



# New Life Church

## Children and Youth Worker's Guidelines and Policy To Reduce Risk of Child Abuse

### Purpose of Document

Jesus loves children. New Life Church is committed to creating a safe place for children and youth to treasure God and to grow in Jesus Christ and understand His love and acceptance. We nurture our children and youth by training and equipping compassionate, responsible ministry leaders to deliver services and programs. Every ministry that serves minors under the age of eighteen is accountable to God for the stewardship of young lives. This policy articulates our best attempt to follow-through on our commitment to keep children safe.

### Scope of the Policy

To ensure the safety of our children and youth, protect our volunteers and paid staff from false accusation, and to safeguard the reputation of our church and the Christian community, every child and youth worker, whether paid or volunteer, is required to adhere to this policy.

Application and selection procedures for children and youth workers, training development and implementation, records retention, and the creation of policy and procedures are the responsibility of the Child Safety Committee. All work of the Child Safety Committee is subject to review and approval by the Elder Board.

This policy encompasses the following major topics

- 1) Children and Youth Worker Selection
- 2) Children and Youth Worker Annual Review
- 3) Children and Youth Worker Supervision
- 4) Defining Child Abuse
- 5) Child Abuse Reporting and Responding Obligations

Any issues not outlined in this policy, but dealing with child and youth safety, will be referred to the Child Safety Committee for review and necessary action.

### Definitions

- Adult Worker                      Any person 18 years-of-age or older who is working with children. They may be volunteers, interns, or paid staff.
- Youth Worker                      Any person 13 to 17 years-of-age who is working with children. They are volunteers.
- Ministry Leader                    A person in charge of a specific ministry, i.e. Middle School Youth Group.

- Child Safety Committee Those responsible for updating the policy, providing an annual training for workers, and managing concerns.
- Children Minors who are under the age of 13 and are not eligible to be workers.
- Youth Minors who are ages 13 through 17. Youth are eligible workers, but are still protected under this policy as children.

## **1) Children and Youth Worker Selection**

### **a) Who must submit an application?**

All staff, elders, church members and non-members who work with children and youth – both paid and volunteer – are required to submit an application for screening and reference check. New Life Church reserves the right to refuse any volunteer. Application forms are available through the church office or from ministry leaders who oversee children and youth programs.

### **b) The Application Process**

- i. All prospective workers must submit a written application.
- ii. All applicants will have a personal interview with the ministry leader of the area where they wish to work. In cases of multiple areas of interest, the ministry leader of the primary area of service will conduct the interview.
- iii. All applicants are required to provide references.
- iv. All applicants should have attended New Life Church regularly for at least six months. Applicants not meeting this requirement will be considered on a case-by-case basis. In these situations, the ministry leader will conduct a personal interview with the applicant and contact three references. This shall be documented on the application, noting who conducted the interview and reference checks.
- v. All applications and reference information are maintained in a confidential file at the church. The applicant, selected ministry leaders, Child Safety Committee members, and church staff responsible for processing the applications may review the application.
- vi. Criminal background investigations are conducted on all applicants 18 years-of-age and older. Background investigations are conducted at a minimum of every three years. Applicants under the age of 18 are subject to a background investigation following their 18th birthday.
- vii. Any applicant with a conviction for physical or sexual abuse involving a minor will be disqualified from the application process. All other applicants with a criminal history will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- viii. No applicant will be allowed to serve until their application has been processed, a criminal background investigation conducted when applicable, and they have attended child safety training. New Life Church office staff will notify the appropriate ministry leader when the applicant has been approved to work.
- ix. All applicants will be given a copy of this policy, which they must read and sign.

## **2) Children and Youth Worker Annual Review**

Child safety policy and procedures will be reviewed annually with all workers, ministry leaders, pastoral staff, and elders. The Child Safety Committee is responsible for conducting annual training and supplemental training as needed.

All workers who have previously submitted an application, and have continued to work, are required to complete a brief renewal application form each year and attend an annual training. Should information become available that a worker may be unsuitable for working with children and youth, they will be suspended from their ministry position until an investigation can be completed to determine if and what further action is necessary.

## **3) Children and Youth Worker Supervision**

For the safety of children, youth, and workers the following guidelines must be observed.

### **a) Two-Worker Rule**

- i. No worker shall ever be alone with a child. Two adult workers shall always be present during any church activity that includes minors. One of these workers must be at least 21 years-of-age and the other no younger than 18 years-of-age. Youth workers (ages 13 to 17) may assist adult workers, but cannot replace them.
- ii. Two workers living in the same household do not fulfill the intent of the “two-worker rule.” If a ministry involves two or more workers from the same household, then one or more unrelated adult workers must also be present.
- iii. When a youth worker is participating in youth ministry events, they are not considered workers and cannot be counted as such.
- iv. The two-worker rule extends to transporting minors during church events, with the exception of multiple vehicle caravans.
- v. Before and after an event, the workers’ personal time is their own and they are not considered “on-duty.”
- vi. New Life Church is released from responsibility for any allegations or claims resulting from transportation of minors not taking place during a church event.
- vii. Should a situation arise in which the two-worker rule cannot be met, the ministry leader will use their best judgment. This may include cancelling the event or child care due to inadequate coverage.
- viii. In an unplanned situation that violates the two-worker rule, the worker must report this to the ministry leader as soon as possible.

### **b) General Guidelines**

- i. Programs and activities that involve children should include an adequate ratio of supervisory personnel to the number of children as recommended in the following guideline from the Oregon Department of Human Services:

OAR 414-300-0130  
TABLE 3A

**Age of Children -- Minimum No. of Caregivers to Children -- Maximum N. of Children in a Group**

6 weeks of age through 23 months -- 1:4 -- 8

24 months of age through 35 months -- 1:5 -- 10

36 months of age to attending kindergarten -- 1:10 -- 20

attending kindergarten and older -- 1:15 -- 30

- ii. Supervision will be provided before and after an event until all children are in the care of an authorized family member or friend, or have been authorized to leave on his/her own.
- iii. All rooms or locations where children meet are to have viewing windows. In the absence of viewing windows, the doors are to be left open to ensure visual accountability.
- iv. Overnight activities require adult chaperones. If an overnight activity is co-ed, then the chaperones must be of mixed gender. A single chaperone must not sleep in the same room as ministry participants. All chaperones must have completed the application process listed in Section 1(b) of this policy.
- v. One adult should not counsel an individual minor in a secluded area. Volunteers may move out of "earshot" for a private discussion, but should never be out of the line of sight of others.
- vi. All workers who have completed an initial application or renewal form for the current year are considered "on-duty" at any church event and are expected to follow the *Children and Youth Worker's Guidelines and Policy*.
- vii. Any contact with children and youth apart from ministry activities and events will be considered personal. New Life Church is released from responsibility for any allegations or claims resulting from any worker's personal contact with children and youth.

**c) Appropriate Touching**

- i. Care must be taken to ensure that any physical contact with children and youth is age appropriate. What is appropriate for one age group is not always appropriate with another.
- ii. Infants may need to be held, patted, hugged or rocked. Such conduct is appropriate and expected with this age group.
- iii. Toddlers and pre-schoolers may also need to be hugged and comforted.
- iv. School age children of any age haven't grown too old for a caring and affirming touch by an adult. Caution should be taken, however, to avoid any contact that could be interpreted as too intimate.

#### **d) Restroom Guidelines**

- i. Never touch a child's private areas except as necessary, as in the case of changing a diaper (Please refer to the child's registration card for parental consent).
- ii. Diaper changes should always be done in the nursery area, where at least one other worker can view the changing area.
- iii. Children less than 5 years-of-age should be assisted in the restroom as needed (please refer to the child's registration card for parental consent). The door should never be closed on the child and worker. As restroom arrangements vary among the church campuses, solutions to any challenges should be established by the children's ministry leaders and a Child Safety Committee member of that campus to ensure adequate supervision and safety.
- iv. Children over the age of 5 who need to use the restroom should be encouraged to go with a peer of the same gender.

#### **e) Appropriate Conduct**

- i. Workers must not intentionally do or say anything that causes physical or mental injury to a child (See section 4(a) – Examples of Abuse).
- ii. Workers are never to spank, hit, grab, shake, or otherwise physically discipline children or youth (See section 4(a) – Examples of Abuse). Misbehaving children should be taken to their parent or guardian.
- iii. Disciplinary issues should be reported to the ministry leader and the child or youth's parent or guardian.
- iv. Workers must not make any comments that are sexual in nature, even as a "joke." Nor shall they inappropriately touch a minor or make any other comments or take any actions that could be interpreted as sexually arousing or satisfying to the worker, the minor, or any third party (See section 4(a) – Examples of Abuse).
- v. Workers must never ask a child or youth to keep a secret from their parents or guardian.
- vi. Workers must not engage in sexual relationships with minors. Such behavior will lead to immediate referral to law enforcement and may lead to a criminal conviction and imprisonment. NLC will not provide for the worker's legal defense in such cases.

#### **f) Children with Special Needs**

- i. Sometimes special needs are not always visible. It is the responsibility of the workers to read the child registration forms and ask any questions that arise.
- ii. Adjustments to standard protocol may be necessary. Discuss any accommodation needs with the parent at the time the child is dropped off.
- iii. Be patient and compassionate. If you get overwhelmed, ask for help.

#### **g) Electronic Communication and Social Media**

- i. Ministry leaders utilizing these forms of communication will discuss appropriate use with workers, youth participants, and parents.
- ii. Children and youth workers must not transmit any content that is illicit, unsavory, abusive, pornographic, discriminatory, harassing, or disrespectful when communicating with each other or with ministry participants.

- iii. Photographs of minors will not be posted on email or in public forums such as Facebook, Twitter, or blogs without written parental consent.
- iv. Should ministry leaders, workers or participants become aware of any violations of the established protocols for electronic communication, the violations must be reported to the ministry leader and a member of the Child Safety Committee. If a ministry leader is involved in the suspected violation, it will be reported to a member of the Child Safety Committee.
- v. When communicating electronically, all ministry leaders and workers are considered on duty.
- vi. All electronic or handwritten communication between workers and youth should never be considered private communication.
- vii. All electronic or handwritten communication should be re-read to anticipate misunderstandings before it is sent and should reflect sound judgment. The context in which it is sent may not be the context in which it is read.
- viii. All electronic or handwritten communication between workers and children and youth are subject to review upon request by New Life Church pastors, the Child Safety Committee, parents or guardians, and the church's legal representatives.

#### **h) Illness**

- i. For the safety of all, workers who are ill with a fever or a communicable illness that can be transmitted by cough or touch, should find an eligible substitute or notify their ministry leader of their illness.
- ii. Should a child or youth arrive ill, or become ill, at a church activity or program, he/she should be returned to a parent or guardian as soon as the illness is discovered. If this is not possible, the child or youth should be isolated in a manner that will allow supervision to continue until he/she can be returned to the parent or guardian.
- iii. Precautions should be taken to limit contact with bodily fluids of any kind – for example, runny noses, teary eyes and dirty diapers. When changing diapers, workers should always use surgical gloves and wash with soap and hot water afterwards. In the event that soap and hot water are not readily available, the use of an antibacterial hand sanitizer is recommended.

#### **i) Injury**

- i. When a worker becomes aware of any injury to a ministry participant or worker, he/she will take steps to ensure that proper medical attention is given to the injured person immediately. For children, the parents or guardians will be notified of any minor injury when they pick up their child.
- ii. Any injury requiring medical treatment beyond simple first aid should be given immediate attention. The parent or guardian of the injured person should also be notified immediately, as well as the ministry leader.
- iii. Workers should prepare a *Written Notice of Injury Report* whenever a moderate to severe injury occurs during a ministry function. Blank *Notice of Injury Reports*, are located in all child safety notebooks. These notebooks are located in each room where children and youth activities take place

- iv. Submit the completed *Written Notice of Injury Form* to the church office.

#### 4) Defining Child Abuse

Child abuse refers to non-accidental physical or mental injury, negligent treatment or maltreatment, sexual abuse or exploitation, or threat of harm to an unmarried person under the age of eighteen.

##### a) Examples of Abuse

<p><b>Physical Abuse</b></p>	<p>Any physical injury to a child that has been caused by other than accidental means. It may appear as bruises, burns, fractures, bites, cuts, sprains, internal injuries, or auditory, dental, ocular, or brain damage.</p> <p><b>Warning Signs of Physical Abuse in Children</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent injuries or unexplained bruises, welts, or cuts.</li> <li>• Child is always watchful and “on alert,” as if waiting for something bad to happen.</li> <li>• Injuries appear to have a pattern, such as marks from a hand or belt.</li> <li>• Shies away from touch, flinches at sudden movements, or seems afraid to go home.</li> <li>• Wears inappropriate clothing to cover up injuries, such as long-sleeved shirts on hot days.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Emotional or Mental Abuse</b></p>	<p>Any actions or statements, which form a pattern of destruction so that a child’s ability to think, reason, or have feelings, are harmed.</p> <p><b>Warning Signs of Emotional/Mental Abuse in Children</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong.</li> <li>• Shows extremes in behavior (extremely compliant or extremely demanding; extremely passive or extremely aggressive).</li> <li>• Doesn’t seem to be attached to the parent or caregiver.</li> <li>• Acts either inappropriately adult (taking care of other children) or inappropriately infantile (rocking, thumb-sucking, tantrums).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Neglect</b></p>	<p>Negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child that causes actual harm or substantial risk of harm to a child’s health, welfare, and safety.</p> <p><b>Warning Signs of Neglect in Children</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clothes are ill fitting, filthy, or inappropriate for the weather.</li> <li>• Hygiene is consistently bad (unbathed, matted and unwashed hair, noticeable body odor).</li> <li>• Untreated illnesses and physical injuries.</li> <li>• Frequently unsupervised, left alone, or allowed to play in</li> </ul>

	<p>unsafe situations and environments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequently late or missing from school.</li> </ul>
<b>Threat of Harm</b>	<p>All actions, statements, or written or non-verbal messages conveying threats of physical or mental injury, which are serious enough to unsettle the child's mind. This includes all activities, conditions, and circumstances that place the child at threat of severe harm of physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, mental injury, or other child abuse or neglect. (OAR 413-015-1000)</p> <p><b>Warning Signs of Threat of Harm in Children</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A newborn whose primary caregiver appears to lack the skills necessary to provide adequate care, even though the child has not suffered harm.</li> <li>• A child living with a person who is involved in child pornography.</li> <li>• Caregiver behavior which is out of control and threatening to a child's safety – e.g., driving intoxicated with children in car, not taking prescribed medication, or behavior that is due to drug or alcohol abuse or mental, emotional, or physical problems.</li> </ul>
<b>Sexual Abuse</b>	<p>Any incident of sexual contact or exploitation with a minor that is used for the sexual arousal or gratification of the offender, the minor, or a third party. Child sexual abuse can include physical contact and non-contact behaviors. Sexual abuse is criminal behavior (see also Oregon Revised Statutes, ORS Chapter 163).</p> <p><b>Warning Signs of Sexual Abuse in Children</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trouble walking or sitting.</li> <li>• Displays knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to his or her age, or even seductive behavior.</li> <li>• Makes strong efforts to avoid a specific person, without an obvious reason.</li> <li>• Does not want to change clothes in front of others or participate in physical activities.</li> <li>• An STD or pregnancy, especially under the age of 14.</li> <li>• Runs away from home.</li> </ul>

(Portions of the above information is taken from the booklet, *Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect*, Children's Services Division, Department of Human Resources, Salem, Oregon, and Revised April 1995.)

**b) Where Does Sexual Abuse Occur and Who Are the Perpetrators?**

- i. Child sexual abuse can occur anywhere and can be perpetrated by anybody. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent or another child.
- ii. In most instances of child sexual abuse, the perpetrator is known by the victim.



## **5) Child Abuse Reporting and Responding Obligations**

Any accusations of physical or sexual abuse of a minor will be taken seriously, investigated thoroughly, and reported to law enforcement authorities as required. Should a worker be accused of child abuse, they must cooperate with any investigation that ensues. Until the investigation is completed and the matter resolved, the accused individual shall not be involved in any church ministry that includes contact with minors.

### **a) Who Must Report?**

- i. New Life Church considers all workers, paid or volunteer, to be mandatory reporters of child abuse.
- ii. If a worker observes, hears, or receives a report of child abuse or suspected child abuse, he/she must report it at once to a ministry leader or member of the Child Safety Committee.
- iii. A pastor must be notified immediately if a church member is accused or victimized.
- iv. Once the report is made, the church will follow ORS 419B.015 in making an oral report of the incident to the Department of Human Services (DHS), or the appropriate law enforcement agency.
- v. All reporters of abuse remain anonymous to the accused unless required to testify in court. By Oregon statute, the reporter making a good-faith report is immune from any liability, both civil and criminal, as long as there are reasonable grounds for making the report.
- vi. Failure to report an incident of abuse may be punishable by fine or imprisonment.

### **b) Responding to Allegations**

New Life Church adheres to the following principles when responding to allegations of child abuse.

- i. All allegations are taken seriously and responded to as if they are true.
- ii. Do not display an attitude that may be interpreted as a desire to minimize the allegation, keep it secret, or cover it up.
- iii. Do not make any statements, or demonstrate any actions or attitudes that may cause the alleged victim to feel guilt or blame.
- iv. Be supportive and reassuring to the alleged victim.
- v. Never discount an accusation because of who is accusing or being accused

### **c) Situations are handled in a timely manner with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality.**

- i. Under no circumstances shall any incident or suspicion of child abuse be discussed with anyone other than your designated ministry team leader, member of the Child Safety Committee, a pastor not accused of abuse, Department of Human Services (DHS) personnel, or a law enforcement officer. It is vitally important that suspected child abuse is reported, and equally important that it only be reported to and discussed with appropriate authorities. To do otherwise could compromise the investigation.

### **d) Full cooperation is given to civil authorities under the guidance of church legal counsel.**

- i. All pertinent information given to you regarding a suspected child abuse must immediately be relayed directly to a ministry leader or a member of the Child Safety Committee.
- ii. The ministry leader or Child Safety Committee member will contact DHS, the appropriate law enforcement agency, the church's legal counsel, and the church's insurance representative.
- iii. If a minor victim discloses abuse, do not attempt an in-depth investigation with them. Ask them only what happened, taking care to write down everything they say verbatim.
- iv. Gather the following information for the investigation: the alleged victim's full name, date of birth, the names and addresses of his or her parents or guardians, the nature of the abuse, including any evidence and any explanations given for injuries, and the name of the alleged abuser.
- v. Do not press the child for details, ask leading questions or attempt to put words in his/her mouth. For the integrity of the investigation, leave the in-depth interview to professional investigators.
- vi. Fill out the appropriate reporting form and give it to your ministry leader or a member of the Child Safety Committee as soon as you suspect abuse, preferably on the same day. A delay in reporting could jeopardize the investigation.

**e) Adequate care and sensitivity is shown for the well being of victims and the accused.**

- i. Do not discuss the allegations or investigation with anyone who is not a party to the investigation.
- ii. Whether founded or unfounded, the investigation is not open to public disclosure or discussion.
- iii. Church members have pledged themselves to a higher authority than the state and as members of the church, will receive more support and/or a stricter judgment than a secular court can mandate.
  - a. A pastor must be notified immediately if a church member is accused or victimized.
  - b. In keeping with Article 4, Section 5 of the New Life Church bylaws, someone in spiritual authority in the church will appropriately confront the church member with the allegation.
  - c. An allegation that warrants a report is a significant opportunity to love, support, pray for and counsel the member family and must include follow-up.

**f) Victims are never held responsible for incidents of abuse.**

- i. It takes courage for a victim of sexual abuse to report the behavior. When victims disclose abuse, it's important to remind them that they have not done anything wrong, and they did the right thing by telling someone.

## Acknowledgement of Children and Youth Workers Policy

New Life Church believes that the safety of our children and youth is a priority. We are committed to creating a safe place for children and youth to treasure God and to grow in Jesus Christ. To ensure the safety of children and youth, protect volunteers and paid staff from false accusation, and to safeguard the reputation of our church and the Christian community, all child and youth workers, whether paid or volunteer, agree to follow the safety protocols as described in New Life Church's Children and Youth Workers Policy.

With my signature below, I acknowledge that I have read the policy and that I will follow the safety protocols described within it.

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Signature

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Printed Name

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Date