



# **CHEROKEE**

## BAPTIST CHURCH

### **Child Protection Policy**

**November 2015**

For the use of Cherokee Baptist Church Children’s Ministry

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### **Our Vision: Generations of Godliness**

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, ESV)

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3:14-15, ESV)

### **Our Mission: To Glorify God**

The children’s ministry of Cherokee Baptist Church (“the church”) exists to glorify God by:

- Maintaining a safe and secure environment for our children
- Supporting and encouraging parents who are primarily responsible for teaching biblical truths to their children (Ephesians 6:4)
- Making the whole counsel of Scripture known to children with special emphasis on the Gospel (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Romans 1:16-17)
- Praying for the children and relying on the Holy Spirit to regenerate their hearts through the faithful teaching of His Word (Romans 10:17; Ephesians 2:4-10)
- Living faithfully before the children and modeling for them how Christians are called to respond to God, interact with each other, and with the world around us (Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 11:1)
- Encouraging children to learn to serve and to not just be served (Mark 10:43-45)
- Maintaining the highest ethical standards such that volunteers and teachers always live and serve above reproach, protecting the reputation of the gospel of Jesus Christ
- Preparing children to one day walk with God as adults, which means getting them ready to be a part of the public services and Lord willing, one day, a fully participating adult member

### **Staff and Volunteer Expectations**

All children’s ministry staff and volunteers share a particular responsibility for:

- Loving the children as Christ loves them
- Setting an example of proper Christian conduct in the way we live our lives
- Ministering to the children
- Understanding that the care of children is not a right, but a privilege; and this privilege embodies responsibilities to God for ministering to and caring for the children

### **Child Protection**

Our first concern is that children be safe while they are in our care. To this end we:

- Screen all children’s ministry volunteers
- Perform background checks on all full-time church staff, regardless of whether or not they have direct contact with children
- Require training for all children’s ministry staff and volunteers
- Use parent authentication identification system
- Employ scheduling procedures and volunteer/child ratios that optimize safety

- Maintain security procedures and practices to promote safety in the building
- Equip each room with a first aid kit
- Educate our staff and volunteers to recognize suspected child abuse and to require them to understand and follow any applicable reporting laws and to encourage them to report suspected abuse to church officials
- Adhere to a healthy child policy for admittance to children's ministry
- Adhere to a two-volunteer room policy
- Equip our volunteers to know how to evacuate children safely in case of an emergency

### Parameters for the Child Protection Policy

This child protection policy applies to children (from birth to 6th grade) who are voluntarily placed by parents under the responsibility of the church for the church's public worship services or specific children's ministry-related church-sponsored activities, bible studies held at the church with accompanying childcare, Vacation Bible School, A.W.A.N.A, Backyard Bible Club). Any form of abuse, harm, neglect or other problems related to children at home, school, or in any bible-study, activity, or venue not directly related to children's ministry at Cherokee is not covered by this policy.

### Personnel Summary

- *Adults* are individuals eighteen years or older.
- *Minors* are individuals under eighteen years of age (under TN law and for most state laws).
- *Staff* is the paid employees of the church. All church staff is required to receive a background check regardless of whether or not they have direct contact with children.
- *Volunteers* are adults who work with children and are not in the employment of the church. All volunteers who serve in children's ministry are required to go through both the children's ministry training and screening procedures before they serve. The term 'volunteer' will be used throughout this policy manual as an all-encompassing term for anyone who serves the children and is not church staff.
- *Helpers* are minors who are at least thirteen years of age and are assisting in some area of children's ministry alongside an adult. Helpers do not count towards the adult-to-child ratios. Helpers must be children of members; may or may not themselves be a member the church; will not go through childcare training, but will be vetted by the children's ministry staff. Helpers will be supervised by the adult volunteers in the same room.
- *Deacons* refer to the church's deacons. They are elected officers of the church who serve the church by assisting in childcare and children's ministry. Just like the volunteers, all deacons are required to go through both the children's ministry training and screening procedures.
- *Pastors* are elected officers of the church who serve the church by providing teaching and leadership to the congregational as a whole. They must go through both the children's ministry training and screening procedures if they are to serve in children's ministry, just like any other volunteer.

### **Protecting the Children Before They Arrive**

Ensuring a safe environment begins long before Sunday or Wednesday services. Every applicant who wishes to serve in children's ministry is required to go through a screening process and attend childcare training.

### Screening Procedure

To ensure safe and quality care, Cherokee has established a screening procedure to approve all volunteers to work with our children:

- All volunteers will normally be members of Cherokee in good standing for at least two months.
- All volunteers must be eighteen years of age or older.
- Youth who are at least thirteen are welcome to help (subject to approval), but they are always in addition to the adult volunteers.

- All volunteers must have completed Cherokee's childcare training.
- All volunteers must have completed the volunteer application and been recommended by or in consultation with the person responsible for children's ministry.
- At least one reference check must be satisfactorily completed prior to beginning of service. Criminal records checks and other appropriate screening checks will be completed.
- All completed records of screening procedures will be kept securely along with the original application.
- All volunteers must repeat the screening procedures and criminal background checks every five years.

Cherokee reserves the right to reject any applicant for volunteer service or dismiss an existing volunteer for any reason, including, but not limited to, refusing or failing to complete screening; failing to provide requested information; providing information that is subsequently determined as false or misleading; sin or suffering issues that compromise the applicant or volunteer's ability to care for children; any criminal report or charge; obtaining information from references or criminal record checks that suggest that the applicant is not suitable to help with children.

Any volunteer, helper, deacon, staff or pastor (or any Cherokee member) who learns of or has knowledge of misconduct by an applicant must report that knowledge to the staff and/or the pastor who oversees children's ministry. He or she also must be personally responsible for any legal obligation that he or she may have to disclose such information to the authorities.

### Training

All children's ministry staff and volunteers must attend Cherokee's childcare training before they are allowed to work with the children. Additional training sessions will be scheduled for existing volunteers to update them on policies and procedures. Full-time staff who does not have direct contact with children will receive training on child protection policies. Parents with questions about childcare training are welcome to attend these sessions.

## **Protecting the Children as They Arrive and Depart**

### Arrival and Departure Times

Volunteers should be ready to accept children 15 minutes prior to the start of any session, so that parents have enough time to transition their children before the session begins. Parents are encouraged to pick up their children immediately after the conclusion of the session.

### Signing a Child in to Children's Ministry

Any parent who would like his/her child to participate in a children's ministry program will sign the child in to the appropriate classroom, nursery, or activity when he/she arrives, granting permission for the child to participate in that Cherokee event or program. The parent should also use this opportunity to note any allergies or special needs the child may have. For more details on our procedures for caring for children with allergies, please see the "Snack and Food" section below. Check-in and check-out of children applies to all children birth through 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

Volunteers have the right to refuse any child check-in. Some reasons might include potential illness, behavior that endangers other children, the room being closed because the adult-child ratio, or anything else that might impair our ability to maintain a safe and secure environment for the children. A parent or designated guardian must be in the church building at all times while their children are checked-in.

### Parental Authentication Identification System

In order to protect the children in our care, each child must be signed into his/her class by a parent or guardian. Upon signing the child in, the child will receive a label with the name and information. The family will receive a matching numbered pickup tag.

At the end of the session when the parent/guardian comes to pick up the child:

1. The children's ministry volunteer will bring the child to the door and verify the number on the pickup ticket with the child's label before releasing the child to the parent.

2. Volunteers will REMOVE & DESTROY child labels before children leave their room. This will prevent strangers from referring to the child by name and potentially luring them away from their parents.

Only the parent/guardian who signed the child into the class is authorized to pick up the child. The exceptions to this are:

1. In the event of an emergency that would result in neither parent/guardian being available to sign out the child at the end of a session, the child will be released to the care of a pastor, deacon, or staff member of Cherokee.
2. A member can send their spouse to pick up their children.
3. A member parent may make prior arrangements with the staff/volunteers to allow for someone other than him/herself or his/her spouse to pick up the child at the end of a session.

### Divorce, Separation or Custody Visitation

In a situation where the parents are divorced or separated, the volunteers should only release the child to the parent who brought this child to check-in. If the other parent or anyone else attempts to check-out the child, the volunteer or staff should immediately contact the pastor or staff. If a parent presents a court order for a child, the police must also be present and we are to release the child to police custody. In any of these circumstances, the volunteer or staff should immediately contact the pastor and staff.

## **Protecting the Children While They Are In Our Care**

### Two Volunteer Rule

- For all children's classes and programs, at least two qualified, adult volunteers must be present in each classroom at all times.
- Helpers are always in addition to and supervised by the two adults. Helpers are never to be left alone at any time with children without the presence of the two adult volunteers.
- Staff and volunteers must never leave a child alone in a classroom.
- Two male volunteers may not serve together in the same room without a female volunteer also being present.
- A staff member or volunteer may take children out of the nursery or classroom only for a compelling reason, such as to use the bathroom or in cases of illness, emergency, or evacuation.
- Staff or volunteers should not have private one-on-one meetings with a child. When a meeting on the church premises is necessary, it should be done with at least one other adult present, and held with the knowledge and consent of the staff and the parents.

### Visibility

When children's classes or programs are in session, the interior doors and windows should allow for unobstructed views from the outside of everyone inside the room.

### Child-to-Volunteer Ratios

In addition to always having at least two volunteers present, the following ratios are maintained during the three regularly scheduled weekly meetings of the church:

- Children 0-24 months: One adult for every three children
- Children 24 – 35 months: One adult for every four children
- Children ages 3-5: One adult for every eight children
- Children ages 6-12: One adult for every twelve children

Once a ratio is met, additional children should not be accepted into a classroom if doing so would exceed the ratio unless and until additional volunteers are added. If for any reason the ratio is exceeded, the director of Children's Ministry should be contacted for more volunteers in order to maintain these ratios. Whenever age-groups are combined, the ratio is determined by the age of the youngest child.

### Diaper Changing and Rest Room Procedure

#### 0 Months through 2 Years Old

Parents of children with dirty diapers are asked to change their children prior to signing them into the classroom. Volunteers will change diapers at least once or as need during service. The female volunteer in the room should always be the person to change the diaper. Diapers must be changed in the presence of other volunteer(s).

#### 2 Years Old through Pre-K

Parents should take their children to the restroom prior to signing them into a class. At check-in and drop-off, parents should let the volunteers know if their child is potty training. The female volunteer takes the child to the restroom. The volunteer should wait outside the closed restroom stall door unless the child requires assistance. The child and the volunteer must wash their hands with soap and water (or anti-bacterial hand sanitizer) before returning to the classroom.

#### K to 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

For all other classes up to 4<sup>th</sup> grade, any child needing to use the restroom shall go with another child of the same age and sex. A female volunteer will accompany the pair to the rest room and wait outside the closed bathroom door until the children are finished. The children must wash their hands with soap and water (or anti-bacterial sanitizer) and return with the volunteer to their classroom.

#### 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

For 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade, any child needing to use the restroom may go on his or her own. Children must wash their hands with soap and water (or anti-bacterial sanitizer) and return immediately to their classroom.

### Appropriate Discipline

All children's ministry volunteers are responsible for providing a loving, respectful, and orderly atmosphere in which children can learn, play, and interact with others. This atmosphere should be maintained by preparing beforehand, proactively directing children towards acceptable activities, verbally encouraging positive behavior, and, when necessary, correcting or redirecting inappropriate behavior.

Acceptable means of redirecting inappropriate behavior may include correcting the child verbally, withholding a certain privilege or activity for a brief time, or separating a child from the situation or problem for a brief time (particularly if his behavior is endangering or upsetting other children). Correction should be discrete; in the classroom.

**Steps of correction** might include (depending on the age of the child):

1. Removing the child from the situation or problem
2. Pointing out the problematic behavior; talking to the child about his/her sin and need for Christ
3. Praying for the child and redirecting to a new activity
4. Helping the child reconcile with the offended children when appropriate

### **Volunteers should view misbehavior as an opportunity to introduce children to the gospel.**

Children's ministry volunteers and staff members are strictly prohibited from using any form of corporal punishment such as slapping, kicking, punching, spanking, or hitting. They should never speak harsh words, insults, belittling comments, threatening words, or any other verbal humiliation to children.

If a child's behavior is uncontrollable or the child does not respond to the acceptable means of discipline indicated above, the child can be removed from the classroom. Before the child can be removed from the classroom, volunteers must contact the Children's Ministry Director or staff. Volunteers are to maintain the two-volunteer rule at all times, even in cases when a child is disrupting the class. The Children's Ministry Director or staff with a second volunteer will escort the child from the classroom. The Children's Ministry Director will call the child's parents. Volunteers and staff are allowed to physically restrain a child if he/she is physically endangering other children. Please report any of these problems to a Children's Ministry Director.

Once a child is removed from children's ministry, reinstatement is possible at the determination of the pastor who oversees children's ministry and the Children's Ministry Director. A child may be reinstated if the risk of re-offense has been adequately reduced.

### Physical Touch Policy

Two types of relationships are important to consider: *volunteer-to-child* and *child/teen-to-child*.

#### Volunteer-to-Child

While appropriate physical contact with children can be an effective means of aiding in communication, redirecting attention, calming restlessness, or showing godly love and care, it can also be misinterpreted. Particularly in our interaction with children, we want to be blameless and above reproach. The following will help workers to avoid any compromise or concerns in this area:

- Always remain in open sight of other adults.
- Appropriate touch is positive physical contact that nurtures children and develops a sense of emotional security and maturity in their interactions with adults. Appropriate touch is applied to meet the needs of children and not the adults.
- Appropriate physical contact will vary according to the age of the child. What is appropriate for nursery children (holding, rocking, sitting on laps, etc.) will not be appropriate for grade school children.
- Inappropriate touch involves, but is not limited to coercion or other forms of physical contact which exploits the child's lack of knowledge, satisfies adult physical needs at the expense of the child, violates laws against sexual or physical contact between adult and child, and any attempt to modify child behavior with physical force.
- For ages 2 thru 5, only women can take children to the restroom.
- Sitting on laps is only appropriate for ages 0 to 5.
- In general, a man will need to limit physical contact more than a woman in the same situation, especially when working with older children.
- Volunteers should refrain from rough-housing, wrestling, shoulder or piggy-back rides, rubbing, massaging, or any physical activity that might make a child feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Only touch children in "safe" areas and for brief time. "Safe" areas generally include hands, arms, shoulders, upper back, or gentle pats on the top of the head. Never touch a child on or near any region that is private or personal, unless when necessary while assisting in a diaper change or restroom visit.
- Never touch a child out of frustration or anger. Physical discipline is not an appropriate means of correcting someone else's child.

#### Child/Teen-to-Child

- No male or female under eighteen should ever be alone together while in children's ministry.
- No inappropriate touching (as defined above and in the appendix) of any kind will be accepted.
- Fighting will not be tolerated and any child participating in violent action will be dismissed from a class/program and placed into his or her parent's care.

Further guidelines on appropriate and inappropriate touch can be found in Appendix 1.

#### Parents in the Classroom

Parents (with children between ages 3-5) are allowed, if necessary, to stay with their child in the classroom on the child's first visit. For following visits, parents are allowed to stay with their child temporarily (for a few minutes). If this goes beyond a few minutes and the child cannot remain without the parents, the parents should remove the child from the classroom and are encouraged to take them into the main service. While accompanying their children, a parent should be kindly but firmly dismissed if the parent is causing difficulty or presenting concerns for the welfare of the class. Parents (with children between 6-18) are normally not allowed to stay in classrooms with their child.

#### Food and Drink Policy

The primary mission of Children's Ministry at Cherokee is to provide a safe and loving environment for the children entrusted to our care so that their parents may be fed spiritually without undue concern.

One of the ways we protect children is to limit the food and drink allowed in classrooms. Volunteers may bring food or drink with them when they serve. Volunteers may not share personal food with children.

If snacks are provided, allergen sensitivities will be considered.

### Administering Snacks and Food

#### *Serving Snacks*

- Volunteers should always check each child's label for allergy information before serving a snack. If instructions are not clear, no food should be given to the child without clarification from the parent/guardian. The volunteer may send to clarify with parent or guardian.
- Normally no snacks will be offered to the children in Sunday School classes for grades K and above.
- Snacks of various kinds WILL be offered as part of Nursery and Children's Church classes.
- Parents should verbally notify teachers upon check-in about the nature of any allergy or food limitations.

### Security and Emergency Response

#### *Emergency Situations*

In emergency situations, if appropriate, 911 will be called to secure help.

#### *Accidents, First Aid and Medical Emergencies*

All classrooms are equipped with basic first aid kits. In the event of life-threatening injury or illness, emergency medical services will be called and parents should be located and informed immediately. Volunteers should complete an Accident Report Form for all injuries, whether major or minor prior to leaving the premises on the day of the accident.

#### *Evacuation Procedures*

In the event of a fire, staff or volunteer should call 911 and also assist all children in immediately evacuating the building. Staff and key responders will help keep parents away from the children's floors. Parents should not report to the children's floors because they risk creating chaos and blocking the exit stairwells for children. Instead, parents will meet their children in the designated areas outside of the church building.

#### *A Live Threat*

A live threat includes a shooting or some other type of security hazard. See the following four steps for handling a live threat situation:

#### **Step 1: Volunteers and Staff Evacuate Children**

- As soon as staff or a volunteer is confronted with a real threat, they respond immediately.
- If it is safe to do so, the first course of action should be to evacuate the building.

#### **Step 2: Volunteers and Staff Communicate the Danger**

- When it is safe to do so, whoever sees or hears the live threat should notify the team leader, or staff about the problem. Staff, the team leader will then notify the remaining volunteers about the live threat.
- When it is safe to do so, staff, deacon or volunteer should call 911. Give the following information:
- Location and the nature of the threat.
- If shots have been fired tell police we have an "active shooter." Police are trained specifically to respond to an active shooter.

#### **Step 3: Hide**

- If running is not a safe option, hide in as safe a place as possible.
- Close the door, including the top portion of each door and pull the latch down.
- Barricade the doors with heavy furniture.
- Close and lock windows and close blinds.

- Turn off the lights.
- Silence all electronic devices.
- Maintain silence.
- Have children lie or sit on the floor away from the door. If possible, stay out of sight of any interior windows.

#### **Step 4: Staff or Volunteers fight the Live Threat**

- If neither running nor hiding is a safe option, as a last resort, when confronted by a shooter or some other danger, adults in immediate danger should consider trying to disrupt or incapacitate the shooter by using aggressive force and items in their environment, such as a fire extinguisher or chairs.
- Under no circumstances will a child be allowed to confront the potential danger. After the area has been made safe and secure by police, the Children's Ministry Administrator, the pastor who oversees children, or staff will communicate an "all clear" sign to anyone who is in lock-down mode.

#### *Missing Child or Kidnapping*

In the case of a missing child, the staff will first do a thorough check of the children's ministry areas to make sure the child is not in another part of the building. If the child is not found after a thorough check of the children's ministry areas then security volunteers and other children's volunteers and staff will continue to search for the child until they are found. If the child is not found, the staff or pastors will call police to secure further help.

In the case of a kidnapping, staff or the volunteer should call 911 to secure help from the police.

#### *Parent involvement in Emergency Procedures*

The pastor who oversees children and/or the Children's Ministry Administrator will decide how and when to notify parents about security or emergency situations. Involving parents too early might cause unnecessary fears or panic. If an emergency does happen, parents will need guidance, pastoral care and counseling, so we rely on staff to walk with parents through difficult situations.

## **Healthy Child Policy**

### Communicable Disease Policy

In order to prevent the spread of communicable diseases among the children, several guidelines are in place concerning disease:

1. Children with infectious diseases should be kept home until they are no longer contagious. If a child is exhibiting symptoms of illness such as fever, diarrhea, open skin lesions or blisters (as in chicken pox), or persistent nasal discharge, the parent should keep the child home.
2. Volunteers will use disposable latex gloves and proper hygiene procedures to change diapers, wipe noses, and handle blood spills.
3. Hand washing or use of anti-bacterial hand sanitizer must be a regular habit for both children and volunteers.
4. Toys and equipment should be washed and disinfected regularly.

Cherokee is dedicated to preventing the spread of disease among the children. Volunteers have the right to refuse a child on the basis of questionable symptoms. To prevent this, parents are asked to comply with the Healthy Child Policy guidelines.

A child should not participate in a class if and when any of the following exist:

- Fever, vomiting or diarrhea (Note: Children should be free of a fever, vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours before coming to children's ministry.)
- Any symptom of scarlet fever, German measles, mumps, chicken pox, or whooping cough
- Common cold – from onset of symptoms and one week thereafter
- Sore throat
- Croup

- Lice
- Any unexplained rash
- Any skin infection such as boils, ringworm, impetigo
- Pink eye or other eye infection
- Thick green, yellow or constant nasal discharge
- Any other communicable disease

Please inform the church if your child appears to have contracted an illness while attending a Cherokee event so that other parents may be notified if necessary. If a child contracts an illness and has been in contact with other children while at Cherokee, it is the responsibility of parents to notify the church.

Neither volunteers nor church staff may give any medication to any child.

Parents of children with special needs are encouraged to contact the Children's Ministry Administrator before signing the child into class. This allows the staff to assess the needs of the child and assist parents in transitioning their child into a classroom setting.

### Universal Precautions

Universal precautions are very effective for protecting both the children and volunteers from illness. These methods are employed such that all human bodily fluids are treated as if they carried infectious diseases. Universal precautions are applicable in any setting and should always be used.

#### Important Points of Universal Precautions:

- Wash hands before and after any contact with bodily fluids, including wiping noses, changing diapers, cleaning vomit, and treating a blood spill.
- Always wear disposable gloves when dealing with any bodily fluids.
- Treat all soiled linen (i.e. sheets, clothing) as potential infectious agents.
- In rooms with children ages 23 months and below, remove toys that children have mouthed from the general play area. Set them in the container designated by the sink and wash.
- At the end of the session, disinfect the room with Lysol disinfectant spray.

### Neglect & Abuse Prevention, Reporting & Response Definitions

What is child neglect and abuse? It is important to define our terms.

**Child neglect** is failure, whether intentional or not, of the person responsible for the child's care to provide for the child's basic needs such as adequate feed, clothing, medical and dental care, supervision, and/or proper education, or the failure to protect the child from harm.

**Child abuse** is any recent act or failure to act resulting in imminent risk or serious harm, death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual harm or exploitation of a child by a parent or a caretaker who is responsible for the child's welfare.

**Sexual abuse** perpetrated by an adult is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child and an adult. This includes activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or child. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered to be forced whether or not the child consents to it. Sexual abuse perpetrated by a child is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between children, with or without the consent of either child, when one child has power or perceived authority over the other child. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children.

**Sexual exploitation** includes forcing a child or soliciting a child for the purposes of prostitution; and using a child to videotape or photograph pornography.

**Child sexual abuse** is any form of sexual contact with a minor, non-touching offenses, or sexual exploitation of a minor. This is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they cannot be personally, socially, and developmentally ready.

**Child spiritual abuse** is the use of spiritual authority (the Bible or church authority) to emotionally, physically, and/or sexually abuse a child.

### Prevention

Cherokee takes protection against and reporting of neglect and abuse very seriously. To prevent abuse and neglect, we:

- Educate and equip staff and volunteers about neglect and abuse
- Adhere to the procedures and guidelines as set out in this policy manual
- Many of the policies are written to protect children, including the two adult rule, visibility guidelines, and diaper and bathroom policy
- Train and screen volunteers prior to contact with any children. Screening includes filling out an application, getting feedback from references and requiring a criminal background check.
- Require all full-time staff to submit to a criminal background check within a month of joining staff
- Repeat screening procedures and criminal background checks for full-time staff and volunteers every five years
- Require volunteers and staff to be members for at least six months prior to serving in children's ministry

Any instance of suspected or observed abuse or neglect should be handled with the following guidelines.

## **Neglect & Abuse Prevention, Reporting, & Response**

### Point of Contact for Reporting

Anyone who suspects, witnesses, or has any reason to believe that a child has been or is likely to be neglected and/or harmed or threatened with abuse in any form should contact the Children's Ministry Director, the pastor who oversees children's ministry, or any staff member at Cherokee. This reporting includes questionable behavior (overly flirtatious behavior, shoulder massages or other intimate acts, etc.) and/or possible offenses (volunteers observing actual abuse or possible evidence of abuse, like abrasions, lacerations, etc.).

### Guidelines for Mandatory and Permissive Reporters

In reporting of neglect or abuse to the authorities, it is important to distinguish between permissive and mandatory reporters.

A mandatory reporter may include social workers, teachers and other school personnel, physicians and other health care workers, mental health professionals, childcare providers, law enforcement officers, and domestic violence workers.

Permissive reporters include anyone who is not a mandatory reporter, which will be the majority of Cherokee's volunteers and staff.

**The church has a moral and ethical obligation to report any neglect and abuse, so if the person suspects or witnessed or has knowledge of neglect or abuse, the person must talk to the point of contact for reporting—the Children's Ministry Director or the pastor who oversees children's ministry, or any staff member at Cherokee.**

If the person who suspects or witnessed or has knowledge of neglect or abuse is a mandatory reporter, he or she must follow the guidelines and laws set out for mandatory reporters. He or she must fulfill his/her obligations to the law, including reporting to Child Protective Services or the police. At no time will the mandatory reporter be

prohibited from reporting, even if their consultation with staff or leadership in the church results in a disagreement. If you are a mandatory reporter, it is important that you know whether you must report only in the context of your professional duties or whether the obligation to report also applies when you are away from your professional duties or functioning as a volunteer at our church.

If the person who suspects or witnessed or has knowledge of neglect or abuse is a permissive reporter, they should contact the Children's Ministry Directory and/or any staff member. Because permissive reporters do not have professional training or experience in recognizing abuse they are required to report first to the Children's Ministry Director and/or staff member. If reporting to Child Protective Services or police is deemed as warranted then that person must report. At all times, this person will be required to fulfill their obligations to the law.

Federal laws authorize civil or criminal penalties or civil liability for failing to report a reasonable suspicion of child abuse. In addition, obstructing or interfering with an investigation of child abuse can result in criminal charges. The church will not tolerate any retaliation against a reporter who has a reasonable suspicion of neglect or abuse.

### More Guidelines on Reporting

When available, the following information will be documented and reported when helpful:

- The name, age, gender and address of the victim(s).
- The name, age, gender and address of the alleged perpetrator/offender(s).
- The nature, frequency, date(s) and location(s) of the abuse alleged to have occurred.
- The relationship between the victim and the alleged perpetrator/offender.
- Other evidence that supports the allegations (eyewitness, medical exams, confessions, etc.)

### **What should a volunteer, staff, deacon or pastor do when they suspect, hear about or observe what appears to be a sign or symptom of neglect or abuse?**

1. Talk immediately with the Children's Ministry Director and staff at Cherokee.
2. The volunteer should document this information on the Child Abuse Reporting form, which is available in every classroom.

### **What should the Children's Ministry Director or the pastor who oversees children say or do with the child who is allegedly neglected or abused?**

1. Talk with the child and find out how the injury happened, though be careful of the level of detail you pursue. Asking for too much detail might be harmful for a child as it causes them to relive the abusive experience. If the child is describing what might be abuse, the objective is to obtain very general information that may help substantiate or alleviate the suspicion.
2. Ask the child open-ended questions and get them to relay the event in their own words. Be careful to not suggest answers to the child and be sensitive to the fact that the child will be scared to tell the story, sometimes out of fear that it will upset adults or will not be believed.
3. Write out a report that should include signs or symptoms observed, notations about bruises or injuries that are visible, a summary of the conversation with the child, and a description of any emotions expressed by the child.
4. Do not ask the child to undress in order to show bruises or injuries that are not visible. Include all of this information on the Child Abuse Reporting form, which is available in every classroom.

### **What should volunteers or staff report when they hear of a story of abuse?**

1. Note what the child said happened
2. Who the child was with when it happened
3. Where it happened, and when it happened
4. All of this should be documented

### **What should a volunteer or staff do when they observe an incident that may be abusive?**

1. Immediately intervene to protect the child
2. Follow-up immediately with staff
3. Write out a report about the incident and act in accordance with all reporting laws

4. The volunteer or staff should keep an on-going log of the suspected person's behavior and anything else that is relevant concerning the person or the child or their relationship

#### Response to Neglect & Abuse

Cherokee will ensure that a caring response is always provided to any suspicion or witnessing of neglect or abuse. Every allegation of neglect or abuse will be taken seriously. Proper guidelines for handling such complaints will be followed diligently and exhaustively. The victim(s) and victim's family will be cared for by the church in whatever way is available. Situations will be handled forthrightly with due respect for all parties' privacy and confidentiality.

#### Who should be Notified?

The church will seek professional assistance when deemed appropriate. Notification will be limited to those who need to know about the allegation and to those who can provide assistance in responding to neglect or abuse. The church may:

- Report suspicions or firsthand accounts or any knowledge of abuse to civil authorities. Full cooperation must be given to civil authorities
- Notify church disciplers, counselors or medical personnel in order to obtain ongoing care for the victim(s) and victim's families
- Notify an insurance agent, denominational leader(s), or any other outside officials
- Notify and consult with a church attorney

#### How Will Cherokee Respond to Allegations, Admission or Criminal Conviction?

Allegations of neglect or abuse, admission of child abuse by staff, deacon, volunteer, helper, or any member of Cherokee, or criminal conviction of abuse should:

- Be reported to staff. This disclosure of abuse is to be done regardless of the source of the information and should be conveyed within 48 hours of the allegation being made or the admission of child abuse or criminal conviction
- Immediately result in removal of the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender from any activity or program involving children
- Result in immediate ineligibility of the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender from being granted approval to participate in any activity or program involving children
- The staff will decide on other appropriate responses to allegations, self-admission of guilt, or criminal conviction, some which may include:
  - Contacting police or CPS
  - Notification of staff, deacons, and any volunteers
  - Reporting allegations, self-admission or criminal conviction to the congregation during Cherokee's public service or member's meeting.
  - Barring from any activities or church programs with children or the children's ministry floors at the church building.
  - The staff will designate Cherokee members or staff, who will accompany the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender at all times while he or she is on Cherokee's property or anywhere in Cherokee's buildings. The alleged perpetrator will be notified of this requirement immediately after allegations are made known to staff or pastors.
  - Disciplining (removal from membership) of alleged perpetrator or criminal offender in a public meeting by the congregation.
  - Barring alleged perpetrator or criminal offender from any and all church property.
  - Suspension or termination of a paid staff member or volunteer position.
  - Acknowledging to another organization about allegations against or termination of staff.
- If staff, Cherokee pastors, or a member of the Child Protection Committee learns from CPS or police that allegations of neglect or abuse are being investigated or criminal charges have been filed, the Cherokee pastors should:
  - Be careful to not interfere with the investigation by police or CPS
  - Prevent contact between the accused and the accuser if appropriate

- Remove the accused from activities or programs involving children, pending the outcome of the investigation
- Appoint a member of the Child Protection Committee or the deacon board to be a liaison with CPS and the police
- If an adult alleges an incident of neglect or abuse that happened he was a child in a Cherokee program, then:
  - Member of Child Protection Committee should hire a trained mental health professional (preferably who is not associated with the church) who can provide Child Protection Committee with an assessment. The victim will have to provide consent for such an interview and to have the assessment released to the Child Protection Committee in confidence.
- If the accused is no longer a member of Cherokee then the Child Protection Committee should consult with Cherokee's pastors and legal counsel to determine legal and moral need to report to police or CPS and any other organization that the accused may be a part of since his departure from Cherokee.
- Even if government officials are no longer bound to investigate due to a statute of limitations, Cherokee should respond to all allegations with the care and diligence traced out in this policy manual

### Confidentiality

The church, as well as permissive or mandatory reporters, will maintain confidentiality to the extent that it deems appropriate for the care of its members and consistent with applicable law. Allegations and suspicion should be reported only to the persons specified in this policy manual.

### Response to Media

If appropriate, the Cherokee pastors will respond to the media. Normally, one pastor or staff member will be designated by the pastor to speak to the media on behalf of the church. A written statement should be distributed at the time of media disclosure. Great care should be taken to disclose only facts and not suspicion. Disclosed facts might include the nature of the abuse allegation and when the alleged abuse happened. Great care should be taken to protect the identity of all parties involved (the alleged abuser and victim). Alerting the media lets the alleged victim know that allegations will be taken seriously and gives other vulnerable members of the community a chance to be protected.

### Sexual Offenders in the Church

If Cherokee's pastors or children's ministry staff learns in advance that an alleged or convicted sexual offender wants to attend a Cherokee service:

1. Admission of the offender will be based on factors such as extent of prior convictions, and his or her willingness to follow guidelines set out by this policy. This is not a comprehensive list of admission criteria. Alleged or convicted sexual offenders are welcome in the large gathering public worship services on Sunday morning and evening, as well as small group gatherings in homes, provided there are no families with minors involved in that gathering.
2. A deacon or designated member of Cherokee will contact the offender letting him or her know that he or she must be accompanied at all times while on Cherokee's property or anywhere in Cherokee's buildings.
3. The pastor overseeing children's ministry, children's ministry staff, children's ministry deacons, the nursery team leader serving on that day, and security volunteers should be notified.
4. He or she will only be allowed in the worship center, fellowship hall, and small group Bible study classroom.

### When an Alleged or Convicted Offender Attends Regularly

If he/she chooses to attend regularly:

1. The Pastors will be notified.
2. The congregation will be notified in a public service of the church, most likely the members' meeting. Cherokee reserves the right to forbid someone from coming to the church for worship services, programs or activities.

When participating in church activities outside of the church building, the same guidelines apply.

3. The sexual offender should provide a member of the staff with the name of his/her probation officer. Someone from the staff will contact the probation officer and find out 1) more about the underlying offense – offenders tend to minimize their offenses, and 2) the specific terms of the probation in order to make sure the offender stays in compliance while at the church.

#### When A Sexual Offender Seeks Membership at Cherokee

If the offender seeks membership at Cherokee, the pastors retain a right to refuse membership. If the pastors approve membership to an offender, it will be conditional on his or her agreement to:

1. Verify the history of offenses, convictions, and adjudication of sexual offenses and disclose them to the Cherokee pastors.
2. A member of the staff contacting his/her probation officer to find out the underlying offense and the specific terms of probation.
3. The Children's Ministry Director doing a thorough criminal background check. If the information provided by the offender differs from the information given by the probation officer or gathered by the Children's Ministry Director that will be grounds for denying membership.
4. Disclosure of information to parents and the congregation. The information released to the church is at the discretion of the pastors. A letter detailing this information will be sent directly to all member parents.
5. Refrain from any form of communication (including phone, IM, texting, email, social media or any type of technology), social fellowship, physical contact, mentoring, baby-sitting, or coaching with children or youth or participate in any activities or programs related to children or youth both inside and outside of the church.
6. The staff will designate a deacon or Cherokee member who will accompany the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender at all times while he or she is on Cherokee's property or anywhere in Cherokee's buildings or in attendance at any church related services, activities or gatherings that has the possibility of children being present.
7. Any restrictions that the pastors determine.
8. Permission to notify the leadership, congregation, and parents of anything that the pastors deem significant for these groups to know.
9. A warning that the church will report any suspected activity to civil authorities.
10. A warning that any violation of the code of conduct (including allegations or suspicion of abusive behavior) can result in discipline and banning from the church facilities or any church related programs and activities.
11. Sign a written document that details all of these items, plus anything else that the pastors deem important to include.

#### Other Guidelines about Sexual Offenders

1. If a sexual offender does not disclose a former allegation, conviction or adjudication, and it is revealed later, the offender will be removed from any paid or volunteer position immediately and may be removed from membership as well.

2. If a sexual offender is a minor, the church reserves the right to bar that minor from any children or youth activities, and will follow the guidelines set out above for any sexual offender who seeks participation in church-related public services, programs or activities.
3. If a sexual offender leaves Cherokee (as a member or regular attender) and begins attending another church, the pastors will disclose allegations or self-admission or criminal conviction of neglect or abuse to the leadership at the next church.

## **APPENDIX 1: Inappropriate and Appropriate Touch**

### **Inappropriate Touching**

- Shoving, hair pulling, shaking, slapping, pinching, biting, kicking, hitting, or spanking a child for any reasons.
- Squeezing of arm, neck, face, or any parts of the body.
- Tickling children over 5 years old. It is over stimulating and is considered by some professionals to be a deceptive device that could lead to inappropriate touching.
- A child sitting on laps of adults is inappropriate for ages 6 and older.
- Holding or restraining children on the lap. However, holding a child 5 years and younger is appropriate for short time spans when comfort is needed by the child or the child's behavior is out-of-control or endangering other children.
- Touching a child in the genital areas except for younger and developmentally delayed children requiring a diaper change, bathing/washing and assistance with toileting procedures. Otherwise, touch in the genital area is only permitted by medical personnel in case of injury or suspected injury.
- Kissing a child on the lips, neck, or anywhere else. A child should never be allowed to kiss a staff member, volunteer, deacon or another child on the lips, neck, or anywhere else. Children are also not allowed to kiss one another. (Note: A kiss is appropriate on the cheek when it is included in a greeting).
- Slapping a child on the behind, even when playing.
- Fondling children, even in non-private areas.
- Carrying a child on the back unless the child is unable to walk.

### **Appropriate Touching**

- A comforting pat on the shoulder and back, or allowing an emotionally distressed child to lean their head on your shoulder is appropriate.
- Back rub to help comfort, or put an irritable child to sleep is appropriate.
- High-Fives, handshakes, or the touching of two fists are appropriate and recommended touch, especially when interacting with older children.
- Holding hands is permitted with children 10 years and under when initiated by the child, or when helping a child to walk, climb stairs, etc.
- Holding a child firmly with your hands to restrain him/her is appropriate when it is used to prevent a child from an accident, injury, hurting self, others, or you.

**APPENDIX 2:**

## Child Abuse Reporting Form

Instructions: If a volunteer, staff, deacon or pastor suspect, hear about or observe signs or symptoms of abuse, please: (1) Talk immediately with the Children's Ministry Director or the Pastor who oversees children; and (2) document any relevant information on this form.

This report should include signs or symptoms observed, notations about bruises or injuries that are visible, a summary of what the child said, and a description of any emotions expressed by the child. Do not go back and interview the child. Fill this form out based on whatever information has already been obtained.

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Volunteer: \_\_\_\_\_

Signs or Symptoms of Abuse Observed:

Bruises or Injuries that are Visible:

Emotions expressed by the Child:

Summary of the Conversation with the Child:

**Anything Else that is Relevant:**

Check all that apply:

Children's Ministry Director Notified

Pastor Notified

### **APPENDIX 3:**

Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting Guidelines in TN

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families Administration on Children, Youth and Families Children's Bureau

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws/policies/state/?CWIGFunction=statestatutes:main.getResults>

## **Child Abuse and Neglect**

### **Clergy as Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect**

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the PDF of this publication

**Citation:** Tenn. Code Ann. § 37-1-605(a)

Any person who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been sexually abused shall report such knowledge or suspicion to the department.

**Citation:** Tenn. Code Ann. § 37-1-403(a)

Any person who has knowledge of or is called upon to render aid to any child who is suffering from or has sustained any wound, injury, disability, or physical or mental condition shall report such harm immediately if the harm is of such a nature as to reasonably indicate that it has been caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect or that, on the basis of available information, reasonably appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect.

### **Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect**

To better understand this issue and to view it across State, download the PDF of this publication

### **Professionals Required to Report**

**Citation:** Ann. Code §§ 37-1-403; 37-1-605

Persons required to report include:

- Physicians, osteopaths, medical examiners, chiropractors, nurses, hospital personnel, or other health or mental health professionals
- Teachers, other school officials or personnel, daycare center workers
- Other professional child care, foster care, residential, or institutional workers
- Social workers
- Practitioners who rely solely on spiritual means for healing
- Judges or law enforcement officers
- Neighbors, relatives, or friends
- Other persons

### **Reporting by Other Persons**

**Citations:** Ann. Code §§ 37-1-403; 37-1-605

Any person who has knowledge that a child has been harmed by abuse or neglect must report.

### **Institutional Responsibility to Report**

**Citation:** Ann. Code § 37-1-403

Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit any hospital, clinic, school, or other organization responsible for the care of children from developing a specific procedure for internally tracking, reporting, or otherwise monitoring a report made by a member of the organizations staff, including requiring a member of the organizations

staff who makes a report to provide a copy of or notice concerning the report to the organization, so long as the procedure does not inhibit, interfere with, or otherwise affect the duty of a person to make a report as required by law.

Nothing in this section shall prevent staff of a hospital or clinic from gathering sufficient information, as determined by the hospital or clinic, in order to make an appropriate medical diagnosis or to provide and document care that is medically indicated and is needed to determine whether to report an incident as defined in this part. Those activities shall not interfere with nor serve as a substitute for any investigation by law enforcement officials or the department. However, if any hospital, clinic, school, or other organization responsible for the care of children develops a procedure for internally tracking, reporting, or otherwise monitoring a report, the identity of the person who made a report of harm shall be kept confidential.

### **Standards for Making a Report**

**Citation: Ann. Code §§ 37-1-403; 37-1-605**

A report is required when:

- A person has knowledge that a child has been harmed by abuse or neglect
- A person is called upon to render aid to any child who is suffering from an injury that reasonably appears to have been caused by abuse
- A person knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been sexually abused
- A physician diagnoses or treats any sexually transmitted disease in a child age 13 or younger or diagnoses pregnancy in an emancipated minor.

Any school officials, personnel, employee, or member of the board of education who is aware of a report or investigation of employee misconduct on the part of any employee of the school system that in any way involves known or alleged child abuse, including, but not limited to, child physical or sexual abuse or neglect, shall immediately upon knowledge of such information notify the Department of Children's Services or law enforcement official of the abuse or alleged abuse.

### **Privileged Communication**

**Citation: Ann. Code § 37-1-411**

The following privileges may not be claimed:

- Husband-wife
- Psychiatrist-patient or psychologists-patient

### **Inclusion of Reporter's Name in Report**

Not addressed in statutes reviewed

### **Disclosure of Reporter Identity**

**Citation: Ann. Code § 37-1-409**

Except as may be ordered by the juvenile court, the name of any person reporting child abuse or neglect shall not be released to any person, other than employees of the department or other child protection team members responsible for child protective services, the abuse registry, or the appropriate district attorney, general upon subpoena of the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, without the written consent of the person reporting.

The reporter's identity shall be irrelevant to any civil proceeding and shall, therefore, not be subject to disclosure by order of any court. This shall not prohibit the issuance of a subpoena to a person reporting child abuse when deemed necessary by the district attorney general or the department to protect a child who is the subject of a report, provided that the fact that the person made the report is not disclosed.

## Penalties for Failure to Report and False Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect

To better understand this issue and to view it across States, download the PDF of this publication

### **Failure to Report**

#### **Ann. Code § 37-1-412**

Any person who knowingly fails to make a report required by § 37-1-403 commits a Class A misdemeanor. A person believed to have violated this section shall be brought before the court. If the defendant pleads not guilty, the juvenile court judge shall bind the defendant over to the grand jury. If the defendant pleads guilty, the juvenile court judge shall sentence the defendant under this section with a fine not to exceed \$2,500.

### **False Reporting**

#### **Ann. Code § 37-1-413**

Any person who either verbally or by written or printed communication knowingly and maliciously reports or causes, encourages, aids, counsels, or procures another to report a false accusation of child sexual abuse, or false accusation that a child has sustained any wound, injury, disability, or physical or mental condition caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect, commits a Class E felony.

**APPENDIX 4:**

## Children's Ministry Volunteer Application

**Personal Information:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ ST: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Employment: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Marital Status: \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security #: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a current driver's license? yes or no If yes, License #: \_\_\_\_\_ ST: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a member of CBC: yes or no If yes, how long: \_\_\_\_\_

Why do you want to serve in children's ministry?

Though it is not required, what prior experience do you have working with kids?

What do you believe your natural or spiritual gifts are?

What age group do you prefer to work with?

**Personal History:**

Have you been convicted of an offense other than a minor traffic violation(s)? yes or no

If yes, please describe all convictions:

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Have you ever been charged with, indicated for, or pled guilty to an offense involving a minor? yes or no

If yes, please describe all convictions for the past five years:

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Were you a victim of abuse or molestation while a minor? yes or no

- If you prefer, you may refuse to answer this question
- You may discuss your answer in confidence with a pastor rather than answering on form
- Answering yes or leaving the question unanswered will not disqualify you from service

Have you ever been accused, charged, or alleged to have committed any act of neglecting, abusing, or molesting any child? yes or no

If yes, please describe accusations, charged, or allegations:

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Have you ever been subject to any disciplinary action or investigation by a church, religious or other organizations, or by an employer? yes or no

If yes, please describe:

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Do you have any drug, alcohol or substance abuse problems? yes or no

Are you presently addicted to pornography? yes or no

Are you practicing a sexual lifestyle that goes against our church covenant? yes or no

**Personal Statement:**

I understand that to verify my suitability as a volunteer worker for the children's ministry department, Cherokee will request a criminal records search. I understand that the personal information will be held confidential by the Cherokee pastors and staff. As a volunteer worker in the children's department of Cherokee, I agree to observe and abide by the policies and procedures of Cherokee Baptist Church.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby authorize Cherokee Baptist Church to make inquiries concerning my background and authorize all persons associated with me, including churches, employers, law enforcement agencies, licensing and social service agencies, to release any information contained in their files or records concerning me to Cherokee Baptist Church.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge.
- I understand my responsibility to verbally report abuse and other inappropriate conduct toward a child to Children's Ministry Director or Cherokee Pastor(s)
- Should by application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the church covenant and to refrain from unscriptural conduct that may bring reproach upon Christ and Cherokee Baptist Church.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_