

# Children/Teen Volunteer Policy

## SAFETY PROCEDURES

Church leaders must be concerned for the safety of the children, teens, and families they serve. At the same time they should be concerned about the safety and reputation of the adults and teens that volunteer to make this ministry possible. There will be some, however, who may come in with impure motives. Our church desires to provide a safe, loving classroom where the child feels comfortable and where learning can take place. Therefore, Bloomingdale Church has developed these procedures to make it difficult, if not impossible, for abuse to occur:

- *Staffing:* There should be a **minimum of two adults** (or one adult with one teen helper) in any room with children, except in the event of an emergency. When it is necessary that only one adult teacher be in a closed room with children, the door of that room will remain slightly open or have a window that will allow others to look in.
- *Rest Room Guidelines (for children):* We recommend that parents take their children to the rest room prior to each class. In the event that a child needs to use the **rest room a female adult volunteer (preferably two) should escort the child to the rest room and prop the door open to make sure everything is in order.** The adult volunteer should never be alone with a child in an unsupervised rest room and never go into a cubicle with a child and shut the door. The volunteer should call the child's name if he/she is taking longer than seems necessary. Teen volunteers should not assist students in the rest room.
- *Nursery:* Safety rules are distributed to parents and posted in the nursery. **Diapers are to be changed by the parents only.** No snacks are allowed in the nursery. Toys and bedding are to be continuously sanitized. Children are to be released to their parents only.
- *Health:* Out of concern and consideration for other children and volunteers, please do not receive into the classroom any child displaying signs of a fever, runny nose, cough, rash, eye infection or vomiting. **All medications are to be given by parents only** and are not to be left in the classroom.
- *Emergencies:* Procedures for emergency situations (fire, tornado, etc.) are posted and should be reviewed for planning route of escape to safety. **First aid kits are available in the church office** and in most classrooms. Infectious disease kits are provided for every room. Contact a parent when an injury occurs and report it to the ministry leader in charge.
- *Discipline Policy:* Encourage good behavior. Remind children of proper behavior. Redirect the child by moving him/her to a new area. Remove the child from the group using a time-out chair within the classroom. Return the child to the parent if all else fails.
- *Proper Affection:* Holding a child's hand when walking to an activity, arm around shoulder when comforting, patting child's head, hand, shoulder or back when encouraging, gently holding shoulders or chin when redirecting behavior, holding a preschooler who is crying. Avoid kissing, extended hugging and tickling, and carrying or sitting an older child on your lap.
- *Special Events & Overnight Policies:* Church leaders must pre-approve off-site activities and overnight events. Parental consent forms are required for each child participating. All events should be supervised by a minimum of two, unrelated and approved adult leaders.

# CHILD/TEENAGER ABUSE PROTECTION AND PROCEDURES

## Obligation to Report:

Any church employee or worker who has reasonable cause to believe that a child has suffered abuse or neglect is required to report or cause a report to be made under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act [325 ILCS 5/4]. They should report **immediately** to a member of the pastoral staff of the church. The church will contact the proper authorities if there are reasonable grounds for belief.

## What to Report:

Be prepared to give a brief description of the incident(s) of abuse to the pastoral staff, including: names of alleged victim(s) and perpetrator(s), details about the actual incident, indication of intention, the time and place of the incident, information about possible witnesses, and evidence of abuse. **It is important to keep the information confidential at all times. Please document everything.**

## Definitions of Abuse:

**Physical Neglect:** Failure to meet the basic requirements for supervision, housing, clothing, medical attention, and nutrition for the child.

**Physical Abuse:** Non-accidental physical injury of a child.

**Sexual Abuse:** Sexual exploitation of a child done for the sexual gratification of the offender or another person.

## Signs of Abuse to watch for:

- Unexplained bruises, burns, fractures, or abrasions.
- Consistent hunger, inappropriate dress, poor hygiene, or unattended medical needs.
- Moves with discomfort and shies away from physical contact.
- Extremes of aggression or withdrawal including listlessness and depression.
- Difficulty sitting or walking.
- Inappropriate sex play.
- Sudden changes in school performance, appetite, or self-worth.

## Report Follow-Up

- In cases where the child is not in immediate danger, a pastor, elder and a third party with reasonable cause will interview the parents. If there is reasonable cause to suspect child abuse the proper authorities will be contacted and the parents will be informed of such an action.
- In cases where a church volunteer or staff member is involved, a pastor, elder and a third party with reasonable cause will interview the person suspected of child abuse. Immediate suspension from ministry shall result if the volunteer or staff member is suspected of child abuse until a complete investigation and decision have been made by the proper authorities.

# VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES

1. The pastoral staff or the volunteers coordinating a particular ministry will recruit volunteers.
2. Volunteers are *only permitted* to work with children or youth *after they have been active participants in Bloomingdale Church for at least six months*, have *filled out an annual volunteer application*, and have had their personal references checked. Anyone who is 23 or younger must have their pastor's signature. Volunteers must give a clear testimony of Christian conversion and be in agreement with Bloomingdale Church policies and doctrines.
3. *The Volunteer Application Form must be completed for all positions involving ministry to children at Bloomingdale Church.* The form requests personal and mental health related information. All forms are to be kept in a locked, permanent, confidential file. *The form is to be filled out annually.*
4. Two personal references are requested on the Volunteer Application Form. The reference should exclude relatives. Teenage volunteers should include a youth pastor or youth worker reference. These references will be phoned by the Children's Ministry Director or the volunteer coordinating a particular ministry and be asked to affirm the appointment of the volunteer. A record will be kept of the person making the phone calls, the date of the calls and a summary of the references' comments.
5. An interview will be conducted by the volunteer coordinating the ministry or the Children's Ministry Director if any of the responses provided on the Volunteer Personnel Form need to be clarified. A summary of the interview is to be made and kept with the applicant's placement file.
6. The Volunteer Application Form includes a statement that grants permission to pursue a criminal records check with local, state and government agencies. A records check may be made depending upon the applicant's responses on the legal questionnaire. All records secured will be placed in the volunteer's placement file and will be considered confidential.
7. *Applicant's names will be checked against the registry of convicted sex offenders.* If a match is found, the applicant will be denied access to any ministry programs involving children.