

## **Child Protection Policy for North Hill Christian Church**

### **General Purpose Statement**

North Hill Christian Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of North Hill Christian Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

### **Definitions**

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “worker” includes both paid and volunteer persons who work with children.

### **Selection of Workers**

#### **Volunteers**

All persons who desire to volunteer with children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a) **Six Month Rule**

No applicant will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with North Hill Christian Church for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children. In the case of Vacation Bible School where multiple churches are involved, all volunteers must have at least 6 months involvement at their congregation.

b) **Criminal Background Check\***

A criminal background check is required for all volunteers. All volunteers involved with any activity involving a minor (anyone under the age of 18) are required to provide a signed release form which the church will keep on file that allows North Hill Christian Church to request a criminal background check. The background check will be completed before any new volunteers can begin working with minors.

- Background checks for all outside groups will be done through the outside group, such as Family Promise of Spokane.
- As a part of our screening of volunteers we will ask if they have ever been accused of, participated in, or been convicted of sexual misconduct.

#### **Employees**

All persons who are seeking employment at North Hill Christian Church for positions (other than pastor as a detailed screening process is done through the Office of Search and Call of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)) will be screened through the following:

a) **Written Application**

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous North Hill Christian Church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the North Hill Christian Church.

**b) Personal Interview**

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

**c) Reference Checks**

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references will be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at North Hill Christian Church.

**d) Criminal Background Check\***

All employees are required to sign a release form which the church will keep on file that allows North Hill Christian Church to request a criminal background check. The background check will be completed before any new employees can begin work.

As a part of our screening of employees we will ask if they have ever been accused of, participated in, or been convicted of sexual misconduct

\* What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Pastor and/or Personnel Chair on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the North Hill Christian Church.

## **Two Adult Rule**

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will have line of sight at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one unrelated adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation.

## Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers and instructors may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at North Hill Christian Church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this will be reported immediately to the Pastor for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at this North Hill Christian Church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation.
3. Civil authorities will be notified, and North Hill Christian Church will comply with the state’s requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. North Hill Christian Church will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. Vice Moderator will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. We will seek the advice of legal counsel before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the congregation. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking to the media.
6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.
7. Any person who is determined to have engaged in alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from his/her position working with children or youth.
8. Allegations of misconduct by the Pastor will be reported to the Chair of the Elders and the Regional Minister of the Northwest Regional Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

The Region will conduct an investigation under the Commission on Ministry's 'Procedures for Dealing with Accusation of Misconduct Against Clergy with Standing.

## **Open Door Policy**

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

## **Teenage Workers**

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 14
- Must be screened as specified above.
- Must never be left alone with children.
- Must have a Red Cross baby sitter certification or equivalent training.

## **Check-in/Check-out Procedure**

For children below kindergarten, a check in/check out procedure will be followed. The Child will be signed in by a parent or guardian, who will provide the names of who has permission to pick up the child from our care. In the event that there is conflict with this procedure the Pastor will be contacted. The Pastor will be responsible for releasing the child to the care of a parent or guardian after discussing the surrounding circumstances with the parent or guardian.

For all children who are cared for by North Hill Christian Church an information form must be on file that includes pertinent medical information, such as allergies or other medical conditions, and contact information for the parents in case they need to be contacted while at the church.

## **Sick Child Policy**

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at North Hill Christian Church. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

## Medications Policy

It is the policy of North Hill Christian Church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the Nursery Attendant to develop a plan of action.

## Discipline Policy

It is the policy of North Hill Christian Church not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There will be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the Pastor if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

## Restroom Guidelines

Workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should call the child's name and ask if the child requires assistance. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door as they assist the child.

For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to checking them into the nursery.

## Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

## Training

North Hill Christian Church will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.