

Millbrook Baptist Church

Protection Policies

for Youth and Children



Millbrook Baptist Church
1519 E. Millbrook Rd.
Raleigh, NC 27609

Phone: 919-876-1519

office@millbrookbaptistchurch.org
www.millbrookbaptistchurch.org

Updated 1/21/2012

Table of Contents

Introduction and Overview	2
Purpose	2
Statement of Covenant	2
Conclusion.....	2
Overview	2
Frequently Used Terms.....	3
Policy #1: Youth and Children's Worker Selection and Supervision	4
Minimum Age.....	4
Six-Month Rule.....	4
Applications.....	4
Criminal Background Check	4
References	4
Interviews.....	4
Training	5
Confidentiality of Information	5
Delays in Receiving Information	5
Policy #2: Operating Policies for All Youth and Children's Ministries	6
Reporting Suspected or Observed Abuse	6
Two Adult Rule.....	6
Physical Contact Rules	7
Policy #3: Ongoing Supervision of these Policies.....	8
Annual Review of the Protection Policies of Youth and Children.....	8
Waiver of Policy	8
Modification of Policies	8
Activities Covered by These Policies.....	8
Policy #4: MBC Response Procedures for Abuse	9
General Principles	9
When a Victim Reports Alleged Abuse	9
Church Leaders Responding to Alleged Abuse	10
Church Workers Who Observe Questionable Activities or Suspicious Behavior.....	10
Child Protective Services.....	10
Local Law Enforcement.....	10

Introduction and Overview

Purpose:

Our congregation's purpose for establishing these policies and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all members of our church community, especially children and youth.

Statement of Covenant:

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a Baptist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the Gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all our church community, especially our children and youth, as well as all volunteers and staff in ministry. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers and staff; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate our workers and staff, especially with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods (including first aid, transportation and maintaining order); we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

Conclusion:

As a church, we believe that the spiritual, emotional, and physical well being of minors is vital. The Protection Policies for Youth and Children – Millbrook Baptist Church (MBC) is intended to ensure that church activities involving youth and children (minors) are consistent with the teachings and example of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the Christian tradition of nurturing vulnerable children.

Church staff and volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of these policies as well as the other Christian standards of moral behavior. Workers must avoid even the appearance of misconduct. The violation of these policies is grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or re-assignment from youth and children's work for both volunteers and staff, at the discretion of the church.

Overview:

This document presents policies and forms. The policies define how MBC will work with minors to prevent and respond to abuse. In particular, they define how workers supervising minors will be selected, the operating model for supervising minors, how these policies are enforced and supervised, and finally how to respond to allegations or suspicions of abuse. The forms are used in selecting workers to supervise minors.

Frequently Used Terms

Children - children from newborn through those in Grade 6 (some years 6th graders are included in the youth as determined by youth and children directors/ministers)

Church Worker - volunteer or paid worker

Ministry Leaders - the Minister to Preschool/Children, the Minister to Youth, or another designated Ministry staff member

Minors - anyone under the age of 18 years, whether visitor or member

Non-related - not husband/wife, nor parent/child, nor siblings

Paid Workers – anyone paid by the church for work whether or not that work is with minors

Programs - the various events and activities involving minors located at MBC, either as a part of the church or as a guest (e.g. Sunday School, Mission Kids, Children's Choir, Nursery, Horizons, Scouts)

Program Auditors - an independent (separate from Youth/Children programs) group of three people who periodically verifies compliance to these policies in order to minimize risk

Program Leaders - the people in charge of the various programs (e.g. teachers, directors, and coaches for any program involving minors)

Six Month Rule - (see policy #3) Volunteer applicants must have attended at least six months prior to applying

Staff - employees of the church, whether ministerial, administrative, custodial, etc.

Two Adult Rule - (see policy #2) Minors must be supervised by at least two non-related, screened adults

Volunteers - unpaid workers

Youth - children in Grades 7 thru 12 that are not yet 18 years of age (some years 6th graders are included in the youth as determined by youth and children directors/ministers)

Policy #1: Youth and Children's Worker Selection and Supervision

The following policies will be used as MBC reviews applicants for church worker positions in Youth or Children's Ministry.

Minimum Age:

All workers must be 18 years of age or older. Younger persons may assist adults if agreed upon by ministry leader, but they would be in addition to two unrelated, screened adult workers.

Six-Month Rule:

Volunteer applicants must have been an active member of MBC or a regular attendee of the church for at least six months. This time of interaction between Ministry Leaders and the applicant allows Ministry Leaders to better evaluate the suitability of an applicant for youth or children's work. This rule only applies to volunteer applicants for MBC programs. An individual may be exempted from the 6-month rule if a personal reference is provided from a staff member.

Applications:

All MBC applicants must complete and sign the standard application form and the related waivers giving permission to check references and conduct a criminal background check. Non-MBC groups who use MBC facilities or interact with MBC minors are responsible for implementing their own Application process and relaying the pertinent information to the appropriate Ministry Leader. The minimum standard is established by MBC and all outside organizations are required to meet that standard.

Criminal Background Check:

A criminal background check will be required for all persons seeking to work with minors at MBC. Non-MBC groups are responsible for implementing their own Criminal Background check process and relaying pertinent information to the appropriate Ministry Leader to ensure MBC requirements are met. The minimum standard is established by MBC and all outside organizations are required to meet that standard. The criminal background check is the first step of the application review process and this check will be done by an independent, confidential contractor. The results of the background check will only be seen by the person responsible for deciding on a applicant's suitability for a position (Personnel Committee Chair, Ministry Leader). All paid MBC staff will also be subject to standard random drug screening.

References:

For MBC volunteer applicants, reference checks will be conducted as needed. For all MBC paid positions, Ministry Leaders will check at least two, preferably three, references. In addition, references may be checked at any other time.

Interviews:

All MBC applicants must be interviewed for suitability for the work they desire to do. Interviews will be conducted by the Ministry or Program Leader in which the applicant will work. Applicants for MBC employment positions will also be interviewed by the Personnel Committee. A team of interviewers may be used. The interviewers will sign the application form indicating their opinion on the suitability/unsuitability of the individual for the work.

Training:

Relevant policies and guidelines will be discussed during the applicant interview and during annual refresher training. All applicants will sign a training form indicating that they have read and understood the policies and procedures of the church and agree to abide by them. The form will also be signed by the training coordinator after the completion of initial and annual refresher training.

Confidentiality of Information:

MBC will keep confidential all information received in the applicant selection process. Selection information will be marked as such and stored with limited access afforded only to Ministry Leaders, Personnel Committee Chair, and Program Auditors, subject to subpoena (civil or criminal).

Delays in Receiving Information:

While the church is waiting for background information and references, applicants may begin working in contact with children. During this time the applicant may only work with children in the presence of 2 additional non-related screened adults. Failure to receive satisfactory responses in a timely manner may result in dismissal or withdrawal of the offer to work with the Youth or Children's Ministry program.

Youth & Children's Worker Selection and Supervision Requirements Matrix

Position	Application	Previous Employer References	Character References	Interview	Criminal Background Check	6 Month Rule
Ministerial Staff	X	X	X	X	X	
Interns	X	X	X	X	X	
Paid Childcare workers	X	X	X	X	X	
Youth & Children's Ministry Volunteers	X		X*	X	X	X*

* See Six-Month Rule section of Policy #1 above

Policy #2: Operating Policies for All Youth and Children's Ministries

Reporting Suspected or Observed Abuse:

Ministry Leaders, Program Leaders, and all workers within MBC programs who suspect any unhealthy or abusive activities must promptly follow the procedure set up in Policy # 4 - MBC Response Procedures for Abuse. Non-MBC groups are responsible for defining and implementing their own Response Procedures for Abuse and must immediately notify the appropriate Ministerial staff of MBC when those Response Procedures are used.

Two Adult Rule:

The rule for all Youth and Children's workers is that there will always be at least two non-related screened adults present to supervise.

Exceptions:

- Communal environment: An exception where a single, screened adult may supervise two or more minors is in a communal environment (e.g. Sunday School, Fall Festival, Preschool) where there are roaming observers/security AND the door to the room is either left open or has a window.
- Bathroom/Diapering: When a single, screened adult is assisting a child in the bathroom or changing a diaper, the door to the room must either be left open or have a window.
- Transportation: A single, screened adult may drive minors in their personal vehicle or the church bus/van as long as there is a transportation permission form, signed by a parent/guardian, in hand or on file.
- Counseling: Children and Youth directors/ministers may provide one-on-one counseling sessions with children and youth in a room which has a window in the door or in a public setting, such as a restaurant or other venue where they are able to be observed, while maintaining a private conversation.
- Overnight trips & events: When overnight trips with hotel style accommodations are necessary, sleeping arrangements should be made such that one screened adult is not supervising alone one unrelated youth or child.

Specifically,

- All supervising adults will be screened.
- All adults and minors sharing a hotel room will be of the same sex.
- An adult may not share a bed with an unrelated minor.
- One adult may not share a room with one unrelated minor but may share the room with two or more unrelated minors.
- This rule does not apply if all adults and minors sharing a room are related.

In exceptional circumstances, a waiver to the two adult rule may be requested to allow the following to supervise: either (1) two unrelated adults, one screened and the other not screened or (2) two related screened adults (see Policy #3 - Waiver of Policy).

Physical Contact Rules:

We live in an age where child abuse is a reality in our society. The church should deal with this issue as a "good shepherd" by taking steps to protect the children in our care. MBC implemented a physical contact policy that will safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. The guidelines below are to be carefully followed by anyone working with youth or children.

- Hugs and other forms of appropriate physical affection are important for a child's development and are generally suitable in our church setting.
- Physical affection should be appropriate to the age of the youth or child. An appropriate kiss includes a kiss on the top of the head or an air-kiss blown to the child that the child can "catch".
- Physical contact should be initiated by the youth or child. It should be a response to the child's need for comfort, encouragement, or affection. It should not be based upon the adult's emotional need. Appropriate contact includes an arm around the shoulder and a simple hug.
- Physical contact and affection should only be given when in the presence of other youth or children's church workers. It is much less likely that touches will be inappropriate or misconstrued as such when two adult workers are present and the touching is open to observation. This rule is especially important when diapering a baby, helping a child change clothes, or assisting a child in using the restroom.
- Touching behavior should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. As church workers our behavior must foster trust at all times; it should be above reproach.
- A child's preference not to be touched should be respected. Do not force affection upon a reluctant child.
- Church workers are responsible to protect children under their supervision from inappropriate touching by others and must promptly discuss inappropriate touching or other questionable behavior by other workers with their Ministry leader.

Policy #3: Ongoing Supervision of these Policies

MBC will appoint three people to audit and supervise the policies. These Program Auditors must meet the same requirements as anyone else participating in the program. This program shall govern all church activities that involve custody of children and youth less than 18 years of age.

Annual Review of the Protection Policies of Youth and Children:

Each Ministry Leader will review compliance with safety policies and identify any new safety risk factors annually in a brief written report that will be given to the Program Auditors.

The reports should include:

- A listing of any new programs or program changes and the additional risks these changes may incur
- A brief summary of policy violations and the program leader's response to these violations.
- A log of workers from each event will be stored in the church office
 - Attendance sheets will be used for Sunday School, Wednesday Night Programs, Retreats/Camps.
 - A general log book of workers will be used for all other events.

Any patterns of violations that suggest policy changes are needed should be identified. The Program Auditors will summarize the reports received from Ministry Leaders and submit an overall report annually to the Personnel Committee who will inform the Leadership Team of the church.

Waiver of Policy:

Church policies may be waived occasionally for exceptional circumstances. The goal of MBC is to promote safety while maintaining practical flexibility in the Youth and Children's Ministry. The waiver of a policy must be authorized by at least two of the following four persons:

- The Minister/Director of Preschool/Children
- The Minister/Director of Youth
- The Chairperson of the Preschool/Children's committee
- The Chairperson of the Youth committee

Modification of Policies:

Changes in these policies must be approved by the personnel committee. These policies may be modified or withdrawn by MBC at any time. These policies are not intended to create an implied or expressed contract with any person. They are not intended to create a legally enforceable or binding promise or representation.

Activities Covered by These Policies:

All church sponsored activities of MBC, both onsite and offsite, that require workers acting within the scope of their duties to have custody of persons less than 18 years of age shall follow these policies. In addition, any outside group that uses the facilities of MBC shall adhere to the same policies. A policy agreement form will be included in the materials provided to outside groups by the Space Use Committee.

Policy #4: MBC Response Procedures for Abuse

This policy is appropriate for allegations involving church and non-church related forms of abuse.

General Principles:

Anyone working with minors has a legal responsibility to report suspected abuse to the proper authorities. When responding to allegations of abuse, the church and its representatives will keep several key principles in mind:

- Reports should be taken seriously.
- Allegations should be handled with sensitivity for people's privacy and confidentiality.
- The church should cooperate with law enforcement and social services.
- The victim should not be blamed.
- The church should seek to provide Christian support as appropriate for alleged victims, alleged offenders, and their families.
- The insurance carrier should be contacted as soon as possible.

When a Victim Reports Alleged Abuse:

The person hearing the initial report should follow these steps, keeping in mind to listen supportively without judging:

- Ask basic questions to clarify facts if needed, but do not try to investigate or verify the allegations of the report.
- Note the pertinent details in writing as soon as possible after hearing the report, but don't take notes when the victim is speaking. Give him or her your full attention.
- Contact the Senior Minister and Minister/Director of Youth or Minister/Director of Preschool/Children immediately. If the suspected abuse involves a paid staff member, then the Chairman of the Personnel Committee must also be contacted. The Senior Minister and Minister/Director of Youth or Minister/Director of Preschool/Children will help decide on the next step that may include consulting with legal counsel and making the report to law enforcement if appropriate.
- If the Senior Minister or Minister/Director of Youth or Minister/Director of Preschool/Children is being accused, the person receiving the initial report should contact an uninvolved pastor and the chair of the Diaconate.
- Do not discuss the allegation with anyone other than the aforementioned individuals unless required by law enforcement officials.
- If the safety of the minor is at issue, the worker must use his or her own judgment to decide the best way to proceed. Youth and Children's workers may contact law enforcement directly if timing is critical and Ministry Leaders are unavailable for consultation.

Church Leaders Responding to Alleged Abuse:

The team is not trying to determine guilt or innocence, only that the allegations are worthy of further investigation.

A team will be formed consisting of:

- The Senior Minister
- The Minister/Director of Youth or Minister/Director of Preschool/Children
- The Chair of the Diaconate
- The Chair of Personnel if the alleged perpetrator is a paid staff member.
- In addition, this team may include any other person the team feels is necessary.

The team should respond quickly to a report of abuse using the following guidelines:

1. The team should clarify and evaluate the report with the person(s) who heard the initial report and with the victim if appropriate.
2. The team should decide if a report to authorities is warranted. Guidance of the church's attorney is often necessary because reporting statutes and relevant criminal statutes may be complicated. This is a decision based on the information at hand and applicable laws. Other outside resources may also be consulted.
3. The team should inform the church's insurance carrier.
4. The team should designate one of its members as a spokesperson. All contact with the news media should be handled by the spokesperson. The team should inform all necessary persons not to respond to media inquiries except to refer questions to the spokesperson. Note: the news media will learn of the incident quickly through access to law enforcement records.
5. The team should designate one of its members as a secretary to document all steps. Briefly log what is learned and what and when actions are taken. Logs should be dated and initialed or signed each time an entry is made. This information should be kept in a confidential file.

Church Workers Who Observe Questionable Activities or Suspicious Behavior:

Any person who observes violations of these policies or has reasonable suspicions of inappropriate activity should follow these steps:

1. Write brief notes to document specifically what you have observed.
2. Contact the program leader and the Ministry Leader as soon as possible. In a private conversation, the Ministry Leader can help evaluate any suspicions, consulting the program leader as needed.
3. The Ministry Leader is responsible for any further response to the situation. He or she must document the report in a confidential file. Possible responses can range from reminding the worker about following policies to reporting the incident to law enforcement.

Child Protective Services 919-212-7000 (during business hours) 919-829-1911 (after business hours)

Local law enforcement 911 or as appropriate outside of Wake County