



Mooretown Brethren in Christ Church CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

INTRODUCTION and GENERAL PURPOSE

This document reflects the commitment of Mooretown Brethren in Christ Church (hereafter referred to as “MBICC” and “the congregation”) to provide protective care and a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and workers who participate in church-sponsored activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children attending MBICC from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

A healthy church utilizes a large number of volunteers in a variety of ways in relation to church-sponsored activities occurring both on and off its premises. This policy is designed to assist church leaders in recruiting volunteers and to provide, to the greatest extent possible, for the safety of children and youth who are served by our congregation. Further, its implementation will appropriately balance each individual’s right to privacy with the needs of the congregation to protect itself and those who rely on it for protection.

It is the intent of MBICC to maintain an environment free of sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, physical abuse, and emotional abuse for all employees, volunteers, members and participants of the congregational community. Such conduct will not be tolerated.

MBICC will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of paid and volunteer staff and make appropriate training materials available for individuals involved in children and youth work environments within the church regarding these policies MBICC will also have a procedure for reporting any suspected incidents in conformance with the requirements of Michigan State Law and will cooperate with any necessary investigation into any report of suspected abuse.

DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “worker” includes both paid and unpaid persons who work with children. The term “volunteer” refers to anyone involved in a day care or school, in overnight activities involving minors, in counseling of minors, or in one-on-one mentoring of minors.



SELECTION OF WORKERS

Only those individuals (both volunteer and compensated) who meet specific qualifications will be allowed to work in the supervision or custody of minors in MBICC sponsored functions.

MBICC will provide mandatory training on this Child Protection Policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events. Church staff and volunteers who work with children and youth must have a faithful church attendance record.

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a) **Six Month Rule**

No person will be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with MBICC for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

b) **Written Application**

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous MBICC affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the MBICC.

c) **Personal Interview**

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

d) **Reference Checks**

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature and not personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at MBICC.

e) **Criminal Background Check**

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and "volunteers" as defined above.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing MBICC to run the check. A refusal to sign the authorization form will automatically disqualify the applicant from working with children at MBICC.



MBICC Governing Board will determine if an incident discovered during a background check is to be treated as a disqualifying offense, after considering all the pertinent information. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude the applicant from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the MBICC.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

The following guidelines pertain to all individuals who work with any children/youth programs at MBICC:

- A couple (husband and wife) will not serve in the nursery at the same time unless a third adult is available to serve along with them.
- Any time youth classes are in session (Junior Church, Sunday School, etc.) classroom doors will remain open unless there is a window which allows for an unobstructed view of the room. Doors are to never be locked while persons are inside the room.
- Whenever large group sessions are conducted, two volunteers, including at least one adult, will be present. Volunteer/staff will not meet alone with a child without another adult or leader nearby to observe.
- Classrooms held in offsite facilities such as a home will adhere to the same policies and procedures as when being conducted in the church building. Children will not meet without adequate adult supervision.
- In the event that church members use their homes for meetings, a child's parent/guardian must give consent for the child to meet at said home. Two adult leaders must conduct the in-home programs. Children attending in-home programs must be able to use the bathroom facilities without assistance
- If, at any time a child needs significant medical attention, the parent(s)/guardian(s) are to be notified immediately.

TEENAGE WORKERS

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable to have babysitters (paid or volunteer) under the age of 18 assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 13.
- Must be screened as specified above.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.



REGISTRATION

Parents/guardians need to complete a registration card annually for each pre-school child. Visitors should be encouraged to fill out a registration card for their child on the first visit to the class. These cards will be kept on file in the classroom and in the church office under the supervision of the appropriate staff. An identifying procedure will be used to match parents/guardians with their nursery age child.

NURSERY

The following expectations apply to all church workers involved in the nursery ministry:

- Two workers are to be in the nursery at all times.
- Only one member of an immediate family should serve in the nursery at a given time. A couple (husband and wife) will not serve in the nursery at the same time, unless a third adult is available to serve along with them.
- When dropping off children, parents/guardians are to leave as soon as the child is settled into an activity or is in the care of a worker.
- No child will be in the nursery without an adult present.
- Only the adult supervisor and the helper should be in the nursery with children. Additional individuals present in the nursery are distracting for the children and their presence opens the possibility of children leaving the nursery area unattended or without the knowledge of the nursery staff.
- The diapering of an infant or toddler must take place in the nursery room under the observation of another worker.
- Parents/guardians are asked to not enter the nursery until they are ready to collect their child. Exception: Parents/guardians who are in the process of toilet training their children may come into the nursery to assist their child to the bathroom.
- Parents are responsible to collect their children and are asked to not send older siblings to perform this task. This will help the nursery supervisor know that the parent is aware of the location of the child.

BATHROOM POLICY

We strongly encourage parents to take their children to the bathroom prior to each class but understand that additional assistance may be required for some children under certain circumstances.

For children who do not require assistance in the bathroom, the worker must remain outside the bathroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker will open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers will prop



open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child and provide the child as much privacy as possible.

For the protection of all, workers must never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child.

SPECIAL EVENTS/OVERNIGHT POLICIES

- All overnight activities must be pre-approved by the MBICC Governing Board and also have an approval by the parents/guardians of the attending child(ren). Off campus day activities must likewise have prior approval by the parents/guardians.
- Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child participating in off campus activities. These forms are distributed through the church office. The supervisor of the activity will complete the Special Events Checklist, including a list of the drivers, and submit it to the church office.
- When an activity involves transporting children, all drivers must be at least 21 years-of-age and have a valid driver’s license, current automobile insurance and proof of current liability coverage from their insurance company. The number of persons per vehicle must not exceed the number of seat belts. Seat belts must be worn at all times.
- Any trips or outings will require the supervision of at least two approved adult leaders (age 21 or older).
- Adult leaders will be responsible for an assigned group of children during the duration of the event. Minimum staffing ratios (leader to children) as listed below are to be observed:

Preschool	1:5 children
Grade School	1:8 children
Youth	1:10 youth

WORKER BEHAVIOR

Although appropriate display of affection is often part of conveying support and encouragement to one another, such displays can be misinterpreted. Therefore, workers should always conduct themselves in an appropriate manner, being role models of obedience, respect, and honesty to young believers.

Touch is an essential part of nurturing. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. Be aware of and sensitive to differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, individual personalities and special needs. The following guidelines are to be promoted for pure, genuine and positive displays of God’s love:

- Hugs: One-arm side hugs or hand-to-arm hugs are positive contact. Adult leaders are to avoid initiating full contact, body-to-body hugs or kisses.



- Lap Sitting: Sitting on laps is appropriate for children 5 and younger. Discourage lap-sitting with school-age children. Rather, encourage them to sit next to you.
- Casual Touch: Gentle contact during activities may be on children's heads, shoulders, arms, and hands. Physical discipline including, but not limited to, striking a child with a hand or object on any part of the body must never be used on children or students.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

This Discipline Policy applies to Junior Church, Sunday School and scheduled weekday classes and/or programs either at the church facility or offsite.

At times, children and youth engage in behaviors that adults find unacceptable and contrary to their wishes. All interaction regarding discipline needs to carefully consider a child's dignity and self-esteem. Gentleness, respect, and understanding must guide all actions and words. Discipline will be carried out through instruction, training, and correction.

Discipline can turn into abuse when (a) the child is blamed by the adult to justify the discipline, (b) pain, injury, or humiliation results from the discipline, or (c) it is used excessively in a short span of time, or (d) one child is singled out repeatedly for discipline when others are also behaving unacceptably.

Teachers, workers and volunteers are instructed to follow these basic guidelines:

- Corporal punishment (spanking, slapping, hitting, pushing, etc.) is not permitted, even if parents/guardian have suggested or given permission for it.
- Abusive verbal discipline (yelling, hurling insults, threatening) is not permitted.
- Parents/guardians are to be informed and involved whenever a child/youth misbehaves beyond minor correction, or if a pattern of misbehavior increases.
- Expectations of children's/youths' behavior must reflect their age and level of comprehension. Similarly, discipline must reflect their age and level of comprehension.

Workers are to use the following strategies to assist them in dealing with discipline issues:

1. Direct intervention and verbal instruction.
2. Verbal correction and instruction given a second time along with the appropriate time-out and parent/guardian notification. For young children, the duration of a time-out measured in minutes should not exceed the child's age. For example, a four-year-old should not have to sit for a time-out any longer than four minutes.
3. Distract the child/youth with another activity.
4. Help the child/youth focus on another more acceptable behavior.
5. Isolate the child/youth from others if another worker is available to assist.



6. If the above outlined measures do not produce the desired results, seek another adult's assistance.
7. If it becomes necessary, remove the child from the classroom and return him/her to the custody of the parent/guardian.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following should be observed when adults are supervising early adolescent and teen students:

- **Driving**: When a youth ministry worker is driving students home, they must never be alone with a student.
- **Lunches**: One-on-one lunch appointments with students should only be made if separate transportation is used, and the meal takes place in a public location.
- **Dating**: At no time shall anyone working with youth pursue a dating relationship with a student. Workers should always be sensitive to students with "crushes."
- **Open Door Policy**: At no time will any youth ministry worker have a one-on-one meeting with a student behind closed doors. For the protection of both individuals the door must be kept at least partially open.

SICK CHILD POLICY

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at MBICC. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours;
- Green or yellow runny nose;
- Eye or skin infections; and/or
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease.

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

ACCIDENTAL INJURIES TO CHILDREN

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under the care of MBICC, the following steps will be followed:



1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from MBICC care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an Accident/incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.
4. It is the policy of MBICC not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under its care (except as noted for minor injuries above). Medications should be administered by a parent/guardian at home. Parents/guardians are reminded of MBICC's sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents/guardians of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents/guardians of such children should address their situation with the senior pastor to develop a plan of action.

First aid boxes will be kept on hand and all workers are to review the location and content yearly. Workers are instructed to review fire emergency policies yearly.

RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

Under Michigan law and for purposes of this policy, "Child abuse" means *harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare that occurs through nonaccidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or maltreatment, by a parent, a legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare or by a teacher, a teacher's aide, or a member of the clergy.* (Michigan Child Protection Law: Act 238 Section 722.622.2g)

Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any intentionally inflicted physical injury to a child. Examples include, but are not limited to beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury resulting from a child not nurtured or provided with love and security. Examples include, but are not limited to, an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child under certain conditions, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and the viewing of pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may have the occasion to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under their care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at MBICC becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, they must report



this immediately to the senior pastor for further action, including reporting the situation to authorities as required by Michigan law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred on MBICC's premises or during its sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The individual who suspects child abuse will review with the senior pastor the situation he/she has observed.
2. If the senior pastor is the alleged perpetrator of abuse or misconduct the individual who suspects child abuse will review what was observed with the MBICC Child Protection Team, excluding the senior pastor (The MBICC Child Protection Team will assume the duties of the senior pastor for all remaining steps in this process).
3. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified by the senior pastor.
4. The senior pastor will notify the MBICC Child Protection Team.
5. The worker or church member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. He or she should be instructed to have no contact with the victim or with witnesses.
6. All allegations of abuse should be reported to the civil authorities, and MBICC will comply with Michigan requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse. MBICC will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
7. The insurance company will be notified, and MBICC will complete an incident report. If allowed by law, any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
8. MBICC will designate a spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of MBICC should refrain from speaking to the media.
9. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it. The purpose would be a provision of pastoral support during the time of crisis. This visit would not be done for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.
10. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.
11. All procedures followed in handling the allegation will be documented.