

## **CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY HAYES BARTON BAPTIST CHURCH**

### **BACKGROUND**

Child abuse affects the lives of thousands of children every year in the United States. Churches have long been seen as organizations which are lax or negligent in the screening, education, and training of their children's and youth workers. The result has been embarrassing false accusations or missed opportunities to protect a child in need. Churches have a responsibility for their ministry programs and for the actions of the volunteers that staff them. Court decisions throughout the nation are holding churches liable when they can prove that the church did not properly screen their volunteers, educate their workers, or provide adequate supervision. Much can and should be done by churches in the United States to make their children's and youth volunteers more aware of the seriousness of child abuse and the procedures that the church can and will implement to protect their children and youth from being abused.

### **PERSPECTIVE**

We desire to respond in earnest to make our facilities and programming a safe place for all children, youth, and volunteer workers. The physical condition of our facilities must continue to be evaluated for safety and effectiveness in ministry. Steps must be taken proactively to screen and to train children's and youth volunteers. Precautionary measures must be communicated by providing guidelines and procedures that offer assistance to parents and volunteers. Through increased awareness and supervision, we hope to prevent any incidents from occurring, and hence support effective, caring ministries which continue to further the cause of Christ and lead individuals to a personal relationship with Him.

### **OUR RESPONSE**

The safety and well-being of our children and youth are foremost in our concern. Unfortunately, abuse of children and youth is a significant issue in today's society. In addition, workers with children and youth are vulnerable to claims arising from misperceived conduct. Hayes Barton Baptist Church (hereafter HBBC) has implemented responsive procedures and affirmations for its ministerial and professional staff. HBBC hereby adopts a policy for its volunteers in children's and youth ministries. The policy affirms our commitment to provide a safe place for our youth and children and condemns clearly any instance of abuse of children or youth. The policy also recognizes that volunteer workers are an integral part of Christian ministry to children and youth. They must be encouraged to teach by their presence and example and be supported as they do so.

HBBC cannot, through any policy, guarantee against abuse of its children or youth; the existence of rules alone cannot insulate the church with its volunteers from assertions of liability.

However, the church wishes to make its condemnation of abuse of children and youth clear. Our congregation, including staff and volunteers, lend their voices in the denouncement of such conduct. In so doing they lend their support to each other, and they help prevent unfounded or mistaken claims. Each member working with youth or children will then individually, in writing, acknowledge and affirm the church's policy against abuse of its children and youth. HBBC will implement other institutional guidelines to minimize opportunities for abuse and false accusations against its professional and volunteer staff. It will provide increased education regarding abuse. It will implement a comprehensive policy for investigating and responding to reported instances of suggested or suspected abuse.<sup>1</sup>

Through this combination of efforts, HBBC hopes to minimize actual or perceived instances of abuse of its children and youth, to respond appropriately to those that might occur, and to guard against misinterpretations of actions as its volunteers continue to serve in Christian love.

Nothing in these policies and procedures shall be deemed to supercede the Preschool Policies of Hayes Barton Baptist Church, Revised 1996, and successor versions.

<sup>1</sup> N.C. Gen. Stat. § 7B-301. "Duty to report abuse, neglect, dependency, or death due to maltreatment. Any person or institution who has cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent, as defined by G.S. 7B-101, or has died as the result of maltreatment, shall report the case of that juvenile to the director of the department of social services in the county where the juvenile resides or is found. ..." (Emphasis added.)

## **AFFIRMATION**

As a volunteer in children and youth ministries, I affirm my commitment to support Hayes Barton Baptist Church (HBBC) as a safe place for children and youth. I recognize that HBBC has adopted policies that seek (a) to minimize actual or perceived instances of abuse of children and youth, (b) to respond to suspected instances of such abuse, and (c) to guard against misinterpretation of actions of its volunteers who strive to serve in Christian love. I understand these policies; I support them; and I agree to abide by them. I affirm that I will do my part in providing a nurturing Christian environment in which our children and youth can develop in faith and in trust.

*The volunteer's duty to disclose continues after the signing of this Affirmation and continues throughout the volunteer's service with the children and youth programs at Hayes Barton Baptist Church.*

I, \_\_\_\_\_, certify that I have not to my knowledge been the subject of any investigation, complaint, or legal or church-related action involving a reported instance of abuse of children or youth, and I have never been refused, resigned from, or been asked to resign from a position for reasons related to such abuse.

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_

## **OR**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am unable to make the certification above. I offer instead the description of an investigation, complaint, or legal or church-related action involving me for reasons related to abuse of children or youth on the page attached to this affirmation.

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_

## **ADDENDUM**

In lieu of the affirmation above, I offer the following explanation: (Use additional space as necessary.)

- (1) I have been the subject of an investigation or instance of alleged abuse of children or youth as follows (provide a summary of the factual circumstances):
- (2) The outcome of the matter was as follows:
- (3) The names and addresses of other persons knowledgeable of these circumstances are:

## PREVENTING ABUSE OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH: POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The following terms used throughout these policies and procedures are defined as follows:

**“Abuse”** is used throughout as defined in N.C. Gen. Stat. § 7B-101(1) and includes, but is not limited to physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.<sup>2</sup>

**“Activities”** are recurring, organized pursuits of groups with the purpose to build fellowship and contribute to the well-being of church members and/or participants from the community.

**“Certified”** denotes those volunteers with children and youth who have signed the affirmation and undergone the required training and screening process, where applicable.

A **“class”** is a regularly scheduled and organized gathering of participants in a learning environment for educational or developmental instruction.

**“Events”** are occasional opportunities to undergird and fulfill the purpose of the church, to reach and edify people of all ages in Christian faith and lifestyle development.

A **“group”** refers to spontaneous or planned gatherings of participants for fellowship, service, personal growth, spiritual development, or recreation.

**“Programs”** are regular classes and ministry opportunities focused upon enabling participants to grow in various aspects of Christian development.

**“Services”** are planned sessions of worship, celebration, affirmation, proclamation, prayer, and recognition of Christian commitment.

**“Volunteers”** refers to those adults working with children and youth who are certified by signing the affirmation and completing the required training and screening process.

**“Active Participant”** is one who has attended services and/or programs at least twice in a given month on average.

<sup>2</sup>“Sexual abuse” is further defined as verbal or physical interaction including, but not limited to, sexual conduct which is injurious to the physical or emotional health of another such as offensive, obscene, suggestive language, unacceptable visual contact, seductive behavior and unwelcome touching or fondling involving a child or youth and an adult for purposes of sexual stimulation. Sexual behavior involving a child or youth and an adult is always considered forced whether or not consented to by the younger party. (Adapted from Sexual Misconduct Policy and Its Procedures, adopted by 1991 General Assembly and revised by 1993 General Assembly.)

**To give guidance and protection to our volunteers and to give protection to children and youth, these practices shall be followed:**

- (1) **Age.** At least one certified adult aged twenty-one or over shall be on duty at every activity, event, or program offered at or sponsored by Hayes Barton Baptist Church. At least one other certified person aged eighteen or over shall also be present to assist the adult.
- (2) **Activities, Events, Programs, Services.** The rules under the Children's and Youth Protection Policy established by HBBC shall be followed in every service, activity, event, or program at HBBC. These rules also apply to events sponsored by HBBC that do not take place on the HBBC campus. Auxiliary organizations who use HBBC's facilities, and whose rules have been certified by HBBC as offering to children and youth protections equal to or greater than those protections herein, may utilize the rules of that auxiliary organization.
- (3) **Affirmation.** All volunteers shall sign an affirmation representing that they have not been subject of a complaint, investigation, or action involving a reported instance of abuse. In the event of inability to do so, they shall be qualified only after staff approval following adequate investigation. The volunteer's duty to disclose continues after the signing of the Affirmation and continues throughout the volunteer's service with the children and youth programs at Hayes Barton Baptist Church. Unless there is a break in the volunteer's service or a material change in the Children and Youth Protection Policy, volunteers will not be required to sign another Affirmation.
- (4) **Church Membership.** No person shall be allowed as a volunteer with children and youth until that person is considered an "Active Participant" for six consecutive months, or based on the approval of the ministers and/or Youth and Children's Ministry Councils.
- (5) **Screening.** Each volunteer shall be subject to a screening process before beginning service and then every year thereafter while in active service. This screening process shall include a criminal background check.
- (6) **Process Owner.** The owner of the process for screening volunteers shall be the Church Administrator. If a volunteer is found to be ineligible for service, the Church Administrator shall inform the Senior Pastor and Associate Pastor who will address the volunteer.
- (7) **Awareness Training.** Training programs will be offered annually and required for all volunteers.

- (8) **Teams.** All volunteers are assigned to work together as teams. At least two volunteers shall be present at all times for any children's/youth activity, event, or program. Volunteers should avoid one-on-one situations with children or youth apart from visible and public settings. If a volunteer finds him/herself alone for a class session, that person should secure another adult to be present in the classroom. Youth (grades 6-12) are permitted to assist with events for preschoolers and children with the permission of the Minister to Children and Families. The youth will NOT serve as substitutes for adult volunteers. There still must be a minimum of two adult volunteers present in the room.
- (9) **Transportation.** No volunteer shall provide transportation for one child or youth alone without written permission from a parent except in the event of an emergency.
- (10) **Overnight and Off-Campus Activities.** An adult volunteer cannot sleep in the same room alone with a minor or group of minors, unless that adult is the legal guardian of all minors within the same room. In cabin-style lodging, the leaders directing the event/activity will arrange for at least two adults (of the same gender) who are not married to stay with multiple minors (of the same gender). This may occasionally require placing more than one group in shared space. If there are separate bedrooms, an adult will be given their own room or may share with another adult. When adult volunteers must use the same bathing and dressing facilities as children or youth, the volunteers must establish a clear schedule of usage so as to eliminate simultaneous usage with children or youth.
- (11) **Reporting.** All allegations of abuse at HBBC shall promptly be made directly to the Senior Pastor. (In the event that the report should involve the Senior Pastor, the report shall be made directly to the Chairman of Deacons.) When an allegation of abuse is made or abuse is suspected, the following immediate actions should be taken:
- (a) Secure the safety of the child/youth.
  - (b) Notify the parents or legal guardians, if they are not the suspected perpetrator(s).
  - (c) The Senior Pastor (or Chairman of Deacons) shall be responsible for notifying the appropriate member(s) of the ministerial staff and the county Department of Social Services. The Senior Pastor shall confer with the Chairman of Deacons to determine the proper response.
  - (d) Report the incident to the church's legal counsel and insurance company
  - (e) Document in writing all actions taken to handle the incident.
- (12) **Reservations.** HBBC reserves the right to amend these policies and procedures as further study or experience may suggest.