrator or designated staff member shall be responsible for overseeing the implementation of this policy.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MINISTERIAL STAFF

SUMMIT WOODS BAPTIST CHURCH

Lee's Summit, Missouri

In accordance with the Church's position that child abuse and neglect shall not be tolerated, the ministerial staff shall do the following:

1. Take all allegations of child abuse and/or neglect seriously.
2. Document all efforts at handling the incident.
3. Contact the Missouri Division of Family Service within 24 hours. Do not attempt an in-depth investigation. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases.
4. Report the incident immediately to the church insurance company and attorney. Do not try to handle this without professional outside assistance.
5. Notify the parents or guardians.
6. Do not confront the accused until the safety of the child or special needs person is secured.
7. Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Showing care and support will help to prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority.
8. Treat the accused with dignity and support. If the accused is a caregiver, that person should be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished.
9. Use the text of a prepared public statement to answer the press and to convey news to the congregation. Be careful to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.