

## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

### **Purpose**

Mt Yonah Baptist Church commits to take all steps within its power to keep children and young people safe from physical, sexual and emotional harm.

### **Policy and Enforcement**

MYBC is committed to protecting preschoolers, children and youth from sexual, emotional, and physical abuse. MYBC has a Zero-Tolerance Policy prohibiting any act of sexual, emotional, or physical abuse. The zero-tolerance policy requires of MYBC employees and volunteers the immediate reporting to the MYBC child protection designee (Pastor and Child Protection Committee members) of any occurrence or suspected occurrence.

Any paid employee or volunteer who works with children (age 17 or under) will be given the definition of child abuse in writing, as well as the policy on reporting child abuse. All paid employees and volunteers are required to view child abuse prevention video(s) and the read the written materials available on the subject to help a worker gain an appreciation for the reality of the concern. The definition and training should help workers identify child abuse in the future, if they see signs of it.

The MYBC practices the “two adult” rule, which requires a reasonable number of adult workers to be maintained in each situation involving the supervision of children and youth, but with a minimum of two workers (that are not married to each other). A married couple counts as “one” in the “two adult” rule.

If a worker is ‘out of ratio’ it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the program supervisors or the Children’s pastor. Supervisors will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately bring worker to children ratios into compliance with church policy.

An identification system will be utilized during MYBC events/ministries so that when adults drop off a child they are the same adults or adults’ designee who picks up the child.

Churches, organizations and/or individuals who utilize MYBC facilities or attend MYBC sponsored events for children and/or youth must certify that a child protection policy is in place with their organization and is being enforced.

### **Abuse Reporting Policy**

Should a misconduct claim or allegation take place that would affect a child’s physical, sexual or mental health, the following steps will be followed to assist the Church in responding in a way that will not only respect the victim and accused, but the Church as well. Do not treat any suspicious or accusation as frivolous.

1. Immediate medical attention will be provided if deemed necessary.
2. The Church Volunteer will immediately notify a Child Protection Committee member, Security Team, or the Pastor.
3. The parent, guardian or caretaker of the child will be notified.

4. The Church pastor will be notified.
5. If a worker is alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse and/or misconduct, they will be temporarily, but immediately relieved from their position pending an investigation, and will be instructed to remain away from the church property during the investigation.
6. Civil authorities will be notified and the Church will comply with the State of Georgia requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse. The Church will fully cooperate with the investigation.
7. The Church insurance company will be notified by the completion of an incident report.
8. The Church will designate a spokesperson concerning the incident and the advice of legal counsel will be obtained before responding to any inquires or providing information to the media and congregation.
9. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be permanently removed from their position working with minors.
10. Per Georgia law, *“a member of the clergy shall not be required to report child abuse reported [to the clergy] solely within the context of confession or other similar communication required to be kept confidential under church doctrine or practice;”* however, *“when a clergy member receives information about child abuse from any other source, the clergy member shall comply with the reporting requirements... even though the clergy member may have also received a report of child abuse from the confession of the perpetrator.”*

### **Contents of Report**

- The names and addresses of the child and the child’s parents or caretakers, if known
- The child’s age
- The nature and extent of the child’s injuries resulting from abuse, including evidence of previous injures
- Any other information that the reporting person believes might be helpful in establishing the cause of the injuries and the identity of the alleged perpetrator
- What the child stated, if it was a verbal statement
- An oral report shall be made immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused

### **Media Communication**

The Pastor should handle all press communication related to sexual molestation and abuse. All questions and inquiries should be referred to him.

### **Building Safety**

The Children, Youth Director (AWANA, VBS, etc.) will be responsible for ensuring that the MYBC building is monitored during classes or programming. This will include unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers and children in children’s classrooms.

No child will ever be left unattended in the building or on the children’s playground during children’s ministry programming or classes. Staff or volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in any room or building. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds

himself/herself alone with a single child, that staff member or volunteer will take the child to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others.

After every programming event, staff and volunteers must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

On the Children's playground, staff members and volunteers are to circulate, watching children during play periods, giving particular attention to the areas which are not easily seen from all viewpoints.

Any two children together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area of the playground or building.

### **Discipline**

It is MYBC policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. In employing this procedure, staff members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines:

- 1) Verbally redirect the child before physically intervening. With younger children some physical redirection may be necessary (for example, removing a toy from the hands of a child that is hitting another).
- 2) If the behavior does not cease, remove or direct the child away from the group to a corner of the room where the group is meeting (avoid being alone with the child).
- 3) Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the time-out, and provide the child with clear explanation of your expectations.

### **Definitions**

#### ***Child Abuse***

- Emotional Abuse: Occurs when a child's emotional and mental health are not being met.
- Neglect: Occurs when a child's needs for food, shelter, clothing, or supervision have not been met.
- Physical Abuse: Occurs when someone inflicts visible or invisible bodily harm.
- Sexual Abuse: Involves direct or indirect sexual acts or behavior including but not limited to language and audiovisual materials.

#### ***Physical and behavioral indicators of abuse/neglect***

- Wary of others
- Clingy (clinging) to others
- Uncomfortable with emotions (crying)
- Emotionally detached
- Extreme changes in behavior when not around parents
- Manipulative or controlling/Poor image of self
- Delinquent behavior

- Self-mutilation, drug and alcohol abuse
- Bruises, welts, burns, bite marks, bed wetting, and fractures
- Reluctant to change clothes in front of others
- Questionable sexual behaviors, knowledge beyond the particular developmental age
- Promiscuous
- Withdrawn, distant
- Self-conscious
- Obsessively clean
- Extreme compliance or defiant
- Anxious
- Fearful
- Pain or itching in genital area
- Injury to genital area

*Disclaimer: These indicators are not exhaustive and do not verify actual abuse; however, when observed, they may warrant further investigation. If these indicators are detected, see reporting procedures.*

### **Child Protection Committee**

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintain a safe environment for children, MYBC will appoint and maintain a Child Protection Committee on a non-rotating basis, which will meet at least twice a year.

### **Mission Statement**

The purpose of the Child Protection Committee is to enable MYBC Children's Ministries to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

### **Composition**

The Child Protection Committee will be comprised of the following members:

1. The Executive Pastor
2. Consist of a minimum of 4 members assigned and voted on from the church body.

### **Meetings**

A member will be elected to chair the meetings of the Child Protection Committee to discuss risk management practices and updates. The Child Protection Committee will also meet on an emergency basis upon the recommendation of a member or following the report of any incident or allegation.

### **Responsibilities**

The Child Protection Committee will be charged with the following duties:

1. Applying MYBC policies and procedures related to children's safety and risk management issues.
2. Monitoring all Children's Ministries programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
  - a. Ensuring background investigations are performed (every 3 years/worker)
  - b. Ensuring Mandated Reporting training is performed (annually/worker)

3. Making recommendations to the MYBC Church Council regarding safety issues.
4. Receiving reports from staff/volunteers of abuse when necessary.
5. Notify pastor of reports when necessary.
6. Designated Mandated Reporters to appropriate agencies when a case warrants such.

#### Agreement Statement and Signature

All employees and volunteers should sign the following Agreement and Statement prior to their work with children/youth in the MYBC:

I have read and understand this MYBC Child Protection document: I agree to abide by the policy and procedures as detailed in this document:

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee/Volunteer Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**A copy shall be retained with the church in the employee/volunteer files and a copy given them.**