



The Heights Baptist Church Children's Ministry Policies

Dear Children's Ministry Staff and Team 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 where children can grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for staff and team 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 carefully reading this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form 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 care for students and desire to protect them, The Heights Baptist Church requires all staff members and team member working with children or students to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or team member placement begins..

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

STEP TWO: Screening Process

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

In the event a staff or team member 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.

Sexual abusers often engage in "grooming" behaviors to manipulate children for abuse. Staff and team members should remain observant and report any behavior that could be interpreted as grooming, any policy violations, or any other suspicious actions immediately to the Children's Minister/Director, or Pre-School Minister/Director

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

Staff and team members at The Heights Baptist Church who oversee others are responsible for ensuring strict adherence to all church policies. Any violations of these policies may result in immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from Student Ministry roles. The Next Generation Pastor will have the final authority in decisions regarding policy violations.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY

All questions or concerns regarding inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be promptly directed to the Children's Minister/Director, or Pre-School Minister/Director

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Any individual accused of committing a prohibited act or any behavior deemed harmful to a child by the church will be immediately suspended from participating in the Children's and Preschool ministry or other leadership positions. This suspension will remain in effect throughout any investigations conducted by law enforcement or Child Protective Services.

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. Team Members who fail to report a policy violation may be restricted from participating in future activities involving children or students at The Heights Baptist Church.

REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

In the State of Virginia suspected child abused 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 abused 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 team members 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 and team members 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 and team members are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in any room or building. In the event a staff or team member finds himself/herself alone with a single child, that staff or team member 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 or team members are present.)

After every programming event, Children’s Ministry staff and team members must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

On the children’s playground, staff and team members 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 and team members 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 and team members 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.

If a staff or team member 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 or team members 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 and team members 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 and team members 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 and team members 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 and team members may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when staff and team members 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 and team members should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.
2. Staff and team members 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 and team members 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 and Pre-School 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 team member application and screening process.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

The Heights Baptist Church is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, The Heights Baptist Church has implemented a 'physical contact policy' that promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting children. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by those working in Children's Ministry programs:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children are important for children'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, the Children's Minister/Director or the Pre-School Minister/Director
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children or Children's Ministry staff and team members. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted 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 staff and team members in the Children's Ministry must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
6. Do not force physical contact, touch or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Staff and team members are responsible for protecting children 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, the Children's Minister/Director or the Pre-School Minister/Director.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS

Staff and team members 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 and team members 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.

NICOTINE PRODUCTS

The Heights Baptist Church requires all staff members, team members, and teenagers to refrain from using or possessing tobacco, vaping devices, and other nicotine products on the church campus and during any church-hosted activities or programs. The church is a tobacco—and nicotine-free facility.

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. Staff and team members 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 and team members 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 and team members 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 and its team members, the Church incurs responsibility for the safety and welfare of the child. Staff and team members must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.

Children's and Pre-School Ministry staff and team members 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 or team members 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 and team members in Children's and Pre-School Ministry are expected to provide adequate supervision for children in their care while working in church programs.

Behavior Policy

The Heights Next Generation Ministry exists to help students know and follow Jesus. We are successful when we create an environment where students can learn the Bible and actively live out its teachings. To ensure this, we have some general **expected** behaviors that must be maintained so that students can fully enjoy their time at church while focusing on growing in their faith and living out their walk with Jesus.

EXPECTATIONS:

- Every child is expected to respect all adults (staff, team members, and others)
- Every child is expected to respect others regardless of age, sex, ethnicity, and social status.
- Children are expected not to be disruptive during times of teaching including large group experiences, small groups, and worship. Disruptive behaviors can include but are not limited to:
 - Talking when the leader is talking.
 - Texting and misusing phones. Examples would include being on social media or texting when the class or group is reading the Bible together.
 - General touching and horseplay with those around them.
 - Intentional behavior to disrupt other students or leaders. This would include continuing an addressed behavior even if the student's intent is not to be disruptive.
- Children must not wander around the church during programming time.
- Children are expected to stay the full length of programming unless a family situation requires them to leave early.

- Children are expected to respect ALL the church's property, including furniture, outside equipment, decorations, and any other property that belongs to the church or members of the church.
- Alcohol, drugs, vapes, weapons, fireworks, or any other object deemed inappropriate and dangerous by church staff are never allowed at Children's Ministry events.
- Clothing should not contain offensive language, pictures, or inappropriate context.

SAFEGUARDING EXPECTATIONS:

To safeguard an environment where children can learn about Jesus, grow in their faith, and build God-honoring relationships, we have established clear boundaries and expectations for both children and parents to follow. If a child fails to meet these guidelines, the following steps will be taken in accordance with Matthew 18:15-17:

- **1st Offense:** The child will receive a verbal warning from either a staff or team member
- **2nd Offense:** A staff or team member will meet with the Children's Pastor/Director to discuss the situation with the child; the child will be cautioned to stop the disruptive or disrespectful behavior, or their parents will be contacted.
- **3rd Offense:** The Children's Pastor/Director will contact the child's parent/guardian to inform them of the ongoing behavioral issues and request their assistance in correcting the behavior in their home and the church
- **4th Offense:** If the behavior persists, the Children's Pastor/Director will meet with the child and their parents/guardian to establish a behavior contract. This contract will clearly define the unacceptable behavior and outline the consequences for failing to abide by the agreed-upon guidelines.

**** Please Note:** Staff reserves the right to contact parents immediately in the event of disruptive behavior on campus. In severe cases, such as intentional rule violations or fighting, staff may ask the student or child to leave the program immediately.

RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENT/GUARDIAN:

- It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to ensure that children respect, understand, and support the church's behavior policies.
- Parents/guardians must acknowledge that church staff and leaders enforce these guidelines and policies to maintain a safe environment for everyone.
- Parents/guardians should teach their children to respect authority, follow rules, and meet expectations, including appropriate behavior during all services.
- It is important to emphasize to children the significance of being a positive role model and witness for Christ at church, in the community, and at home.
- Parents/guardians must acknowledge that their children's behavior at church is ultimately their responsibility as the primary faith trainers of their children.

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 team member, 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 Team name (please print)

Staff Member or Team signature

Date: _____

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