

Back Creek Church's Child and Youth Protection Plan

**A training guide for all who care for our
children and youth.**

[As amended by the Session on January 24, 2010]



**“Let the children come to me and do not hinder them for
the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”**

— Mark 10:4

Statement of Intent

As members of God's church who are responsible for the care and training of our covenant children, we have implemented the following goals and procedures to:

- *Honor God by showing godly care for our children, staff, volunteers, and church family.
- *Protect our children from physical, emotional and sexual abuse and provide an environment where they can thrive.
- *Protect our volunteers and staff members by providing structure and policies that will protect them from allegations.

Scope

The policies and procedures within this manual apply to all paid and unpaid staff members, church leaders and volunteers who have contact with children and youth.

Definitions

Children and youth:

Any person under 18 years of age involved in programs sponsored by or affiliated with Back Creek Presbyterian Church.

Physical abuse:

Includes any non-accidental physical injury caused or allowed to be caused by a child's parent or caretaker.

Emotional abuse:

Includes any spoken and/or unspoken violence, threats or emotional cruelty.

Sexual abuse:

Inappropriate behavior toward children relating to or involving a sexual nature. This may be violent or non-violent, touching or non-touching and is an exploitation of a child's vulnerability and powerlessness.

Procedures for Hiring and Screening

Staff: all paid and unpaid staff members will fill out an application, undergo an interview by the appropriate supervisor, submit references and undergo a criminal background check.

Elders and Deacons: will be men who are above reproach, appointed by the congregation and who have undergone a criminal background check.

Volunteers:

Frequent: This includes all paid staff members and volunteers who interact with children on a weekly, monthly, or regular basis. Starting in January 2009, all will fill out an application, submit references that will be checked by the appropriate supervisor, and will undergo a criminal background check.

Intermittent: This includes all nursery, children's church and Vacation Bible School volunteers and those who work with children on an infrequent basis. All will fill out a volunteer application and submit to a criminal background check.

Training: Annual training will be mandatory for all persons working with children and youth in any capacity. A reference manual will be provided to each paid worker and volunteer in addition to the training session. The training session will include: how to recognize abused children, how to create a safe environment, Back Creek's policies and procedures that relate to children and youth, and appropriate reporting procedures for suspected abuse.

*No applicant convicted of a sexually related crime is eligible for service in a position with direct contact to children.

*All volunteers working with children or youth must be at least 18 years of age. If a minor is volunteering, he or she must be paired with a person at least 21 years of age.

*All volunteers must be members before serving in our youth and children's ministries.

*All persons will undergo a criminal background check every 5 years.

Security and Abuse-prevention policies

In every situation involving children and youth, our policy is to:

- *have at least 2 workers in the room with children at all times, unless there is at least one hall monitor observing the classrooms periodically during the class time; in which case there only needs to be one teacher in the room.
- *have the setting be “open” at all times through an uncovered window or an open door.
- *allow a teacher or leader to take the entire class outside the classroom for a walk or to some other place on the church campus,. He or she may not take an individual child on a walk, etc. with out parental consent. If a class is taken outside, there must be two teachers.
- *have regular and unscheduled visits by the supervisors of children’s and youth activities. Sunday school coordinators should check on each classroom at least once per session. Deacons should check on children’s church and nurseries at least once per session. Deacons should wear nametags to be easily recognized.
- *have all parents fill out a contact information sheet that includes cell phone numbers in case of an emergency.

With children ages birth– 2nd grade, our policy is to:

- *have parents fill out a contact information sheet (parent info form in teacher’s binder) that includes authorized adults who can pick up the child.
- *not release the child to any adult but a person on the contact sheet without prior notice by the parent.
- *have a parent or authorized adult sign the child in and out of any church-sponsored activity.
- *have children’s diapers changed in the room with another adult.
- *have an adult take the child to the restroom and stand outside if the child is old enough to go by himself or herself. If the child needs assistance, every effort should be made for an activity coordinator to assist in taking the child to the restroom.
- *(beginning in January 2009) have every parent of an infant or toddler receive a pager that will be effective on the church grounds. This can be used by a nursery worker to contact the parent if the need arises.
- *have tags available for the child’s bag with a number corresponding to the child.

With children ages 3rd-5th grade our policy is to:

- *have parents fill out a contact information sheet that includes a signed release for the child to leave the class or event unaccompanied. If a parent has not signed this release, the child must be picked up by an authorized adult.

With youth: 6th grade– 18 years of age our policy is:

1. At least two adults will supervise all church-sponsored programs and activities involving minors whether on or off campus. This rule can be eased if other adults are close by and can visually observe activities at all times.
2. Some activities and programs require more than two adult supervisors.
3. When one-on-one interactions between minors and church workers or congregants are necessary, care must be taken to conduct the meeting in an environment that provides visibility by other adults. Another adult must have knowledge of the church worker's or congregant's whereabouts and with whom they are meeting.
4. 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 church worker/congregant is allowed to give gifts to individual minors without knowledge and permission of parents and of minister or department head.
5. Situations where adults take minors out of the area for long periods of time or for overnight outings are to be carefully planned. Back Creek will enlist known, proven adults in supervisory capacities. Any new church workers or congregants are not to be alone with minors in a situation where there are not other adults to observe.
6. A lone adult must never take a minor or minors on an overnight outing.
7. As the nature of Youth Ministry involves the establishment of one-on-one relationships between the Minister of Youth and 6th-12th graders, some of the safeguards listed above can be relaxed with the consent of minor and minor's parent or caretaker.
8. Citing the nature of the Youth Small Groups Program, a high school student is assigned to a small group whose leader may occasionally meet with the small group for recreation, social, or educational outings. The above rules can be relaxed with consent of minor and minor's parent or caretaker.
9. 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.
10. Group transportation from the church facility to any other location will be provided by a responsible adult in a church vehicle.
 - A) If extra group transportation is required due to lack of space on church vehicles, a responsible adult may provide transportation in a private vehicle.
 - B) If extra group transportation is still needed, minors who have their own vehicles may drive to a local destination.
 - C) A minor may not provide transportation to another minor on a group event, unless said minor originally provided transportation to the church for the event.
 - D) The above transportation rules may be relaxed with the consent of minor and minor's parent or caretaker.
11. Back Creek clergy, administrators, and department heads have the right to visit and observe any church-related program or activity at any time, unannounced.

Procedures for Reporting Suspected Abuse

1. Whenever any type of abuse is suspected, the individual with this information should strive to maintain confidentiality and speak to the appropriate contact person at Back Creek first.
2. Incidents of abuse or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse of minors shall be reported within 24 hours to **the Director of the Department of Social Services in Mecklenburg County at 704-336-CARE AND** to the Back Creek staff person directly responsible for the area of ministry or education where the incident occurred AND to the senior pastor. The staff person AND senior pastor shall also make a report or verify the making of the report. Within the 24 hour period the person reporting the suspected abuse (in the presence of the Sr. Pastor and/or the staff person directly responsible for the area of ministry involved) will report the incident by phone to the Department of Social Services in Mecklenburg County at 704-336-CARE.
3. The reports shall initially be made orally and then in writing. Reports from persons requesting to remain anonymous shall be made by telephone in the presence of a witness of the reporters own choosing to verify the filing of the oral report.
4. *Questionable or inappropriate* behavior when observed should be reported to the Back Creek staff person directly responsible for the specific area of ministry involved because such conduct can *precede* abuse, though the observed act in itself is not.
5. All adult members of Back Creek and other adults participating in programs and events at Back Creek are encouraged to be sensitive to the potential for abuse of children and youth. They are encouraged not to hesitate to caution others in activities that are, or may appear to be, inappropriate.
6. Organizations that use Back Creek's facilities have reporting procedures of their own and shall be responsible to follow their established procedures. In addition, they are asked to notify Back Creek's senior pastor as soon as possible of any incidents or suspected incidents that occur when using Back Creek's facilities.

Mandated Reporters:

Any person who suspects that a child is being abused or neglected is required to report this information, after following the procedures on pages 6 & 7, to the DSS at 704-336-CARE. Those required to report include professionals, relatives, or any other person in the community without exception. North Carolina statutes provide protection from civil or criminal liability for any person making a report in good faith. The department of Social Services is not allowed to reveal the name of the person making the report of suspected abuse or neglect.

Procedures for Responding to Abuse Allegations

1. All facts and circumstances of an incident shall be documented and the senior pastor/responsible staff member and DSS should be notified.
2. The senior pastor or responsible staff member is responsible for securing the safety of the potential victim. This includes immediate notification of parents/guardians of the potential victim and for notification of the person accused of abuse. The safety of the potential victim must take place before contacting the persons suspected of abuse.
3. Any in-depth investigation shall be carried out by DSS, not Back Creek Church.
4. Persons accused shall be immediately removed from any areas of service involving children and youth until the accused is formally cleared of allegations or charges are formally brought against the accused. If charges are made, the senior pastor will consult with the accused regarding future responsibilities.
5. Incidents/reasonably suspected incidents should be reported to Back Creek's legal counsel and liability insurer.
6. All steps taken should be documented.
7. The senior pastor should be the sole spokesperson for the church and all steps should be taken to guard the confidentiality of the situation and treat all persons involved with dignity, support and love

Contacts

*For any incidents involving children birth through 5th grade:

Director of Children's Ministry:

Phone number: 704.805.4073

*For any incidents involving middle or high school students:

Matt Mantoath, Pastor of Student Ministry

Phone number: 704.805.4063

*For any other incidents, please ask the Senior Pastor who the appropriate contact person would be.