

# Child Abuse Prevention Policy

## Grace Bible Church, Wappingers Falls, NY

Approved 7/11/ 2006, Revised 1/7/2018

### **Introduction & Purpose**

Children are extremely precious to God and to us. Jesus welcomed them to Himself (Matthew 18:1,2) and used them as an example of the humility and trust that one must have in order to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:3,4). He also gave stern warning about causing “*one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble. . .*”.

A church should be a safe place for any child, but tragically that is not always the case. Because Christians are saved sinners there are those who profess Christ that will stumble into sin in their treatment of children. There are also those that make false professions of faith that will give into their sin nature. There are also those who consciously and falsely present themselves as good Christians because they specifically target churches in order to sinfully exploit children.

The Church must work hard to protect children and prevent others (whether adults or other children) from abusing them in any manner whether it be physical, mental or sexual. As part of our effort to protect our children, Grace Bible Church has established policies and procedures for our Nursery, Children’s and Youth ministries which are to be taught and upheld. These policies will be reviewed on a regular basis for effectiveness and conformity to any changes in law.

### **Statement of Covenant**

In order to demonstrate our love by fulfilling the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ, we, the members and congregation of Grace Bible Church, pledge to conduct the ministries of this church in ways that assure the spiritual growth, safety and welfare of all who come. Special attention will be given to the various ministries to our children and youth to prevent any sort of abuse and protect our workers from false charges. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events: we will educate all of our workers with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods (including first aid and methods of discipline); we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and we will be prepared to cooperate with any investigation by law enforcement agencies and to respond to any media inquiries if an incident or accusation occurs.

## Grace Bible Church: Ministry to Children & Youth Statement of Policies

The congregation of Grace Bible Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

1. **APPLICATION & BACKGROUND CHECK:** All adults working with children or youth shall fill out the appropriate ministry application, agree to and sign the ministry worker's covenant, provide a list of references and agree to a criminal records background check. All volunteers involved in overnight activities with minors, counseling of minors, or one-on-one mentoring of minors, must be involved with Grace Bible Church a minimum of six months before participation in any ministry with minors.
2. **REFERENCES:** All adults working with children must be of good character and of the Christian faith which are affirmed to by references. (Those who are not members of GBC must also sign the appropriate doctrinal statement). They must also have the physical, mental and emotional ability to carry out the particular work they are doing with children.
3. **ABUSE & NEGLECT:** No adult who has been convicted of child abuse (whether sexual, physical or emotional) should volunteer to work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity. *[It is understood that in becoming a Christian a person becomes a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17), however, while the possibility exists of a person whose actions of abuse occurred prior to becoming a Christian working with children / youth, such cases will be handled on an individual basis with extreme caution. Those whose actions of abuse have occurred after becoming a Christian will not be allowed to work with children / youth in any circumstance].*
4. **ABUSE SURVIVORS:** Adult survivors of child abuse need the love and support of our congregation. Any adult survivor of abuse who desires to work in some capacity with children or youth is encouraged to discuss their background with a church pastor first.
5. **"THE TWO WORKER RULE"** - Adults are not to be alone with a minor (except their own) on the church property. Except as noted in #6 below, at least one other adult or approved teenage assistant must also be in the room. The adult or approved teenage assistant may not be an immediate family member of the first adult.
6. **ROOM MONITORING:** Classes taught by a single adult and one-on-one mentoring sessions must be done in a place that is public or easily observable from the outside. The outside windows, door windows and video surveillance cameras that allow viewing into rooms may not be obscured.
7. **REPORTING ABUSE:** All adults working with children or youth shall immediately report to the ministry director and/or a pastor any behavior (physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, neglectful) that seems abusive or inappropriate. (See attached policy and procedure)
8. **DISCIPLINE:** A child that disrupts is given up to three warnings. The first warning is a verbal reprimand. On the second warning, they are to also be isolated to a chair separate from the

rest of the group for the remainder of the class time. The parent is to be notified after class. On the third warning, the child is to be sent to the Ministry Director and the matter will be discussed with the parent / guardian. A child that is habitually disruptive may be asked to refrain from participation for a month by the teacher in consultation with the Director.

9. **SICK CHILDREN:** In order to maintain a healthy environment for all our children, those who are sick (worker or children) should not be allowed around the other children. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of others and keep sick children home. In general, a person will be considered sick if they have had diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours; A fever within the last 24 hours; Currently have a runny nose with green or yellow mucus; Eye or skin infections or other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease. Children who are observed to have signs of illness are to be isolated from the other children and their parent / guardian contacted for pick up.
10. **MEDICATIONS & FIRST AID:** In general, we do not administer medications, prescription or non-prescription. The exception will be emergency conditions such as asthma attack or severe allergic reaction. Parents with children subject to such emergencies are to discuss procedures with the Ministry Director beforehand and develop a plan of action.

Emergency first aid will be administered by trained personnel as required and the parents contacted. An ambulance will be called if necessary. Non emergency first aid will only be administered with parental / guardian permission. Once a minor has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed and kept on file for at least one year.

11. **REST-ROOMS:** Parents are encouraged to take their children to the rest-room prior to classes. If the program has multiple sessions during its meeting time, an opportunity for children to go to the rest-room will be provided between sessions. Children will be allowed go to the restroom during a class period only in an emergency and with a proper escort as detailed below.

Those working with minors should check the bathroom first to make sure it is safe before allowing the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom after they are done. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name and assess if everything is okay. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child. For the protection of all, workers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Only female workers are to assist girls.

12. **TRAINING:** All adults working with children or youth shall attend yearly and/or special training and educational events provided by the church to keep workers informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.
13. **CHECK IN / CHECK OUT:** In general, children younger than third grade will not be released from their classroom except to the parent / guardian or person designated by the parent / guardian either in advance, by a signed note with the name of the person picking up the child or by phone call to the worker. The Nursery has a more detailed policy which includes usage of the pager and its return.

1. All adults working with children or youth shall immediately report to the ministry director and/or a pastor any behavior (physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, neglectful) that seems abusive or inappropriate. (See attached policy and procedure)
2. All allegations shall be investigated immediately by the ministry director and / or pastor to determine the nature and plausibility of the allegation. The minor's parent / guardian will be informed and requested to be present in the interviews of the person(s) abused / neglected, the person(s) accused, and any witnesses. If available, the video security recordings are to be reviewed for confirmation / refutation of allegations. (Note: Security camera's are located in all rooms in the church except bathrooms, closets and stairwell). If the investigation does not indicate any criminal abuse or neglect, the procedure outlined in #3 below will be followed. If the investigation indicates serious or possible criminal abuse or neglect, the procedure outlined beginning in #4 will be followed.
3. A) If all parties can agree to a resolution concerning the incident including any corrections needed to avoid similar incidents in the future, a written report will be filed and the matter considered over. This would apply to allegations based on misunderstandings of what happened, or incidents that were minor in nature.  
B). If all parties cannot agree to a resolution concerning the incident, the matter will be referred to the Pastoral staff and Church Elders for further investigation. Neither the accused adult or minor involved will be allowed to be in contact with one another pending the investigation. Those involved, including witnesses, will be asked to provide a written description of what happened and any evidence about the incident. The Pastoral Staff and Elders or sub-committee appointed by them, will seek to determine what happened and then give direction on the proper corrective measures to ensure such an incident does not occur in the future. Among other measures, this may include mandatory training, removal from ministry position, or barring unreasonable families from participation in that ministry. As in A) above, this applies to allegations based on misunderstandings and incidents of minor nature.
4. A) If the initial investigation indicates serious or possible criminal abuse or neglect, the alleged perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will be immediately placed on leave from that ministry and instructed to avoid all involvement with minors pending investigation by civil authorities. The alleged perpetrator will also be instructed to avoid contact with the victim and witnesses pending the investigation.  
B) The civil authorities will be contacted and the incident reported to them. Grace Bible Church will cooperate with all relevant Federal and State laws regarding allegations of abuse, and will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.  
C) The church's insurance company will be notified and will complete any required incident reports. Copies of any documents received relating to the incident and / or allegations will be immediately forwarded to the church's insurance company.  
D) The church will designate a spokesman to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or release of information including to the congregation. All other representatives of the church

will refrain from speaking about the incident or allegations to others except as part of an official investigation, gaining legal counsel or as part of official church leadership business.

E) A pastoral visit will be arranged for the purpose of providing spiritual support for those who desire it. After any involvement in Step #2 above, all investigation will be deferred to the civil authorities involved.

F) Any person who is not cleared of alleged abuse or misconduct will remain restricted from involvement in any church ministry to minors. Any person found guilty of abuse or misconduct will be permanently barred from involvement in any church ministry to minors.

5. A) Those who make false accusations are subject to rebuke and correction.

B) If investigation, whether by church officials or civil authorities, demonstrates malicious false accusation, those involved will be subject to church discipline, and may be restricted from further participation in ministries at Grace Bible Church.

6. No part of this policy or any other policy of Grace Bible Church may be construed or interpreted to contradict or require anything contrary to the commands of God as recorded in the Holy Bible. The Scriptures are our final authority.