MYERS PARK BAPTIST CHURCH

Inclusivity | Spirituality | Community | Justice

Children and Minors Protection Policy

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1. INTRODUCTION

God embraces children with love and gives their nurture and care into our hands. We believe that Myers Park Baptist Church (MPBC) is called to provide a safe, loving, and secure environment for the children and minors who come here to participate in our community of faith. These young people are entitled to the highest safeguards we can provide, and we understand that safeguarding our young members requires our utmost vigilance.

To this end we adopt the Myers Park Baptist Church Children and Minors Protection Policy (the policy) as outlined below. In so doing, we hope to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of the children and minors of MPBC. We commit ourselves to implementing this policy to the best of our ability and to abiding by all procedures associated with this policy as well as those laws and statutes adopted by NC State Legislature regarding child and minors safety and protection.

The goal of this policy is intended to guide and inform all who work with children and minors at MPBC C campus workers, congregants, The Cornwell Center and Through-The-Week-School (TTWS) personnel, parents and caretakers.

It is further understood that as a ministry of MPBC, Through the Week-School and The Cornwell Center are governed by this policy.

This policy supersedes any and all prior MPBC Children and Minors Protection Policy.

2. DEFINITIONS AND TERMS

- **Campus Worker**: any and all clergy, staff, employees or volunteers without regard to compensation or ordination, without regard to length of service, and without regard to terms of service. Also included are Through-the-Week-School (TTWS) administrative staff and teachers and The Cornwell Center staff.

- **Congregant**: any person participating in campus-sponsored activities, on campus or off campus, without regard to formal membership or longevity of association with the congregation.

- **Campus-Sponsored Activities**: include any and all gatherings that arise from MPBC-generated worship, education, social, administrative, pastoral, or recreational events. Campus-sponsored activities include on campus and off campus gatherings. Also included are casual gatherings among congregants on the MPBC campus.

- **Minor**: a child or minors (under 18). This term shall also include all legally incompetent persons, regardless of age.

- **Parent**: is understood as "parent" (biological or adoptive), "guardian" (one appointed by court to have care, custody & control of minor), and "custodian" (person or agency having legal custody of a minor).

- **Caretaker**: someone (other than parent, guardian or custodian) who is responsible for a minor's health and welfare in a residential setting. This also includes people who care for

minors in day-care homes and day-care facilities. This includes people or relatives employed by parents to assume responsibility for a minor. TTWS teachers and staff and The Cornwell Center staff are not, by law, considered caretakers.

- **Non-Caretaker**: is defined as one given temporary caretaking responsibilities for minors. Campus workers and congregants, when supervising minors, are termed non-caretakers, as are teachers, coaches, club leaders, troop leaders, chaperones and others with similar temporary responsibility.

- **Known Offender**: anyone who has been arrested for, convicted of, has pled guilty to, or has otherwise admitted to an act (civil or criminal) of abuse or neglect of a minor, including but not limited to sexual abuse.

- **Child Abuse** is defined as follows:

    - *Causing / allowing serious injury*: A minor is abused when a parent or caregiver inflicts serious, nonaccidental physical injury on him or her. A minor is also abused when one of those persons creates or allows to be created, a substantial risk of serious nonaccidental physical injury.

    - *Cruelty:* A minor is abused if the parent or caretaker uses cruel or grossly inappropriate procedures or devices to modify the minor's behavior.

    - *Emotional abuse*: A minor is emotionally abused if parent / caretaker either creates or allows others to create serious emotional damage to the minor.

    - *Contributing to delinquency*: A minor is abused if parent / caretaker encourages him or her to commit delinquent acts that involve moral turpitude or if one of those persons directs or approves of the minor's commission of such acts.

- **Child Neglect**: A neglected minor is one who:

    - Does not receive proper care, supervision or discipline;

    - Is abandoned;

    - Is not given proper medical attention;

    - Is not provided necessary remedial care;

    - Lives in an injurious environment; or

    - Has been placed for care of adoption in violations of law.

- **Sexual Abuse** is understood as including:

    - *Sexual molestation*: Sexual contact, involvement, or activity with a minor.

- *Sexual exploitation*: Development or attempted development of a sexual or romantic relationship between campus worker, congregant or non-caretaker and minor, whether or not there is apparent consent from minor.

- **Sexual harassment**: Although sexual harassment is not easy to define, for the purposes of this policy it is defined as sexually oriented humor or language, questions or comments about sexual behavior or preference, unwelcome or undesired physical contact, inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance, or repeated requests for social engagements. This definition is not meant to be exhaustive.

3. SAFEGUARDS ADOPTED TO REDUCE THE RISK OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

The following guidelines apply to all who engage with minors on campus – this includes those who are paid and unpaid. All campus workers must meet the following requirements:

- Has proven engagement or experience in one of our Campus Entities and has been cleared to serve by a senior staff liaison to the ministry on which the volunteer would like to serve.

- Undergone reference checks;

- Undergone background checks which may include personal reference checks and will include their work history with minors:

    - Background checks will be run every three years.

    - Completed annual policy training;

    - Trainings will be required every three years.

        - All volunteers and paid employees will receive a copy of the policy along with the Policy Covenant annually.

- Informed the Senior Minister of any charges to, previous arrests for, admissions of guilt to, convictions of charge(s) of abuse or neglect.

- Except in certain instances, those who engage with minors must be at least 5 years older than the group they are engaging with.

- MPBC reserves the right to request at any time criminal records checks on prospective campus workers.

- **Prohibited Behaviors**

    - MPBC strictly prohibits interaction with minors by anyone who has been arrested for, convicted of, pled guilty to, or has otherwise admitted to an act (civil or criminal) of child abuse or neglect. Further, MPBC prohibits interaction with minors by anyone known to have a paraphiliac diagnosis (e.g., pedophilia, ephebophilia, exhibitionism, voyeurism, etc.) as defined by the American Psychiatric Association.

- MPBC strictly prohibits abuse, neglect, sexual misconduct of any type by any campus worker, caretaker, congregant, or non-caretaker toward any minor participating in campus-sponsored activities.

- All campus workers will follow all MPBC campus policies.

- **Code of Conduct for Working with Minors**

  - No partaking in tobacco or intoxicating substance while on campus or while working.

  - No physical punishment of minor; no non-consensual contact.

  - No intimate, romantic, or sexual relationship with minors.

  - No transporting minors in personal vehicle (without written approval from caregiver and supervisor).

- **Adults' Relationships with Minors**

  - At least two Child and Youth Protection Policy-trained adults will supervise all campus-sponsored programs and activities involving minors, whether on or off campus.

  - Adults must remain in sight of one another at all times.

  - When one-on-one interactions between minors and campus workers or congregants are necessary, care must be taken to conduct the meeting in an environment that provides visibility by other adults. Another policy-trained adult or parent AND staff member must have knowledge of the campus worker's or congregant's whereabouts and with whom they are meeting. This must be communicated in a written form (text, email, note).

  - Campus workers/ congregants must not make "secret deals" with minors.

  - Because gift giving can be a form of "buying" loyalty or silence, gift giving must be done on a group basis and for special occasions only. No campus worker/congregant is allowed to give gifts to individual minors without knowledge and permission of parents and of minister or staff member.

  - UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES can one adult alone take a minor or minors on a campus sponsored outing.

  - MPBC acknowledges that there are times when a parent, guardian or caretaker adult might request a one-on-one engagement with a minor and a trained adult (mentoring, coaching, etc). There is a process that is to be followed. Please talk to a senior staff liaison for more information.

  - Ministerial counseling of a minor will take place in a public setting, such as the church during working hours, and with other adults close by.

- **Open Door Policy**

- Any trained adult has the right to visit and observe any campus-related program or activity at any time, unannounced.

- **Bathroom Policy**

  - Children in Grades 2nd and higher may leave the room with permission to go the restroom. Children younger than 2nd grade must be escorted to the restroom. It is understood that having an adult taking children to the bathroom may leave one adult alone in the room with multiple children for a short period of time. No adult is allowed in the bathroom with a child unless the child is currently potty training or needs help. In this case, the door to the bathroom will always remain open.

- **Social Media Policy/ Communicating with Children and Minors**

  - Set stringent privacy settings on any social networking profile if you are an adult ministering to children and minors.

  - Remember material on any site (campus-affiliated or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should be immediately reported to the clergy and/or the Department of Social Services (DSS).

  - Keep in mind that the best way to communicate is through a group page set up by the church. Tie events to the group accounts, NOT PRIVATE MESSAGING.

  - Remember, if you are an adult, limit comments on a child/minor's page. Otherwise, it can be perceived as intrusive and make the child/minors feel uncomfortable.

  - Adults will not use their personal social media accounts to interface with minors on behalf of the church. Campus Social Media Accounts are accessible by a minimum of two campus staff.

4. PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT

- **North Carolina Statutes**

  - North Carolina General Statute 7A-543 states that "any person or institution who has cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused, neglected or dependent (by his or her parent, guardian, custodian or caretaker), or who 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 minor resides or is found."

  - North Carolina does not exempt clergy from reporting requirements.

- **MPBC Campus and Incidences or Allegations of Abuse or Neglect**

  Myers Park Baptist Church, citing a strong moral and ethical responsibility to protect our minors, adopts these additional procedures to be carried out in the event of an incident or allegation of abuse or neglect of a minor by a parent, caretaker or non-caretaker:

- **Safety**
  - The Senior Minister or designated staff minister will take immediate and appropriate steps to ensure the safety and well-being of the alleged victim.
- **Reporting**
  - Anyone believing there has been abuse or neglect of a minor by a parent, caretaker or non-caretaker in any setting (including, but not limited to campus-related activities) should report that concern immediately to the Senior Minister or a member of Senior Staff.
  - If the minor's caretaker or parent is suspected of abuse or neglect, report should also be made to Department of Social Services as outlined in 5.1.
  - If someone other than the minor's caretaker or parent is suspected of abuse or neglect, report is made to the Senior Minister who, in turn, will report to the police or to the suspected offender's probation officer, if applicable.
  - The reporting party's name will not be disclosed, except as required by law.
  - All reports will be taken seriously but not judged prematurely.
  - Confidentiality of all parties involved will be maintained unless NC law requires otherwise.
  - A designated staff minister will report any incidents of abuse or neglect to church's insurance carrier, conforming to the carrier's requirements. Our current carrier requires reporting within 7 days of incident.
- **Notification**
  - The parent(s) or caretaker(s) of the alleged victim will be notified immediately.
  - If the parent(s) or caretaker(s) is suspected of abuse or neglect, he or she will be notified of steps being taken to report the incident.
  - All staff and paid employees who minister to minors will be notified immediately.
- **Documenting**
  - The person reporting suspected abuse or neglect will be asked to document, in writing, all known facts and circumstances.
  - The Senior Minister or designated staff person will document all steps taken in the course of handling the reported incident.
  - All documents related to the allegation will be held by the Campus Administrator

- **Confronting the Suspected Violator**

  - After consultation with the Department of Social Services, the Senior Minister and at least one support person (another minister, a member of the Board of Deacons, someone with specific skills, for instance), after having established the safety of the alleged victim, will confront the person suspected of abuse or neglect.

  - The person suspected will be treated with dignity, support, fairness, and kindness.

  - The person suspected will be prohibited from any ministries with minors or congregating with minors until investigation is complete.

  - The person suspected may be asked to take a leave of absence from the church until the investigation is complete. In this case, the Senior Minister will create a support group from within the membership to minister to the suspected person.

- **Investigating**

  - Civil or criminal authorities, not church personnel, will carry out in-depth investigation.

- **Procedures for Exceptional Situations**

  - If the Senior Minister is suspected of abuse or neglect of a minor, report should be made to the chair of the Board of Deacons. If Senior Minister is suspected of abuse or neglect, the duties of that office as outlined in this Policy will be assumed by the chair of the Board of Deacons.

- **Notification of Campus Members**

  - Myers Park Baptist Church and Campus Entities recognize that suspicions of or occurrences of abuse or neglect can create a spiritual crisis for the entire membership. In an effort to minimize the damage such events can cause, to eliminate exchange of potentially destructive inaccurate information, and to promote Christian support, prayer and spiritual healing, MPBC adopts the following notification procedures:

    - Each situation will be treated on an individual basis and will include, but not be limited to the following:

      - The Senior Minister and a committee of staff and lay leadership that he/she appoints will, as expeditiously as possible, develop a plan for the exchange of information within the MPBC community regarding reports or allegations of abuse or neglect.
      - If this same group believes that other minors in the church may be jeopardized by the presence of the suspected violator, the following notification procedures will be adopted:
        - All parents/caretakers of minors in the church will be notified of the incident or alleged incident as soon as seriousness of the charges has been credible established;

        - All campus workers who minister to minors will be similarly informed.

    - The Senior Minister will schedule meetings, open to all, to disseminate information

    - The ministerial staff will establish ongoing, timely notification methods to keep the congregants informed of developments, actions taken, and all relevant details of the case.

- **Notification of Others**

    - The Senior Minister or designee will be the sole spokesperson for the Church regarding any matter of reported / suspected abuse or neglect and any investigation. Should the Senior Minister be the subject of the investigation, the Chair of the Board of Deacons will be the church's spokesperson.

5. ONGOING MINISTERIAL SUPPORT

- Throughout the crisis, the ministerial staff will provide spiritual support, guidance and leadership that will include, but not be limited to, listening, counseling, and educating.

- The ministerial staff will enlist the help of professionals in the field when deemed necessary or helpful. The staff may also enlist the help of church members with special skills or spiritual gifts to assist in congregational support.

- It is understood that both immediate and long-term ministerial support is provided for all families affected by the crisis.

6. PROCEDURES REGARDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

MPBC is committed to providing all minors an environment that is free of sexual harassment. Therefore, MPBC strictly prohibits all forms of sexual harassment of minors during campus-sponsored activities.

- Any minor who believes they have been subjected to harassment or has witnessed another minor's being harassed is encouraged to notify the Senior Minister or another minister who will, in turn, notify the Senior Minister.

- MPBC will attempt to keep such notifications confidential and will disclose information only on a need-to-know basis in order to investigate and resolve the matter.

- While victims are not required to report harassment, in the event an incident is reported, the ministerial staff is obligated to report to the Board of Deacons.

7. EDUCATION AND TRAINING ON THE POLICY

- **Who Receives Training**

REQUIRED TO BE TRAINED:

- All who work with minors on our campus, whether paid or non-paid
- All paid employees of the campus, whether they engage with minors as a part of the employment or not, are required to take training.

URGED TO BE TRAINED

- Parents/caretakers of minors, extended family of minors such as grandparents, and members of Board of Deacons.

- Minors at MPBC will be given age-appropriate education on the policy on issues of abuse and neglect.

- **When Training is Offered**

  - Policy training sessions will be offered yearly and/or as needed.

  - Educational sessions for minors on abuse and neglect will be scheduled by the education ministers and will be offered yearly or as needed.

- **Leadership of Training**

  - The Ministerial Staff will schedule, coordinate and give leadership to these training and educational sessions.

- **Distribution of the Policy**

  - Copies will be available to all campus participants via the website and printed versions upon request.

  - All new members will be apprised as to how to get a copy of the policy and when policy training classes are held

  - The policy will be distributed with General Personnel Policies.

- **Review of This Policy**

  - This policy shall be reviewed routinely and revised as NC law requires or as it is deemed lacking or otherwise ineffective.

8. MYERS PARK BAPTIST CHURCH AND KNOWN OFFENDERS WHO ARE CONGREGANTS

At the MPBC Campus, we seek to live in covenant with God and with one another and to be a redemptive community to all who congregate with us. We also acknowledge that redemptive action and responsible action can, at times, be in tension or even in seeming opposition. We embrace this fact as a natural part of seeking to be the church in the world. And we adopt these procedures for ministering to those among us who are known offenders of minors.

- **Disclosure of Status to Clergy:**

- Known offenders are required to make their status and any terms of probation known to the Senior Minister.

- **The Senior Minister will appoint a group of 3-5 members to establish appropriate boundaries governing the life of the known offender within the church,** including areas on campus where they may go unaccompanied. Group members will receive training in protection of minors and in dealing with known offenders. No decisions made by this group will conflict with any provisions of this policy.

- **Offenders' Relationships with Minors**

  - At no time is a known offender to be assigned to ministries with minors.

  - At no time is a known offender to congregate with minors.

  - At no time is a known offender allowed in areas of church or grounds dedicated to minors or in use primarily by minors.

- **Disclosure of Status to Others**

  - Known offenders are encouraged to make their status known to parents/caretakers of minors and to campus paid employees ministering to minors.

  - Should a known offender elect not to disclose their status, the Senior Minister can identify them to campus workers and congregants whose ministries should be informed by this fact.

  - If known offender has been convicted of sexual molestation, the Senior Minister will notify parents of church minors, all campus workers ministering to minors, and at the discretion of the Senior Minister, other populations within the congregation or the general congregation.

- **Known offenders will receive the normal pastoral care afforded any member or congregant.**

  - Should a known offender disregard the terms established in this policy, , or should a known offender disregard any boundaries or conditions set by the Senior Minister and their appointed group, **the following steps will be taken:**

    - the situation will be reported to the Senior Minister

    - the Senior Minister will take immediate steps to separate the offender from the church and its congregants

    - the Senior Minister will implement procedures outlined in this policy.

Child and Youth Protection Policy Training Outline

These are the main points that will be covered by your trainer. Remember, you are responsible to read the policy in its entirety.

Welcome and Trainer Introduction
Why this training?

The goal of this policy is intended to guide and inform all who work with children and minors at MPBC C campus workers, congregants, The Cornwell Center and Through-The-Week-School (TTWS) personnel, parents and caretakers.

Definitions

- **Campus Worker**
- **Congregant**
- **Campus-Sponsored Activities**:
- **Minor**:
- **Parent**:
- **Caretaker**:

Safeguards Adopted to Prevent the Risk of Abuse and Neglect

We will read this section together.

Questions at this point

Open Door Policy
Bathroom Policy
Social Media Policy
Education and Training on the Policy

Final Questions?

Please fill out the background consent form and the covenant.