

# **Children's Ministry Safety Manual**

**Approved: April 2024**



# Mount Calvary Baptist Church

## Children's Ministry Safety Manual

Revised 5-1-24

Mount Calvary Baptist Church welcomes children and promotes a safe and secure environment for ministry participants. We are committed to biblical principles, our church's mission, and federal and state law. We desire to follow Jesus' example, who welcomed children and gave them His attention. We want to receive them just as if we were receiving Jesus.

Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them, <sup>37</sup> "Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me." **Mark 9:36–37** NAS95

The following manual has been adopted in order to enhance our safe environment for children, inform our parents, educate our workers, and minimize the church's and workers' vulnerability to unwarranted accusation.

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### Terms and Definitions

"MCBC" ..... Mount Calvary Baptist Church  
"Children" ..... refers to minors (birth to 17 years old)  
"Nursery" ..... refers to children (birth to 2 years old)  
"Staff" ..... refers to church employees, full-time or part-time  
"Worker" and "Volunteer" ..... refers to a screened, approved volunteer serving our children's ministry

## **I. Prerequisites for Serving in Children's Ministry**

- A.** Potential workers must be faithful in attendance for at least six months and must also be members of MCBC, except for teens under the age of 18 and Bob Jones University students. Young adults whose parents attend MCBC must become members when they turn 18 to serve in children's ministry.
- B.** Complete an Employment Application or Children's Ministry Application and a face-to-face interview with a member of the child safety committee.
- C.** Read and agree to abide by this Children's Ministry Safety Manual.
- D.** Successfully pass a public record criminal history check implemented by Protect My Ministry. The link can be accessed on the church website: resources/child safety. This check does not apply to teens under the age of 18.
- E.** Read materials and/or view educational videos that the Child Safety Committee provides in the future. Staff members and volunteers should avoid abusive behavior, report policy violations, and have a basic understanding of the characteristics of child abusers.

## **II. Child Safety Committee**

### **A. Committee Members**

- the Youth Pastor
- the Assistant Pastor over Safety Ministry
- the Nursery Administrator
- another female ministry leader

### **B. Responsibilities**

1. Applying existing policies and procedures related to children's safety.
2. Review annually all Children's Ministry programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
3. Make recommendations to the Board of Elders regarding safety issues.
4. Ensure that state or local authorities are notified in the event of observed or suspected abuse.

## **III. Child Safety Policy**

### **A. Goals:** MCBC endeavors to protect children by:

1. Ensuring staff members and volunteers are known to ministry leaders
2. Maintaining a screening process
3. Providing tools for training
4. Limiting opportunities for abuse to occur
5. Periodically reviewing all approved volunteer workers and their compliance with the safety manual

### **B. Child Abuse Protection**

MCBC has a **zero-tolerance** policy concerning child abuse and neglect. It is a violation of South Carolina law to abuse or neglect any child. In the event that staff or volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors (i.e., policy violations, neglectful supervision, etc.) or suspected abuse, they are responsible to immediately report their observations within 3 hours to their ministry leader and a member of the Child Safety Committee.

### **C. No Retaliation**

No church member, children's ministry worker, or staff member will be discredited or criticized for making a forthright report of suspected child abuse or neglect. Every effort will be made to protect the privacy of the reporter as well as the privacy of the minors involved. (See "Reporting suspected abuse" in section XIII on page 8.)

## IV. Children's Ministry Monitoring Plan

### A. Building Safety

No child should ever be left unattended in a ministry area during regular services, classes, or activities. When a ministry concludes, two adults will be present in the ministry area until all children have departed. Only screened ministry volunteers, church staff members, children, and parents (who are dropping off children or observing the ministry) are allowed in classrooms where ministry to children is occurring.

### B. Supervision

1. Only approved workers may serve in any children's ministry or nursery. Permission must be granted from the ministry leader before a non-approved worker may be allowed to help or visit in the classroom unless that person is a parent of a child in the class.
2. Two adults over the age of eighteen are to be present wherever a ministry is taking place with children or youth. In the event that there is only one adult in a classroom setting, another adult nearby should be notified and the door left open until a second worker arrives. Staff members and volunteers are never to be alone with a child (this includes trips to the restroom) unless they are in plain sight of other adults. An exception to this rule is made for the nursery, where an approved teen worker may serve alongside an adult in place of a second adult worker.
3. If a children's worker needs to talk with a child alone, the worker should do this in the hallway or a highly visible area or have another worker present. If a counseling session requires privacy, a worker may be alone in a room with a minor provided the door is left ajar and another nearby adult is informed of the meeting. During the one-on-one, observable distance from the minor should be maintained.
4. If an unusual circumstance occurs when a worker ends up being alone with a single child, the worker should take the child to a room or building occupied by others or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: if a child is the last in a class to be picked up by a parent and a coworker needs to leave, the remaining worker and child can move to an adjoining room where other workers are present.)
5. After every ministry event, workers will ensure that every room, area, and restroom are checked prior to leaving.
6. Outdoor Activities: When ministry activities occur outdoors, workers will circulate, watching children during play periods or recreation, giving particular attention to areas not easily seen from all viewpoints (Examples: in corners, behind structures). Any children in a less easily viewed area should be redirected to another more visible area.

## V. Check-In and Release of Children

**A. Nursery Ministry:** No one but the parents are permitted to take a baby from the nursery unless the parent notes on the sign-in sheet the name of someone else who may pick up their child, or the parent has a pink release card on file giving the person's name.

### B. General Guidelines for Ministry to Children 3 years to Grade 6

Since our children's ministry includes workers who know our children and their parents or legal guardians well, children of church members and regular attenders can be dropped off at the ministry rooms by a parent, legal guardian, or a responsible family member designated by the parent.

**C. Sunday School Ministry:** Parents of children in Sunday School in grades 3 through 6 may give permission to the ministry workers to release their children from the ministry room at dismissal. The parents would then be responsible to provide supervision and safety for their child upon dismissal.

**D. Sunday Evening Children's Church Ministry:** Workers are to release children ages 3 through 6 only to parents, guardians, or persons specifically authorized to pick up the children. Parents of children ages 7 through 8 may give permission to the ministry workers to release their children from the ministry room at dismissal.

**E. Outreach Ministries** (Bible Clubs, Neighborhood Bible School, Conferences that include ministry to families beyond MCBC): Children will be released to parents, legal guardians, or a responsible family member designated by the parent. If the church provides transportation, workers will obtain permission from a parent or legal guardian for the child to be transported. Workers will return the child to the residence where the child was picked up and will ensure the child safely enters the residence.

In the event that workers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact their immediate ministry leader or a pastor before releasing the child.

## **VI. Parental Involvement**

### **A. Parental Contact**

Parents who leave a child in the care of MCBC staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in the children's ministries.

### **B. Parental Involvement**

Parents may visit any and all services and activities in which their child is involved at MCBC. Parents have an open invitation to observe all events and activities in which their child is involved. Parents who desire regular, continuous observation or participation in their child's ministry will be required to complete the volunteer application and screening.

## **VII. Interaction with Children**

### **A. Physical Contact**

1. Every precaution must be taken to avoid even the appearance of impropriety. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
2. Workers should avoid any lingering physical contact with children, except for female workers ministering to nursery and preschool children.
3. Fist bumps, handshakes, pats on the back and other appropriate physical forms of greeting and kindness between staff members or volunteers and children are important for children's development and are generally suitable in the church setting.
4. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
5. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children or children's ministry workers.
6. Workers should not force physical contact on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Children's ministry volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.

## **B. Discipline**

1. MCBC maintains a “hands-off” policy regarding discipline. This means that in no way should a worker physically discipline a child. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, grabbing, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction. Physical force is not permitted in any form unless necessary to prevent a child from hurting himself or other children.
2. While there are many ways to maintain order during children’s ministry (i.e. seat check, eye contact, verbal warnings, etc.), physical discipline should never be one of them. Should a child not respond to these normal conventions, it may be necessary to contact his/her parent(s) to take care of the problem. If it becomes necessary to pull the child aside while waiting for his/her parents to come, two workers will stay with the child until his/her parents arrive. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported to the ministry leader.
3. The children are the responsibility of their parents, and workers should not assume that responsibility. Most parents will want to know about even seemingly minor infractions. Workers will communicate behavioral issues to the parents so that they may follow up at home. Workers should not confront a parent in front of others. Workers should not humiliate a child in front of the class/group.

## **C. Bullying**

Verbal, physical, or emotional bullying is not acceptable in MCBC ministry activities. At the first sign of bullying, workers should act decisively and inform their ministry leader.

## **D. Images**

No photos or videos of minors may be posted on any social media without parental permission.

## **E. Gifts, Awards**

Because of the association with bribery or favoritism, workers must exercise caution and forethought when giving gifts to young people.

## **F. Verbal Exchanges**

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. Staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children. Staff members and volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, or humiliating.

## **E. Electronic (or Digital) Communications**

All communication with minors must be above reproach. The digital content should be communicated strictly for ministry purposes and be readily available to share with a ministry leader or a parent. When possible, messaging between workers and children should either copy a parent or be sent to a “group,” even though students may reply individually. Workers should not message individual children of the opposite gender.

## **G. One-to-One Interactions with Children**

We acknowledge that there is valuable discipleship and interaction that can take place during one-on-one meetings; however, workers should never be alone in an unobserved meeting or interaction with a child. The meeting should occur in a public area with other workers nearby. If a counseling session requires privacy, a worker may be alone in a room with a minor provided the door is left ajar and another nearby adult is informed of the meeting. During the one-on-one, observable distance from the minor should be maintained.

## **VIII. Restroom Policies**

### **A. Nursery Children**

Because nursery children may require complete assistance with their restroom activities, all workers will observe the following policies.

#### **1. Diapering**

- Only female nursery workers 15 years old and older or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in the diapering of children of either sex. Men should not assist in this area of nursery care at church.
- Changing diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.
- Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
- Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in nursery should be recorded on the check-in sheet.
- Disposable gloves are provided but not required.
- Do not apply ointment. Inform the parent if there is redness or a rash. If you think the cream is absolutely necessary, page the parent to come and apply the cream. Please do not have any skin to skin contact with the baby's genital area when changing diapers.
- Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
- Children should be changed on changing stations only.
- Early and Advanced Walker Nursery: Because few children this age are completely accident free, we must attempt to keep our carpets sanitary by asking parents that the children wear either disposable diapers or pull ups.

#### **2. Toilet training**

- No child will be forced to toilet train.
- Only female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children of either sex.
- When children are taken into restrooms the door will be left partially open.
- Young children will never be left unattended in restrooms.
- Parents should be consulted on young children's progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with ministry workers. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery will be recorded on the check-in sheet.
- Children should be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.
- "Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing. Extra clothing and diapers are available in the Advanced Walkers Nursery, if the parent has not furnished a clothing change.

### **B. Children Age 3 through Grade 6**

If a worker must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, the worker should seek out another worker to accompany him/her. If another worker is not available, the worker should leave the door open, stand in the doorway and ask if the child needs assistance, instead of entering the restroom alone.

If a child requires immediate assistance, leave the exterior door open when entering the restroom and attempt to verbally assist the child in completing his or her toileting activities, while the child remains behind the door of the restroom stall. Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of clothing should be done in the presence of another worker.

No staff member or worker should ever be alone with a child in the restroom.

### **C. Special Needs**

Parents should offer instruction to volunteers to change the diapers of individuals with special needs. After the age of 3, parents or legal guardians will change the diapers of all individuals with special needs. If someone with special needs requires assistance using the restroom, a special needs worker may assist them in the restroom with parental permission and another worker present.

## **IX. Injuries and Medical Assistance**

- A.** Whenever possible, workers should seek the help of medical personnel or someone who has been trained in First Aid. Medically-trained church members are present during services and can be notified by an usher or a Safety Team member. If the situation is truly an emergency, 911 should be contacted first.
- B.** Wearing gloves is highly recommended when dealing with blood or any body fluid.
- C.** Workers should not administer medication of any kind to any child while serving in ministry programs, including “over the counter” drugs, without the permission of a parent or legal guardian.
- D.** Workers should notify their ministry leader of situations that require medical assistance (beyond a Band-Aid).

## **X. Transportation**

Staff members and volunteers may provide transportation for children. Children should be transported by two workers and taken directly to their destination. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving vehicles owned or rented by MCBC, unless in an emergency.

## **XI. Ministry Worker Conduct**

### **A. Alcohol and Drugs**

In accordance with MCBC’s Covenant “to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage and from every appearance of evil,” staff members and ministry workers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in any MCBC facility, while traveling with children, or while working with or supervising children.

### **B. Tobacco and Vaping**

Staff members and workers should abstain from the use or possession of tobacco or vaping products in church facilities or at church activities held at locations beyond the church campus.

### **C. Sexually Oriented Conversations & Material**

In addition, staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities in the presence of any child. However, it is expected that from time-to-time student ministry discussions and lessons may address issues related to purity, dating, sex, and human sexuality. Ministry workers are prohibited from possessing any sexually explicit materials, such as images and videos, on church property or in the presence of children.

### **D. Modesty**

Staff members and workers should never be nude in the presence of children in their care. Events that may include a full change of clothing (e.g., campout, field trip, or mission trip) require a plan approved by the youth pastor concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

### **E. Events Approval**

All events and activities organized by workers for children, whether held on church property or elsewhere, must be approved by the youth pastor.



## **XII. Response to Policy Violations**

- A. When an individual is observed in violation of this Child Safety Manual, the witness(es) should lovingly approach the individual and remind him/her of the applicable guidelines.
- B. If a worker continues to violate policies, the witness should report the violation(s) to the respective ministry leader.
- C. The ministry leader will lovingly, personally confront the individual to discuss the situation with him/her. The ministry leader should then report the issue to the Child Safety Committee.
- D. Further violations after being confronted by a ministry leader will result in dismissal of the worker from the respective ministry.
- E. Workers or staff members who fail to report continued violations may be restricted from participation in children's ministry.

## **XIII. Reporting Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors**

### **A. Commitment to Protection**

Mount Calvary Baptist Church is committed to protecting the children in this ministry from any form of abuse. All staff members and volunteers who work directly with children should immediately report any occurrence or suspected occurrence of abuse or neglect to a member of the Child Safety Committee. In accordance with this policy and state law, every occurrence or suspected occurrence of abuse or neglect will be reported to Child Protective Services or law enforcement. The contact information for these agencies is as follows:

Abuse Hotline: 1-888-227-3487 (24 hrs/7days)  
Greenville County DSS (864) 467-7700 (8:30 am – 5:00 pm) or <https://dss.sc.gov/>  
Greenville County Sheriff: (864) 467-5300

### **B. Dual Reporting Method**

Because many adults are unfamiliar with South Carolina's reporting requirements and may be uncertain about the process, MCBC may utilize a "dual report" model. A "dual report" occurs when a ministry leader reports the suspicion or allegation *together* with the individual who saw, heard, or received the information.

This practice is not required or intended to inhibit any staff member or volunteer from reporting directly to Child Protective Services or law enforcement. Instead, it is meant to facilitate reporting, protect children, and support individuals who may not feel able to report alone.

### **C. Response to Allegations**

MCBC will take seriously every allegation of child abuse given by a child or an adult.

#### **1. Response to the Person Giving the Allegation**

Staff Members and Ministry Workers will . . .

- Listen calmly and carefully
- Not criticize the person or suggest the person is not truthful
- Not blame the alleged victim
- Not promise confidentiality
- Respect the person's privacy by not discussing the situation except with a member of the Child Safety Committee or SC Child Protective Services.

## **2. Response to the Accused**

Staff Members and Ministry Workers will treat the accused with respect and dignity. If the accused is a screened ministry worker, the worker will be temporarily removed from children's ministry during the investigation by government authorities. If cleared by these authorities, the worker may resume children's ministry. If the accused is a staff member, during any legal investigation the individual will continue to receive compensation. The staff member may return to service and employment duties if cleared legally. During the investigation the accused may be required to be accompanied by an attendant (appointed by church leadership) while attending church services and activities to ensure no children are harmed and to protect the accused from further accusation.

## **3. Reporting to Church Leadership**

Staff members and ministry workers who receive an allegation of child abuse will contact a member of the Child Safety Committee within 3 hours upon receiving the information. DSS or the Greenville County Sheriff will be contacted within 48 hours employing the dual reporting method described above.

## **4. Public Communication**

The senior pastor or an official spokesperson will be appointed by the Elders for all communication with media, the congregation, or the public. Requests from the media for information will be directed to the official spokesperson.

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**All Children's Ministry workers or prospective workers should click the link below to register that they have read this manual and agree to follow its guidelines.**

[Acknowledgement Form](#)

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## **Addendum**

### **Children's Ministry Worker Approval Process For Prospective Workers**

- ☐ Prospective worker completes application.
- ☐ Prospective worker authorizes a criminal background check.
- ☐ Prospective worker reads and agrees to follow the Children's Ministry Safety Manual.
- ☐ Child Safety Committee member interviews prospective worker.
- ☐ Child Safety Committee notifies prospective worker of approval.