

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION OUR HOME CHURCH

Our Home Church is a church with the vision of influencing our community for Jesus Christ. Like it or not, child abuse is a part of “our times,” and can happen anywhere, including at church. This church is committed to ministering in ways that are scriptural, loving, safe and legal; this commitment is based on Biblical instruction and societal standards.

The disturbing and traumatic rise of physical and sexual abuse of children has claimed the attention of our nation and society. The following policies reflect our commitment to provide protective care of all children, youth and volunteers who participate in church-sponsored activities. We view children as a most precious resource; anything which threatens them - including physical, emotional or sexual abuse - is unwelcome and unacceptable at this church.

While Our Home Church has informally protected the well-being of children since its inception in _____, the reality of contemporary society has dictated that the Pastor, staff and leadership of this church take formal steps toward preventing child abuse in any form, in any children or youth program or activity. The policies and procedures which follow apply to programs and activities in the Preschool Ministry, Children's Ministry, Youth Ministry, Music Ministry, Activities Ministry, Missions Ministry and other church ministries which involve “children” (defined legally in Texas as anyone less than 18 years of age).

The following CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES are presented with the hope that any attitude of “It could never happen at this church” will become an attitude of “We won't let it happen at this church.”

1. Adults who have been convicted of either child sexual or physical abuse should not volunteer service in any church-sponsored activity or program for children or youth.
 2. Adult survivors of childhood sexual or physical abuse need the love and acceptance of this church family. Individuals who have such a history should discuss their desire to work with children or youth with one of the ministers on staff prior to engaging in any volunteer service.
 3. Adult volunteers should observe the "two adult" rule. This requires that adults are never alone with children or youth without an unrelated adult partner. **WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES DICTATE A SINGLE ADULT WITH A CHILD, THEN THE ADULT SHALL STAY IN PUBLIC AREAS.**
 4. Adult volunteers should immediately report any behaviors which seem abusive or inappropriate to their supervisor.
 5. Adults who wish to work with preschoolers, children and/or youth, must have been attending Our Home Church for a minimum of six (6) months, must submit a worker application form **AND BE APPROVED BY THE MINISTERS. FURTHER, ALL SUPERVISORY ROLES WILL BE AVAILABLE AFTER YOU HAVE ATTENDED FOR AT LEAST ONE (1) YEAR.**
-

Our Home Church Preschool/Children/Youth Worker Application

Name _____ Date: _____
 Last First Middle

Address _____ Phone(s) _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Driver's License No. _____ Social Security _____

Date of Birth _____ Place of Birth (City, State) _____

1. Are you a member of Our Home Church? _____ Yes. Since _____. No _____

2. List cities and states in which you have lived and the churches of which you have been a member, including addresses and all previous church service, volunteer or paid, you have provided **FOR THE LAST FIVE (5) YEARS** and approximate dates. (Attach a separate page if necessary.)

Church Name	Street, City & State	Volunteer Position(s)	Dates

3. **FOR THE LAST FIVE (5) YEARS**, list all your previous non-church work, volunteer or paid, involving children. Include approximate dates, organization's name and address, type of work you performed, name of supervisor and phone number, if known. (Attached a separate page if necessary.)

Dates	Organization	Type of Work	Supervisor's Name	Phone

4. Do you consider yourself a positive role model for children? _____ Yes _____ No

5. Please provide the names and phone numbers of three personal references not related to you.

Name	Home / Cell Phone	Work Phone

6. Because Our Home Church cares about our children and desires to protect them, we ask you to please answer the following questions. We understand the following questions are personal and we will protect your privacy.

- (a) Do you agree to observe all church policies regarding working with children or youth? _____ Yes _____ No

- (b) Is there any reason, including those that are physical or mental health related, that might keep you from effectively working with children or that might cause a child potential harm? _____ Yes _____ No

- (c) Have you ever been **ACCUSED OF, INVESTIGATED**, charged with, indicted for, or pled guilty to a felony? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, please explain: (attach a separate page, if necessary)

- (d) Have you ever been **ACCUSED OF, INVESTIGATED**, charged with indicted and/or pled guilty to an action prohibited by the Texas Family Code, or a similar code in any state? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, please explain: (attach a separate page, if necessary)

- (e) Have you ever been known by any other name? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, please list all other names (including maiden name)

- (f) Would you be willing to be fingerprinted? _____ Yes _____ No

**OUR HOME CHURCH CHILDREN AND YOUTH VOLUNTEER
WORKER POLICIES AND AGREEMENT**

This document is to be completed by any minor (age 16 or under) who will be working with children and/or youth. The disturbing and traumatic rise of physical and sexual abuse of children has claimed the attention of our nation and society. The following policies reflect our commitment to provide protective care of all children, youth and volunteers who participate in church-sponsored activities.

1. Anyone who has been convicted of either child sexual or physical abuse should not volunteer service in any church-sponsored activity or program for children or youth.
2. Survivors of childhood sexual or physical abuse need the love and acceptance of this church family. Individuals who have such a history should discuss their desire to work with children or youth with one of the ministers on staff prior to engaging in any volunteer service.
3. Volunteers should observe the "two unrelated adult workers" rule. This requires that workers are never alone with children or youth.
4. Volunteers should immediately report any behaviors which seem abusive or inappropriate to their supervisor.
5. Volunteers who wish to work with preschoolers, children and/or students must have been attending Our Home Church for a minimum of six (6) months and must submit a worker application form.

Please answer each of the following questions. Your response will be kept confidential.

1. As a church volunteer, do you agree to observe all church policies regarding working with children or youth? _____ Yes _____ No
2. Is there any reason, including those that are physical or mental-health related, that might keep you from effectively working with children or that might cause a child potential harm? _____ Yes _____ No

Signature

Date

Your Name Printed

Signature of Parent or Guardian

**OUR HOME CHURCH PRESCHOOL/CHILDREN/YOUTH WORKER
TEMPORARY WORKER APPLICATION**

The disturbing and traumatic rise of physical and sexual abuse of children has claimed the attention of our nation and society. The following policies reflect our commitment to provide protective care of all children, youth and volunteers who participate in church sponsored activities.

1. Adults who have been convicted of either child sexual or physical abuse should not volunteer service in any church sponsored activity or program for children or youth.

2. Adult survivors of childhood sexual or physical abuse need the love and acceptance of this church family. Individuals who have such a history should discuss their desire to work with children or youth with one of the pastoral staff prior to engaging in any volunteer service.

3. Adult volunteers should observe the "two unrelated adult" rule. This requires that adults are never alone with children or youth without an adult partner. **WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES DICTATE A SINGLE ADULT WITH A CHILD, THEN THE ADULT SHALL STAY IN PUBLIC AREAS.**

4. Adult volunteers should immediately report any behaviors which seem abusive or inappropriate to their supervisor.

5. Adults who wish to work with preschoolers, children and/or students must have been attending Our Home Church for a minimum of six (6) months and must submit a worker application form.

Please Answer Each Question. Your Response will be kept confidential.

1. Do you agree to observe all church policies regarding working with children or youth?

_____ Yes _____ No

2. Is there any reason, including those that are physical or mental health related, that might keep you from effectively working with children or that might cause a child potential harm?

_____ Yes _____ No

3. Have you ever been ACCUSED OF, INVESTIGATED, charged with, indicted for, or pled guilty to a felony? _____ Yes _____ No.

If yes, please explain: (attach a separate page, if necessary)

4. Have you ever been ACCUSED OF, INVESTIGATED, charged with, indicted and/or pled guilty to, an action prohibited by the Texas Family Code, or a similar code in any state?

_____ Yes _____ No.

If yes, please explain: (attach a separate page, if necessary)

5. Have you ever been known by any other name? _____ Yes _____ No.

If yes, please list all other names (including maiden name)

6. Would you be willing to be fingerprinted? _____ Yes _____ No.

Signature

Date

Please Print Name

RELEASE OF INFORMATION

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize Our Home Church to obtain information from references and churches listed herein. I also authorize any references or churches listed in the application to give you any information, including opinions that they may have regarding my character and fitness for children's work. In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application by Our Home Church, I hereby release any individual, church, children's organization, charity, employer, reference, or any other persons or organization, both collectively and individually, from any and all liabilities for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family, on account of compliance or any attempts to comply, with this authorization. I waive any rights that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me in this application.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the Bylaws and Policies of Our Home Church, and to refrain from unscriptural conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church.

I understand that my church desires to protect its children and therefore give my permission for church leadership to conduct a criminal background check on me.

I further state that I have carefully read the forgoing release and know the contents thereof; and sign this release as my own free act. **I HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONSULT WITH A LAWYER BEFORE SIGNING THIS FORM. THIS IS A LEGALLY BINDING AGREEMENT WHICH I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTOOD.**

Applicant's Signature

Date

AUTHORIZATION FOR REFERENCES AND CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize Our Home Church to obtain information from references listed herein. Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the Policies of this establishment.

I understand that Our Home Church desires to protect its children in every way possible. I hereby give permission to do an inquiry regarding any record of convictions in any criminal file maintained on me whether local, state or national. I release any law enforcement agency from any and all liability resulting from such disclosure.

Applicant's Signature

Date

AUTHORIZATION FOR CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK

I understand that Our Home Church desires to protect its children in every way possible. I hereby give permission to do an inquiry regarding any record of convictions in any criminal file maintained on me whether local, state or national. I release any law enforcement agency from any and all liability resulting from such disclosure.

Applicant's Signature

Date

INTERIM HARASSMENT/ABUSE REPORT RESPONSE PROCESS

Effective immediately, any report of harassment, inappropriate contact or abuse received by an church staff member, church member, teacher, sponsor, volunteer or part-time paid worker or parent of a minor at church, or any report from any official or member of the community at large regarding conduct or behavior related to any facet of church life, the following action steps comprise the Interim Report Response Process (*NOTE: Steps 1-5 should be completed AS SOON AS PRACTICAL*).

STEP 1

Regardless of how the initial report of the alleged incident, behavior or situation is first presented, the uniform response for anyone wishing to assist is to immediately refer the person making the report to the CHURCH Minister in charge of that area (Pre-School, Children's Ministry, Adult Education, Middle School/High School), **UNLESS THE MINISTER IS THE ALLEGED PERPETRATOR, IN WHICH CASE, IT SHALL BE REPORTED TO _____**.

If the report has been made anonymously (unidentified caller, voice-mail, e-mail or unsigned letter), the appropriate area Minister should immediately document the report, note the anonymous source and proceed to Step 3.

STEP 2

The appropriate area Minister shall immediately document the date/time of the report, date/time and circumstances of the report, the individual(s) involved, how the reporter had knowledge of or was involved in the alleged incident, behavior or situation. The confidential write-up (report form) is then signed by the person making the report and the area Minister.

If the person making the report will not sign the report form, the area Minister should document that fact, record the person's name and proceed to the next step.

STEP 3

As soon as possible, but absolutely within 24 hours of receiving the report of the alleged incident, behavior or situation, the area Minister contacts the Response Team. Contacting the chairman is preferable, but contact with any member of the sub-committee is acceptable. All further actions contained in Step 3 should also be completed or acted upon **AS SOON AS PRACTICAL**.

FURTHER, THE RESPONSE TEAM SHALL APPOINT A SPOKESMAN FOR RESPONDING TO MEDIA INQUIRIES. A STATEMENT SHALL BE DRAFTED FOR ALL OTHERS TO READ TO THE MEDIA.

STEP 4

<u>What the Response Team Does</u>	<u>What the CHURCH Area Minister Does</u>
(within 24 hours of notification from CHURCH area Minister)	(Within 24 hours of the initial report to CHURCH area Minister)
A copy of the signed, confidential report form reviewed by the Response Team.	To the extent possible or reasonable to do so, the area Minister should contact all known witnesses of the alleged incident or behavior.
Preliminary notification to Pastor	
Preliminary notification to legal counsel and document the contact.	Without disclosing the exact details of the report, the area Minister should ascertain whether there exists corroboration or neglect, alleged abuse, incident or
Based on legal counsel advice, authorize appropriate area Minister to prepare report of the situation to the proper state authority	Document all conversations of those interviewed and immediately have them sign a written summary of what they observed.
Notify area Minister of legal counsel advice and all immediate action to be taken.	If the report is of neglect or abuse outside of CHURCH life, area Minister should determine who to notify, including parents.
Meet with area Minister to review information obtained from "other adult in the room" or witnesses.	Meet with the Response Team (and based on legal counsel advice) whether state agency conversations or notification is required/appropriate.
Report findings to others as directed.	

STEP 4a

Assuming that documented report "findings" from the [] witnesses or those individuals with direct involvement DO NOT provide sufficient grounds for going forward with the investigation, as determined by the Response Team, the Pastor and legal counsel:

What the Response Team Does

(Within 24 hours of notification from CHURCH area Minister)

- (a) Documents the action recommended by the legal counsel and prepares a written report for permanent file, co-signed by legal counsel.
 - (b) Review results of area Minister conversation with alleged victim's parent(s) and or alleged victim. (if new info presented, repeat Step 3)
 - (c) Provide copy of the report to Pastor and Personnel Committee for permanent files.
 - (d) Bring together the Pastor, area Minister(s) and other staff or volunteers, if appropriate, for a debriefing and review of events. Make certain everyone knows the facts of the situation, how much, if any, details are to be shared publicly.
 - (e) Record suggestions for change in policy or process for the future.
-

END OF RESPONSE TEAM PROCESS

What the Area Minister Does

(Within 24 hours of the initial report to area Minister)

Contact parent(s) of the alleged minor victim, or the alleged victim if not a minor. Without revealing name of the reporter, the accused, or details of the unsubstantiated report, provide notification of the report and, thorough follow-up investigation and decision to stop without further action UNLESS the alleged victim and/or their parent(s) believe further action is warranted, based on additional information the alleged victim's parent(s) or the alleged victim can provide. (If new info presented, repeat Step 3) Document conversation(s) with alleged victim's family and/or the victim to be signed by area Minister and alleged victim and/or parent.

END OF RESPONSE MINISTER PROCESS.

STEP 4b

Assuming that documented report "findings" from the [] witnesses or those individuals with direct involvement DO provide sufficient grounds for going forward with the investigation, as determined by the Response Team, legal counsel and the area Minister:

What the Response Team Does

(Within 24 hrs of notification from CHURCH area Minister)

- (a) Notify legal counsel of documented findings and ask for counsel's immediate involvement in all additional steps.
- (b) Notify Pastor of the most current information and provide regular updates on the plan of action developed.
- (c) As advised by legal counsel, notify the person(s) reported as being responsible for the alleged incident, behavior or situation.
- (d) Review documentation to assure that each step in the process and each conversation or report is fully document.

What the Area Minister Does

(Within 24 hours of the initial report to area Minister)

Contact parent(s) of the alleged minor victim or the alleged victim if not a minor. Without revealing name of the reporter, the accused, or details of the report, provide notification of the report and documented results of the thorough follow-up investigation. Determine what action the alleged victim and/or their parent(s) believe is warranted, based on additional information the alleged victim's parent(s) or the alleged victim can provide. (If new info presented, repeat Step 3) Document conversation(s) with alleged victim's family and/or the victim to be signed by area Minister and alleged victim and/or parent.

ALL ABOVE STEPS SHOULD BE COMPLETED AS SOON AS PRACTICAL, NORMALLY WITHIN TEN (10) DAYS OF THE INITIAL REPORT.
