



The Heights Baptist Church Children's Ministry Policies

Dear Children's Volunteer or Staff Member,

Welcome to The Heights Baptist Church!

At The Heights Baptist Church, we take our responsibility to care for children very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which children can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for volunteers and staff members. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children, protecting children, you, and the mission of The Heights Baptist Church. The following procedures have been adopted and will be diligently enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

Next Generation Ministry Team

The Heights Baptist Church

Policies & Procedures for Children’s Ministry

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Overview of The Heights Baptist Church Safety System

Because we desire to protect children involved in our ministry, The Heights Baptist Church requires all staff members and volunteers working with children to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placements begin.

STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

The Heights Baptist Church policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a supervisor or a member of The Heights Baptist Church Safety Committee. Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in 'grooming' a child for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or 'gatekeeper'), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, The Heights Baptist Church requires all staff members and volunteers to complete sexual abuse awareness training. This training will be renewed every two years.

STEP TWO: Screening Process

Staff members and volunteers working or serving with children are required to complete The Heights Baptist Church's Screening Process, which may include:

- An Employment Application (employees only);
- A Safety Application (employees and volunteers);
- A face-to-face interview (employees and volunteers);
- References to be checked (employees and volunteers).

*A volunteer must attend The Heights Baptist Church for three months before being eligible to serve in positions providing ministry services to children

STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures

Staff members and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

Sexual Abuse and Awareness Training will be required of all volunteers in the Children's Ministry Department 16 years of age and older.

STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check

The Heights Baptist Church requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in children's activities undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon the ministry position, differing levels or intensity of criminal background check may be required.

Child Safety Policy

ABUSE TOLERANCE

The Heights Baptist Church has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at The Heights Baptist Church to act in the best interest of all children in every program.

In the event a staff member or volunteer observes any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse or neglect (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is that individual's responsibility to immediately report their observations to his or her immediate supervisor, the Children's Minister/Director, or Pre-School Minister/Director

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

The Heights Baptist Church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse or neglect will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to Child Protective Services, or another appropriate agency.

Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a child for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to an immediate supervisor, the Children's Minister/Director, or Pre-School Minister/Director

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

The Heights Baptist Church staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Church policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from Children's Ministry positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Next Generation Pastor.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY

All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to an immediate supervisor in the ministry area, the Children's Minister/Director, or Pre-School Minister/Director

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in Children's Ministry. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have violated this policy may be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming involving children or students

at The Heights Baptist Church. If the person is an employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from The Heights Baptist Church.

Failure to report a policy violation is grounds for termination of an employee. Volunteers who fail to report a policy violation may be restricted from participation in any future activities involving children or students at The Heights Baptist Church.

REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

In the State of Virginia child abuse or neglect needs to be report immediately to the local department of the county or city wherein the child resides or wherein the abuse or neglect is believed to have occurred.

Child abuse or neglect witness by an individual while on the campus of The Heights Baptist Church or sponsored event is to be reported to a Staff Member of The Heights Baptist Church. At which time both the church Staff Member and witness will report the incident to the Virginia Department of Social Services.

Virginia Department of Social Services tollfree hotline number is:

In Virginia (800) 552-7096

Out-of-state: (804) 786-8536

Hearing-impaired: (800) 828-1120

RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE

The Heights Baptist Church Leadership will take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs.

Safety Committee

SAFETY COMMITTEE

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children and students, The Heights Baptist Church will appoint and maintain a Safety Committee, which will meet a minimum of two times each year.

MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Safety Committee is to enable The Heights Baptist Church Children's and Student Ministries to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

COMPOSITION

The Safety Committee will be comprised of the following members:

1. Next Generation Pastor
2. Pre-School Minister/Director
3. Children's Minister/Director
4. Student Minister/Director
5. Adult Ministry representative appointed by the Senior Pastor

MEETINGS

The Next Generation Pastor will chair the meeting of the Safety Committee to discuss risk management practices and updates. The Safety Committee will also meet on an emergency basis upon the request of any Safety Committee member.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Safety Committee will be charged with the following duties:

1. Applying existing The Heights Baptist Church policies and procedures to related ministries of the church safety and risk management issues.
2. Monitoring all Ministry programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
3. Making recommendations regarding safety issues to The Heights Baptist Church Executive Staff.

Children's Ministry Staff Monitoring Plan

Monitoring of staff and volunteers will happen on a regular basis in our Children's Ministry programs. Supervisors will be appointed by the Children's Pastor/Director and the Pre-School Pastor/Director for the purpose of observing staff members and volunteer interactions with students.

1. **Supervisor** will conduct unannounced observation at least once each week in programs that occur weekly.
2. **Children's Pastor/Director and the Pre-School Pastor/Director** will train staff and volunteers yearly in their area of ministry with the most current information the church has on risk management training and adherence to proper risk management procedures.
3. **Children's Pastor/Director and the Pre-School Pastor/Director** conducts an unscheduled observation at least once each month for programs that occur weekly.
4. **Safety Committee Member** will conduct an unscheduled observation of the Children's Ministry program up to four times a year in order to affirm that our Safety Policies are being followed correctly.
5. **Next Generation Pastor** meets with Children's Pastor/Director and the Pre-School Pastor/Director regularly to discuss Children's Ministry, including safety training and procedures.

BUILDING SAFETY

The Children's Minister/Director or Pre-School Minister/Director will be responsible for ensuring that the Children's area is monitored during Sunday 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 Children's Building or on the children's playground during children's ministry programming or classes. Children's Ministry staff members 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. (Example: if a child is the last in a class to be picked up by a parent, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present.)

After every programming event, Children's Ministry staff members 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 not easily seen from all viewpoints. (Example: under slides, in corners, behind structures).

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

WORKER TO CHILD RATIOS

The Heights Baptist Church is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Children's Ministries programs. Accordingly, the following worker to child **minimum ratios** will be observed:

Program	Workers	Children
Nursery	2	8
Preschool, 2 and 3 years old	2	12
Preschool, 4 and 5 years old	2	18
Elementary	2	20

If a worker is 'out of ratio' it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the program supervisor or the Children's Minister/Director or Pre-School Minister/Director. Supervisors will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately bring worker to children ratios into compliance with Church policy.

DISCIPLINE

It is our 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, biting 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. (“Jamie, you didn’t stop hitting Chris when I asked you to, so you need to sit quietly in the blue chair for three minutes.”) In addition, be verbally reassuring, as being removed from the group will likely upset the child. Do not physically hold a child in time-out.
- 4) Provide the child with a chair to sit in or a “spot” to sit on (using a pillow, blanket, carpet square, etc.) until their time-out is complete.
- 5) Follow the rule of thumb that a time-out is ineffective if it lasts longer than one minute for every year of the child’s life (3 years old, 3 minutes).
- 6) Monitor the child through the entire time-out without giving your undivided attention. For longer time-outs give intermittent praise to reassure the child and keep them on task. (“Jamie, you’re doing a great job of sitting quietly – just 2 more minutes.”)
- 7) Praise the child once he or she has completed the time-out and tell them that their reward is being able to rejoin the group. Remind them that repeating their initial behavior will result in further time-out. Follow this with praise.

Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents, Children’s Minister/Director or Pre-Scholl Minister/Director

If poor behavior is persisted and the parent has been notified of their child’s behavior parents may be asked to sit their child’s classroom for an agreed upon time period until behavior is under control. In extreme cases a family/child may be required to enter into a behavior contract with The Heights Baptist Church in the hope of correcting the poor behavior.

BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINE

Nursery children

Because nursery children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies:

Diapering

- 1) Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.
- 2) Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
- 3) Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery will be recorded on the white board in the classroom (“Seth Adams - diaper rash ointment in bag for rash”)
- 4) Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
- 5) Children should be changed on changing stations only.

Restroom Assistance for 2-3 year old's (Bank and Barber Shop Classrooms)

- 1) Children wearing training pants or a diaper should be changed on the changing station only.
- 2) Children who are toilet training may be assisted in the restroom with the door left partially open.
- 3) Any special instructions given by parents regarding toilet training, should be noted by the classroom Leader in the attendance binder and on the white board in the classroom.
- 4) Children should be verbally assisted where possible. If physical assistance is necessary, another staff member or volunteer should be present when possible.
- 5) Children should not be left unattended in the restroom.
- 6) Accidents should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing. Extra clothing and diapers/training pants are available in the classroom if the parent has not furnished a clothing change.

Restroom Assistance for 3-5 Year Olds (Police Station, City Hall, Toy Store, Café Classrooms)

- 1) Children in 3-5 year old classrooms should be toilet trained and wearing underpants or actively training and wearing training pants.
- 2) Children who are actively toilet training may be verbally assisted in the restroom with the door left partially open. If physical assistance is necessary, the parent/guardian must be notified.
- 3) "Accidents" will be handled by reassuring the child and contacting the parent/guardian and asking them to complete the change of underpants and clothing.

School age children

School age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. Children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities. Staff members or volunteers should never be in the restroom a lone with a child.

If a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another worker to accompany him/her. If another worker is not available to accompany, he/she should go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. If the child requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall. Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer.

Special needs

Parents will offer instruction to staff members or volunteers to change the diapers of special needs individuals. After the age of 4, parents or legal guardians will change all special needs individuals.

INTOXICANTS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drug while in any church facility, while traveling with

children, or while working with or supervising children during any The Heights Baptist Church program or activity.

MEDICATION

Medication is not permitted in classrooms and should not be brought into preschool and children's departments by team members or children. Medication for children, including epi-pens, should be checked in at the medical desk. If a team member needs medication while serving, he/she should go to the medical area or other designated area to administer it.

NUDITY

Staff members and volunteers serving in Children's Ministry should never be nude in the presence of children in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes during a pool party, weekend or overnight retreat, etc.), the staff member or volunteer leading the event will submit a plan to the Children's Minister concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Staff members and volunteers should never conduct one-to-one, unobserved meetings or interaction with children while participating in Children's Ministry activities or programs. Another trained, screened adult should always be present.

TRANSPORTATION

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children:

1. Children should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.
2. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
3. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving Church vans, or vehicles owned or rented by The Heights Baptist Church, unless in an emergency.
4. No drivers under age 25 may drive Church-owned or rented vehicles.

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents who leave a child in the care of The Heights Baptist Church staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if a child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Children's Ministry programs.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their child's program will be required to complete the Church's volunteer application and screening process.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

The Heights Baptist Church is committed to protecting students in its care. To this end, The Heights Baptist Church has implemented a 'physical contact policy' that promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our Student Ministry programs. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone involved in our Student Ministry programs:

1. Brief Hugs, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between students, staff, and or volunteers are important for student's development and are generally suitable in the church setting.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to an immediate supervisor or Student Minister.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of an individual, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a student, staff, and or volunteer.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other students or student staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted as such when physical contact is open to observation.
5. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of students, staff, and or volunteers in the Student Ministry must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
6. Do not force any physical contact, touch, or affection upon a reluctant student, staff, and or volunteer. A person's preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Student staff and volunteers are responsible for protecting students under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse must be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor or Student Minister

SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS

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 with any child in the program.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from possessing (or transmitting to a child) any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children in their care.

TOBACCO USE

MY Church requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in church facilities, while in the presence of children or their parents, or during The Heights Baptist Church activities or programs. The Heights Baptist Church is a tobacco-free facility.

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

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.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is or could be construed by a reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

At any time that a child has been entrusted to Children's Ministry staff members or volunteers, the Church incurs responsibility for the safety and welfare of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.

Children's Ministry staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians at the close of services or activities. It is presumed a person who drops off a child has authority to pick up that child.

In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact their immediate supervisor or the Children Minister/Director or the Pre-School Minister/Director before releasing the child.

SUPERVISION

Staff members and volunteers in Children's Ministry are expected to provide adequate supervision for children in their care while working in church programs.

Policy Amendments

BACKGROUND CHECK REQUIREMENTS

Background checks will be required of any short term or long-term team members under the umbrella of the Next Generation Ministry (Pre-School, Children, and Youth Team Members). Team Members include any volunteers (i.e. unpaid) and paid staff.

*Background checks on Team Members under the age of 18 is prohibited

SEXUAL ABUSE TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Ministry Safe sexual abuse video training level 1 will be required of every paid staff member of The Heights Baptists Church. The below list of non-paid Team Members will also be required to complete training:

- Preschool, Children and Youth Leaders and Coaches serving weekly or bi-weekly
- Security and Medical Team Members
- Mission Trip Team Member who are on a mission team with minors
- KIDnect Coordinator
- MOPS Kids Coordinator
- Any Team Member over the age of 16 who will be participating in an overnight camp or retreat with minors.

*Team Members under the age of 16 will not be required to take the Sexual Abuse Training

CHILD CARE EVENT POLICY

- Events needing childcare should be submitted 6 weeks in advance.
- Additional events scheduled outside of the annual calendar meeting may not be budgeted for. If this is the case, the requesting ministry may be asked to cover the cost of childcare from their ministry budget.
- A list of registered children including their grade and age should be submitted to the Preschool Ministry Director 7 days before the event. Late registrants will be considered and approved by the Preschool Ministry Director.
- An event with less than 5 children registered may not be accepted. That decision will be made at the close of registration by the Preschool Ministry Director and the requesting Ministry.
- If food is being served; a list of ALL foods being served at the event should be submitted to the Preschool Director 7 days before the event.

Policies and Procedures

Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of The Heights Baptist Children's Ministry Policies and Procedures Manual and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at The Heights Baptist Church.

Further, I understand that the manual may be modified at any time, and that any guidelines may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by The Heights Baptist Church.

I also acknowledge that I have reviewed and agree to fulfill the duties listed in the Manual. While, ideally, I will serve in this ministry for the agreed term, I understand that I may choose to end this relationship at any time. If possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to my supervisor.

I further acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this manual in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between The Heights Baptist Church and me. If I am applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no compensation for hours worked.

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed, as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of The Heights Baptist Church policies and procedures manual.

Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: _____

[This page is to remain attached to The Heights Baptist Church Children's Ministry Policies.]