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# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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NEW CITY CHURCH  
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

ADOPTED BY THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS

FEBRUARY, 2014  
AMENDED AUGUST, 2014

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## 1 Statement of Purpose

**A** New City Church is committed to providing a safe and Christ-centered environment for all children and youth. Sadly, abuse in today’s society (outside and inside the church) remains a reality. It is our moral and legal obligation to reduce the possibility of child abuse. We are committed to following our Abuse Protection policy and the laws of the State of Michigan in order to:

- protect the children and youth by providing a safe environment for spiritual growth;
- protect the members and volunteers from false allegations and accusations of abuse;
- protect the viability of the church and its ministries.

## 2 Policies and Procedures For Volunteers

**A** All policies and procedures are designed to protect our children and volunteers.

### 2.1 Adult Volunteers

**A** All staff members and volunteers for any position involving the supervision of minors must complete an application form.

**B** Staff members and volunteers will be accepted for such positions after satisfactory review of an application form, at least two reference forms, and a routine police background check. All application information will be kept strictly confidential.

**C** Applicants must attend New City Church regularly for at least six months before being accepted for any children's ministry position.

**D** Each application (including reference forms and police checks) will be reviewed by two individuals appointed by the Council of Elders. If concerns arise through this review regarding the applicant's fitness to serve in a position involving the care of minors or vulnerable adults, the reviewers will meet with at least one Elder to discuss these concerns. In such a case the Council of Elders will make a final determination to approve or deny an applicant.

**E** Should an applicant be denied, a member of the review team will meet with the applicant to inform him/her of this decision and to encourage other avenues of ministry.

**F** Applicants who acknowledge having engaged in child abuse or actual or attempted sexual molestation of a minor will not be accepted for any position involving the care of minors.

**G** Applicants who have been arrested for or convicted of child abuse or actual attempted sexual molestation of a minor will not be accepted for any position involving the care of minors.

**H** The Council of Elders will provide accountability and oversight for all staff members and volunteers, including Elders, who are involved in children, youth, and vulnerable adult ministries. This also includes any areas of counseling.

**I** This accountability and oversight includes but is not limited to:

- being regularly involved in the life of the church (attending worship services, participation in a City Group, etc.);
- being available for counseling, training and feedback;
- attend Abuse Prevention Workshops;
- reporting problems immediately and accurately.

## **2.2 Minor Volunteers**

**A** Minors who wish to assist adult volunteers in programs involving the care of children must be at least ten (10) years of age and must also be screened according to the policy stated. Parents or guardians must sign the application form for minors. No minor may work without an adult worker present. No males will be allowed to help with children under the age of six (6).

**B** The list of approved children's ministries workers will be updated regularly in the following ways.

- If a worker does not attend New City Church for 6 months, he/she will be removed from list.
- Renewal applications will be distributed to all approved workers approximately every three years.

**C** Exceptions to this policy include workers who have been approved in the past, remain in good standing as members, and are:

- missionaries who remain under support by New City Church;
- college students who are studying out of town;
- military personnel who have been deployed.

### **3 Protection Policies**

**A** For all programs involving children ages five and under, a minimum of two adult women must be present, with a ratio of 1 adult to 3 children. With two adults present, a volunteer who is a minor may be called in to assist.

**B** No male may assist any child to the bathroom, nor change diapers.

**C** When a woman or female youth worker is assisting a child to the bathroom, she should:

- first check the bathroom to make sure it is safe;
- stand outside the bathroom;
- prop the door open while the child is using the bathroom;
- assist the child if asked, leaving the door propped open.

**D** No child or youth worker may be alone with a child or youth except with written permission of his or her parent or guardian.

**E** All children need to be registered by the childrens' ministry worker(s). Once registered, a parent/guardian must sign in the child on the form provided upon arrival and later initial the form indicating the child has been picked up from the classroom or event. Only those listed on the child's registration will be allowed to pick up the child.

**F** If a child is being unruly and cannot be calmed down in a reasonable time or is disruptive to the rest of the group or is exhibiting signs of being contagiously ill, the helper or the second adult should inform the child's parent/guardian.

**G** Any person who may pose a threat to children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be prohibited from working in any ministry involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

**H** Premise monitors may be used to patrol hallways and common areas of any facility that New City Church uses where children, youth, and vulnerable adult activities occur. Premises monitors may also observe classrooms and activity areas through windows or open doors on a roving basis. This helps to ensure that the entire building is safe from any outside threat and also helps protect staff members and volunteers from unfounded accusations.

### **3.1 Abuse Policies**

**A** All childrens' ministry workers must be aware of indications that a child may have experienced abuse.

**B** Indications of physical abuse include:

- child reports injury by others;
- unexplained bruises, welts, lacerations, burns, fractures, abdominal injuries, or human bites;
- child is unusually wary of physical contact with adults, demonstrates extremes in behavior, or seems frightened of parents or guardians.

**C** Indications of sexual abuse include a child:

- reporting abuse by others;
- having difficulty walking or sitting;
- having torn, stained, or bloody underclothing;
- complaining of pain or itching in genital area;
- experiencing frequent or urgent need to use the bathroom;
- having bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal or anal area;
- having unusual interest in or knowledge of sexual matters;
- or having other unusual and excessive behaviors inappropriate for a child of that age.

**D** Workers should report any inappropriate behavior by a child or youth worker such as inappropriate comments about sexual matters, especially about or in the presence of children.

**E** The items listed above are not always indicative of abuse, but are to be viewed as warning signs. Reporting abuse can lead to severe consequences for a family, so it should never be done casually or for malicious purposes.

**F** If abuse is suspected when a child first comes to a childcare worker, the worker should listen, then immediately report such a case to the department head. He or she will contact a member of the Council of Elders. A determination will be made whether more information is needed and/or Child Protective Services will be contacted.

**G** If contacted, Child Protective Services is mandated by law to report suspected abuse to police. Information will be kept confidential at all times.

**H** NOTE: State law does not require volunteer minor volunteers in a church to report actual or suspected child abuse or neglect. Should a worker voluntarily make a report to civil authorities, however, the law provides that he or she will be immune to civil or criminal liability, provided the report was made in good faith and without malicious purpose.

**I** If a childrens' ministry worker at New City Church is accused abusing a child, the worker will be immediately relieved of his or her childrens' ministry duties pending an investigation.

**J** The Council of Elders will obtain a written opinion from the Church's Legal Team within twenty-four (24) hours of any allegation or suspicion of child abuse/neglect reported to ministry leaders. Volunteers/staff members should report any such suspicion or allegation to one of the Elders to request legal opinion. If the legal opinion advises the church to report the allegation or suspicion to law enforcement, it must be done immediately.

**K** The Council of Elders will receive legal opinion prior to termination of employment of a staff member as a result of allegation or suspicion of child abuse/neglect.

## **4 Procedures for Handling Allegations of Child Abuse**

**A** Please note: In this document, the words "child," "children," "youth," or "young people" refer to anyone between the ages of 0 and 16 or developmentally-impaired adults.

**B** Any alleged incident of abuse, by anyone (child, youth, or adult), whether witnessed in the church or disclosed by a child, youth, or adult, must be reported to the Elders or formal leadership (Sunday school teachers, hall monitor, etc). All actions and discussions should be documented on the report form for all suspected instances of sexual/physical abuse. Once reported, Child Protective Services or the police must be contacted.

**C** Suspected sexual or physical abuse must be reported to the appropriate governmental authorities, Child Protective Services or the police as required by the laws of the State of Michigan.

**D** If allegations involve a pastor or lay staff member, the Council of Elders will investigate and take appropriate action.

**E** Every effort will be made to protect the identity and privacy of all those involved. A suspected incident will not be discussed outside of New City church. Confidentiality must be maintained at all times. The rule of Matthew 18 should be followed within the limits of the law of the State of Michigan.

**F** Pastoral care will be extended to all those involved in the incident.

## **5 Parent Hand Out**

**A** The following information shall be given to each parent and/or guardian regarding New City Church's Child Protection Policy.

### **5.1 New City Church Responsibilities/Policies**

**A** We thought it would be helpful for parents to know how the Child Care Program at New City works. Below is a brief explanation of what is expected of our Care Givers and Parents. Any questions can be directed to the volunteer staff or the Elders.

- All workers will have attended New City Church for at least 6 months and pass a criminal background check.
- Men are not allowed to provide care for any child under the age of 5 (this includes all males, adults, teens, and pre-teens).
- We have a ratio of 3 children to 1 adult (2 infants to one adult) and there must be at least two adults in the nursery to cover for bathroom breaks. Pre-teen and teen girls can assist in the nursery to help cover when extra kids are in the nursery. The volunteer worker may take children to the bathroom but must wait outside the stall or leave the stall door open if the child is too small to go by him or herself.
- According to State Law, we are required to report obvious signs of abuse.

### **5.2 Parent/Guardian Responsibilities**

- Nursery is provided for infants and children up to 4. (As we grow and have more available workers we will expand to providing care up to age 5).
- Each child must be registered before being left in the nursery. Please provide the names of those approved to remove the child from nursery. If there are custody issues involved, please note the specifics on the back of the registration form. Once the child is registered, you will need to sign them in and sign them out with each visit.
- In some cases, a child may be too unruly, disobedient or disruptive for the volunteers to handle; one of the volunteers will invite you to the nursery so we can provide a solution and assist in training and developing ways to reinforce child protection guidelines. We all know that children can be difficult at times, if you have any questions or concerns about parenting, feel free to talk to any of the Elders for discipleship, encouragement, and wisdom on how to better guide your children.
- If you have any issues of concern with the nursery volunteers or the treatment of your child you are strongly encouraged to speak to one the Elders immediately.

## **6 Appendix**

### **6.1 Amendment(s)**

#### **6.1.1 Minor Volunteers**

The policy regarding minor volunteers was stated as follows in the original policy.

**A** Minors (ages 12-17) helping in programs involving the care of children must also be screened according to the policy stated. Parents or guardians must sign the application form for minors. No minor may work without an adult worker present. No males will be allowed to help in ministries with children under the age of six (6).

The new policy, adopted by the Council of Elders on 20 Aug 2014, is as follows.

**A** Minors who wish to assist adult volunteers in programs involving the care of children must be at least ten (10) years of age and must also be screened according to the policy stated. Parents or guardians must sign the application form for minors. No minor may work without an adult worker present. No males will be allowed to help with children under the age of six (6).