

**Chapelstreet Church**

**PROTECTION POLICY**

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## **PROTECTION POLICY PURPOSE STATEMENT**

Chapelstreet Church desires to be a safe place for all who attend any activity or ministry. Each year children and youth are victimized by individuals they know and trust. The church is not immune to the potential for such abuse or neglect of children or youth, either by its members or by those in leadership positions. Incidents of abuse or neglect cut across every racial, social, economic, and religious boundary. This *PROTECTION POLICY* reflects Chapelstreet's commitment to protect children and youth from harm. The policy applies to all volunteer and compensated workers of Chapelstreet Church.

Chapelstreet Church will not tolerate abuse or neglect of our children or youth. Your cooperation in this policy not only reflects your concern about their safety in this society, but also your willingness to take steps toward halting abuse and its detrimental effects.

For the safety and protection of our children and youth, as well as for our and workers, all people who participate in church-sponsored activities with them will be required to comply with this policy.

### **Purposes:**

1. To create a safe environment so families feel comfortable leaving their children and youth in the care of Chapelstreet Church staff and volunteers.
2. To help prevent the incidence of abuse or misconduct between staff/volunteers and minors involved in church events.
3. To protect staff/volunteers from false claims.
4. To document proper response procedures in the event of alleged misconduct.

# Chapelstreet Church PROTECTION POLICY

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Definitions:

Preschool: Children who are not yet in 1st grade.

Children: Infants through 4<sup>th</sup> grade

Youth: 5th through 12th grade students

Young Adults: 18 – 20 year olds

Adults: Over 21 years old

Leaders: Any staff member, adult volunteer or young adult serving in Children or Student Ministries

Ministry Staff refers to paid staff.

Parent: Parent or legal guardian.

## Architectural Precautions

- ◇ All classroom doors will have windows or side windows. Sight lines through the windows will remain unobstructed at all times.
- ◇ Toilets should be age appropriate so children can use them with little assistance.
- ◇ Preschool rooms will have one-way windows.
- ◇ Classrooms for nursery through kindergarten children will have bathrooms located in the rooms, or near the rooms, so they may be used whenever needed by children.

## Appropriate Touch

“Good touch” is important to each of us; it’s what we all need to grow and thrive. Touch was important to Jesus as He healed and comforted people and held children. Our Christian tradition shares love with each other through hugs, placing an arm around another’s shoulder or squeezing a hand to say, “You are loved.”

It is imperative that the Christian community not lose the importance of “good touch,” that is, touch that is genuine and supportive and displayed in an age- and gender-appropriate way. We need to continue to express Christian love in appropriate ways with children and youth. To a child who is upset, a hug and kind word can be most comforting, displaying the pure, genuine and positive nature of God’s love. In the midst of our caution, let us not forget that good touch is just that: *good!*

## VOLUNTEER SELECTION

- ◇ All volunteers must be regular attendees of Chapelstreet Church for a minimum of 6 months, or be a believer who has attended another church of like-minded faith for 6 months, and provides a recommendation from a ministerial staff person of that church.
- ◇ All volunteers must complete the following procedures before serving in any church-sponsored activities:
  - Complete a Chapelstreet Church Ministry Application form.
  - Be interviewed by a staff member.
  - Attend orientation/training meetings appropriate to the level of the volunteer.
- ◇ Requests for criminal background checks on all adults and young adults will occur on each 3-year anniversary of their initial application.

## CHILDREN'S POLICIES

- ◇ Registration
  - A registration or visitor form will be on file for each child attending Sunday School or other ongoing programs.
  - All children must be electronically checked in to attend ongoing Chapelstreet Church programs.
- ◇ Release Procedures
  - No children shall be independently released.
  - Children will be released only to persons with the security number that matches the child's security number on his name label.
- ◇ Diaper changing and bathroom policies
  - Changing tables in classrooms will be in full view of a window.
  - An adult volunteer should be in view of a child going to and from the bathroom (for hallway bathrooms).
  - If a preschool child needs assistance in a preschool bathroom, an adult volunteer may assist with the door slightly ajar.
  - If an elementary child needs assistance in a bathroom, two adult leaders must be present (one could be a young adult).
- ◇ Incident Reports
  - Upon the event of accidental injury to a child, requiring onsite first aid or other medical assistance an Incident Report is to be completed by an adult witness prior to their leaving the building.
  - The Incident Report is to be turned into an Chapelstreet Church staff member.
  - Upon child pickup, the parents are to be notified of the incident and any first aid steps that were administered.
- ◇ Discipline
  - When discipline is necessary, carefully consider a child's dignity and self-esteem. Gentleness, respect, and understanding must guide all actions and words.
  - Discipline will be carried out only by an adult through instruction, training, and correction. See any existing departmental discipline policies for further information.
  - More serious or continuing disciplinary issues should be taken to the appropriate ministry staff member.
- ◇ Volunteer Supervision
  - At least two volunteers, one of whom must be an adult, will be in every preschool classroom.
  - When elementary children are in small groups with one adult or young adult leader the leader must be in view of another adult.
  - All volunteers working with children must wear a name tag
  - Immediate family members may work together in preschool rooms when at least one other volunteer is present.
  - There must be at least one female volunteer present in each preschool room.

## YOUTH POLICIES

- ◇ On Campus Programming
  - For small group sessions at least one adult will be present. For 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders, the leader may be a young adult. In the event only one leader is present in a small group, the adult or young adult must be in view of another adult.
  - In a classroom environment, at least two leaders will be present.

- In middle school ministries, High School Students may serve as a volunteer if they are partnered with another adult leader.
- For mixed gender large-group activities, an adult or young adult of each gender will be present.
- ◇ Off-campus Regular Programming and Special Events
  - A minimum of two adult volunteers is required for these types of activities. When youth of both genders are attending, at least one male and one female adult volunteer are required.
  - The student to adult/young adult ratio will be at a maximum of 13 to 1.
  - There will be at least one adult for every 3 young adults.
  - Two adults/young adults are required for any meeting in a private home.
  - Any overnight special event or activity must be approved by the responsible ministry staff member.
  - An all-year participation form is mandatory for events requiring parental registration.
  - Adult chaperones (unscreened adult volunteers) are permitted for special events in public places under the supervision of the ministry staff leader.
- ◇ Retreats / Trips:
  - All overnight activities must be approved by the responsible ministry staff member. All-year participation forms must be signed by a parent and returned.
  - A minimum of 2 adults (or one adult and one young adult) is required per gender.
  - There will be at least one adult for every two young adults per gender.
  - The student to adult/young adult ratio will be at a minimum of 10 to 1.
  - Cabins or sleeping rooms require a minimum of two adults (or one adult and one young adult) per room or no adults in a room (for sleeping arrangements in a hotel, for instance).
- ◇ Discipline
  - When discipline is necessary, carefully consider the youth'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. Corporal punishment is never allowed at any time. The only acceptable time to physically restrain a student is when you see a student attempting to do bodily harm to self or another student or leader.
  - More serious or continuing disciplinary issues will be addressed by the appropriate ministry staff member.
- ◇ Special Concerns
  - When a staff member or leader is driving students to or from any scheduled church program or activity, he/she should not be alone with a student except in an emergency, or with the permission of a parent.
  - A Staff member/volunteer may be the only adult in a car with students if they are carpooling as a part of a larger ministry group (for instance, multiple vans driving together to a weekend retreat).
  - MEALS: One-on-one meal appointments between a staff member/volunteer and a student must occur in a public place in view of other adults.
  - DATING: No adult or young adult may be in a dating/romantic relationship with a student.
  - APPOINTMENTS: One-on-one meetings between a staff member/volunteer and a student must be in view of another adult.
  - COMMUNICATION: Personal, persistent and/or excessive communication via phone calls, texting, email, or social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) between an adult or young adult and a youth is unacceptable and is to be reported to ministry staff. Communication directly related to the ministry program or an event, including occasional communication to an individual related to the same ministry program or event is acceptable. Snapchat or other social media platforms that do not keep a record of your communication is prohibited with youth.

## RESPONSE TO PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL ABUSE ALLEGATIONS

- ◇ Response Procedure: In the case of an allegation of physical or sexual abuse involving church staff or volunteers at church programs or events, the following requirements apply:
  - The person made aware of the allegation must immediately notify a staff member, preferably the staff member who oversees the ministry for which the program or event is a part, and complete an Allegation Form. All steps handling the incident must be documented by that staff member.
  - If the accused is a pastoral staff member, immediately report the incident to another pastoral staff member.
  - The incident then must immediately be reported by the staff member to the Senior Pastor and the Church Chairman.
  - The parents/ legal custodians of the allegedly abused child or youth must be notified by the Senior Pastor and/or staff as soon as possible.
  - It is the responsibility of the Senior Pastor to report the incident to the Director of Operations, who in turn must notify the church insurance company and seek legal counsel.
  - When there is reasonable cause to believe the child or youth may have been abused physically or sexually as defined by Illinois law (325 ILCS 5/3), the pastoral staff member first notified must immediately report or cause a report to be made to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Under no circumstances may any church leader exercise any control, restraint, modification, or other change in the report or the forwarding of the report to the department. There is no “privilege” that attaches to any communication that would constitute grounds for failing to report such an incident.
  - The accused should not be confronted until the safety of the allegedly abused child or youth is secured, and only upon advisement by legal counsel.
  - A prepared statement to the press and to the congregation should only be made by the Senior Pastor and/or Church Chairman as advised by legal counsel.
- ◇ Response to the Alleged Victim
  - All allegations must be taken seriously and emotional support given to the alleged victim.
  - All efforts should be made to reach out to the alleged victim and the alleged victim’s family, extending whatever pastoral and professional resources may be needed.
- ◇ Response to the Accused
  - The accused shall be treated with dignity and support.
  - The accused will be suspended of his/her duties until the investigation is finished and the matter is resolved.
  - Reinstatement procedure will be determined by the Senior Pastor.
  - Pastoral and/or professional resources should likewise be extended to the accused.

### Review Cycle:

This policy should be reviewed every four years, or more frequently if necessary.