

**PROTECTION POLICY FOR
YOUTH AND CHILDREN AND SPECIAL NEEDS ADULTS
Ardmore Baptist Church**

Purpose:

This policy is designed to provide adequate safeguards for the care of all children, youth, and special needs adults of Ardmore Baptist Church to keep them safe from abuse.

SCREENING PROCEDURES FOR PAID EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

Careful selection is the primary way we attempt to provide protection for children and youth.

Threshold Requirements for Volunteer Service:

Six-month rule – A person must attend and/or be involved in this congregation for a minimum of six months before he or she can be enlisted to work with children or youth, which should allow sufficient opportunity to evaluate the individual's suitability for volunteer service. It shall be within the discretion of the minister in charge to determine initial suitability for volunteer service. If a question arises as to suitability, the minister in charge shall consult with the senior pastor and if needed, the chairman of the personnel council.

We conduct background screening on all paid employees and all volunteers who work with youth or children. Upon completion, the status of the background check is either "No Record," meaning the background check is clear, or "Alert," which indicates there is activity on the background check. If "Alert" appears on the background check, the employment or volunteer status will be determined on a case by case basis and documented in the person's employment file or volunteer records.

The Administrative Assistant performing background checks and the Church Administrator will review each completed background check. The Minister-in-charge or Preschool Director is responsible for reviewing and following up on each person's background check, and he or she will consult with the senior pastor as needed. A complete list of approved and rejected records shall be maintained in a password protected file on the church server.

Certain criminal offenses will prevent staff members or volunteers from serving in ministries and activities with minors. Any offenses that are sexual in nature, involve minors or family members, display violence, or are abusive or neglectful toward others will be grounds for disapproval or removal from working with minors. Any other crime or documented behavior that is not consistent with the safeguards established by the Church may also be grounds for terminating involvement with minors in the Church. Additional factors may be considered in determining an individual's ability to be involved with children and youth. Such additional factors may include, but are not limited to, (i) the relationship between the underlying conduct and the person's ability to be an effective staff member or volunteer; (ii) the nature, severity and recency of the conviction or the documented underlying conduct; and (iii) the age of the applicant at the time of the incident.

The selection/screening process for paid employees and volunteers will include:

1. Completion of an application for background check
2. A personal interview before work begins
3. A background records check which includes a criminal record check and a sex offenders' registry check
4. References from the person's previous work with children, youth and special needs adults. These references will be asked specifically, "Do you know of any reason this individual should not be allowed to work with children, youth, or individuals with special needs in our church?"
5. Training in all aspects of our policies, procedures and prevention program.

The church reserves the right to repeat background checks at any time. Background checks will be repeated yearly. All background screening will be conducted in full compliance with the Fair Credit Reporting Act utilizing a third-party screening service.

SUPERVISION OF WORKERS

- Training is a requirement for all staff persons and volunteers working with children or youth. The training would be an annual orientation that includes information about this policy, procedures for supervision, as well as information on how to identify and report child abuse.
- Supervisory standards include:
 1. Two adults present whenever church employees or volunteers are working with minors, whether at church, on trips or when providing transportation.
 2. Age restriction --No person shall serve unless he or she is at least 18 years of age and at least three years older than the group being supervised.
 3. Doors - Each room in which child care is being provided shall have a window in the door or the door shall be left open. Teachers should not cover the window at any time.
 4. Floaters – Supervision will be maintained before, during and after all events until the children and youth are in the custody of parents or off the premises. Two adults will provide this care.
 5. Bathroom Policy – Adults over the age of 18 years will assist with bathroom and diaper changing duties. Bathroom doors are to remain open when an adult is assisting any child with toileting or diaper changing.
 6. Preschool Dismissal Policy – Children will only be released to properly identified and pre-authorized adults in accordance with our check-in and dismissal policies.

7. Child/Student to Adult Ratios – Adequate supervision is to be provided by a minimum of the following ratios of children to adults with a minimum of two adults always present.
 - 1 adult per 3 babies
 - 1 adult per 5 children
 - 1 adult per 6 youth
 - Ardmore Baptist Preschool will abide by the classroom ratios as set by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.
8. Child Dismissal – Children 2nd grade and younger are released from classes and activities only to parents/guardians or those authorized by the parents/guardians to do so. Staff and volunteers must visually verify that the person picking the child up is the parent/guardian or, in the case of guests, verify the identity tag of the parent/guardian issued to the guest at check-in. If someone other than a parent/guardian is picking a child up, the staff person or volunteer must have written permission from the parent/guardian before releasing the child.
9. Youth Policy – Youth Counselors must be at least 21 years old to work with senior high students and at least 18 years of age to work with middle school students.
10. Written parental permission form is required in advance for off-site events.

Closed Door Meeting Policy: If an employee or volunteer is meeting with someone, particularly a minor or special needs adult, one-on-one in a room or office, the door shall remain open or the meeting should be moved to an area that can be easily observed by others passing by, such as through a window. Always inform other staff and volunteers that you are alone with someone.

Off-site Contact: All activities involving children or youth that are held away from church property must have two or more adult supervisors over the age of 18 years old. Contact outside of regularly scheduled activities may put minors and special needs adults at increased risk. When off-site contacts are part of our ministries and programs or are unavoidable, employees or volunteers are required to have permission from the parents or guardians to engage in any outside contact with a minor, such as visiting students at school or when attending other large-group gatherings. Examples of inappropriate outside contact are as follows:

Inappropriate Outside Contact:

- Taking minors on an outing without the parents'/guardians' permission.
- Taking minors on an overnight outing without the parent's/guardians' written permission.
- Visiting a minor in the minor's home without a parent/guardian present.
- Visiting one minor at any venue (school, sporting event, recital, etc.) without the parents'/guardians' knowledge.
- Hosting less than three minors in the home of staff or volunteers.
- Less than three minors spending the night in the same location as staff or volunteers.
- Transporting a minor alone at any time for any reason.

If employees or volunteers are unsure of the appropriateness of any outside contact, they should consult a minister.

DEFINING ABUSE:

Child abuse includes the physical, emotional or sexual abuse of a minor and also may include neglect or exploitation. North Carolina child abuse laws require mandatory reporting by "any person or institution." The state's broad definition of child abuse includes acts that "approve of delinquent acts involving moral turpitude" in addition to the infliction of abuse or neglect.

Physical Abuse: North Carolina law defines [physical child abuse](#) as inflicting, or permitting to be inflicted, or creating a substantial risk of injury, other than by accident. The law does not specifically define injury, in order to prohibit as many forms of physical abuse as possible.¹

Behavior Modification: The [child abuse law](#) also prohibits using, or allowing to be used, cruel or grossly inappropriate procedures, or cruel or grossly inappropriate devices in order to modify a child's behavior.

Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse can come in many forms. North Carolina's child abuse law specifically mentions rape, unlawful sale, surrender, or purchase of a minor, incest, preparation of obscene photographs, disseminating obscene material to the juvenile, sexual exploitation of the juvenile, promoting prostitution, and taking "indecent liberties" with the juvenile.

Emotional Abuse: Emotional abuse may not be as obvious as some other forms of abuse, but it is just as serious and just as illegal. North Carolina makes it a crime to create or allow to be created serious emotional damage to a juvenile. Some evidence of this type of abuse is severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, and aggressive behavior towards him or herself or others.

RESPONSE and REPORTING PROCEDURE:

North Carolina law makes it illegal to not [report child abuse](#). If you have reason to suspect that a child is abused, neglected or dependent, or died as the result of maltreatment, you must report it to North Carolina's child protection agency, or the Director of the Department of Social Services in the county where the juvenile resides.

Reporting Procedures for Allegations:

Anyone who observes abuse of a child, youth, or disabled adult at an event or activity sponsored by Ardmore Baptist Church will immediately intervene and provide assistance, and the inappropriate conduct will immediately be reported to DSS at 336-703-2287. A minister will also be immediately notified, and the church will cooperate fully with law enforcement and/or the Department of Social Services. If the allegations involve an employee of the church, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken. The church reserves the right to remove any volunteer at any time for any reason.

¹ All definitions of abuse (physical, behavioral, sexual, and emotional) are as defined by the following: <https://statelaws.findlaw.com/north-carolina-law/north-carolina-child-abuse-laws.html>
Ardmore Baptist Church's Critical Incident Management Plan (see below) will be followed in the event of an allegation or incident.

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

Prior to Allegation/Incident:

- The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMP) will consist of the Pastor, the minister of the area in which the incident occurred, the Church Administrator, the Personnel Chairperson and the Deacon Board Chairperson.
- Policies and procedures surrounding safeguards for minors and special needs adults are contained in the Protection Policy for Youth and Children and Special Needs Adults.
- All employees and volunteers working with minors and special needs adults will be trained regarding proper procedures in the event of an allegation of ongoing or historical abuse involving a church member, guest, employee or volunteer. This education will be presented in a combination of online training, written policies and procedures, and in-person training
- All employees and volunteers should know how to fulfill their duties as mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect according to NC law as outlined in the Protection Policy for Youth and Children and Special Needs Adults.

Immediate Safety:

- Follow all mandated reporting requirements and contact the authorities as appropriate.
- Prevent the accused from having further access to children until an incident review is completed. *Before beginning an internal incident review, verify with local authorities that this will not interfere with their investigation.*
- If the accused person is an employee, follow discipline procedures accordingly.
- When applicable, notify other employees.

Initial Communication Plan:

- A single point person will be designated to respond to all inquiries from parents, the media and other stakeholders.
 - Prepare a short media statement in anticipation of receiving media inquiries.
 - All oral and written communication should speak with a voice of compassion and confidence.
 - All employees and volunteers will refer media inquiries to the point person.
- As soon as possible, a member(s) of the Critical Incident Management Team will meet in person with identified victims and their parents/guardians.
 - Victims and parents/guardians will be assured ABC recognizes the severity and gravity of the situation.
 - As part of the conversation, the CIMT members will inform the victim and parents/guardians of support options, such as counseling.
- The minister-in-charge/senior pastor and the CIMT shall use their discretion to determine when and how the Church communicates with the children currently attending Ardmore Baptist Church as well as those who may have had contact with the accused offender in the past.

- The message should communicate:
 - Empathy: Begin by stating that such incidents run counter to our church's values.
 - Facts: Include a summary of the incident, including information about the arrest, suspension, investigation, etc.
 - Contact Request: Ask parents to contact you or the specified authorities if they suspect their child may have been abused.
 - Your Response: Explain that you are fully cooperating with the authorities. Describe proactive steps you are taking such as offering resources to parents, hosting a parent meeting, training staff, and conducting an independent investigation to prevent it from happening again.
 - Host a parent/guardian meeting to speak directly with concerned families and directly answer any questions before rumors or misinformation is spread.
- Communicate as much information as you can about the incident.
- Provide information regarding the actions being taken by leadership in response to the incident.
- Describe resources that are available for the families and provide parents a chance to ask questions.
- Provide parents with information about how to talk to their children about abuse.

Ongoing Communication and Response:

- The Critical Incident Management Team will decide how to manage ongoing relations with authorities, parents, the community and media.
- Specific individuals within the church will be designated to handle various communications and outreach efforts.

Acknowledgment, Receipt, and Adherence to Ardmore Baptist Church's Protection Policy

I acknowledge that I have received and read a copy of Ardmore Baptist Church's Protection Policy for Youth and Children and Special Needs Adults. I agree that if there is any policy that I do not understand, I will seek clarification from the Minister-in-Charge of the area in which I serve with youth, children, or special needs adults. I agree that I will abide by the policy set forth to protect the youth, children, and special needs adults in my care at Ardmore Baptist Church.

Please sign and date this receipt and return it to the Minister-in-Charge (Youth, Children, or Adult Faith Formation Minister).

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

TO BE PLACED ON FILE WITH THE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT