

Safety Policies for the Children's and Youth Ministries Of Bethel Baptist Church (adopted)

Introduction

The Children's and Youth Ministries of Bethel Baptist Church affirm the importance and value of all children and youth by ministering to their spiritual, physical and emotional needs. Ministry to these age groups is accomplished through the efforts of church staff and many volunteers who provide a wide array of activities for fellowship and spiritual development. These activities may occur through specific programs such as Bible Study, Missions and Music, as well as other church sponsored events. A priority of these ministries is the provision of a safe environment in which the children and youth may worship, learn and enjoy fellowship. These ministries rely on church members who volunteer to teach and nurture these individuals. These volunteers are individuals who have indicated their willingness and ability to provide the safest environment possible for the children in their care while ministering to their spiritual, physical and emotional needs. Through their efforts, the ministries' goals are accomplished.

Section 1: General

1. For the purpose of this policy, the terms child and youth are defined as any individual less than eighteen years of age.
2. The provisions of this policy will apply to all activities and events sponsored by Bethel Baptist Church as part of it's ministry to children and youth. The operation of Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts and Adventure Crews will be governed by the Safety Policies and Procedures of Boy Scouts of America.
3. Prior to employment, all potential employees of Bethel Baptist Church will be submitted to Shepherd's Watch or other 3rd party, for a criminal background check as part of the interview process.
4. The effective date of this policy will be _____.

Section 2: Enlistment

The Children's and Youth Ministries strive to select as workers those individuals who have demonstrated through their lives their own commitment to a maturing relationship with Jesus Christ. Enlistment of all volunteers within these ministries will be accomplished in the following manner:

1. Any member wishing to serve as a new worker in children's/youth ministry will:
 - a. Have been a member of Bethel Baptist Church for a least six months or be a part of a mentoring relationship (see Section 2-Item 2) with a veteran member, as identified by a staff member and be at least 18 years of age.
 - b. Have participated in an orientation session for prospective workers in children and youth ministries scheduled in conjunction with New Members Orientation. During this time of orientation, prospective workers will receive a copy of all policies and procedures related to their prospective area of ministry and will receive guidance in their implementation.
 - c. Have affirmed by signature a Children's and Youth Ministry Covenant.
 - d. Agree to submit their name to Shepherd's Watch or other 3rd party for a criminal background check.

2. Members of at less six months may serve as a volunteer worker under a mentoring relationship with an experienced teacher, as approved by a staff minister, but may not be counted as one of the required two adults with a group.
3. Upon fulfillment of these criteria, an individual will be eligible to begin service within their desired area of ministry in accordance with the recruiting and election process as established by the church.

Section 3: Supervision

Providing adequate supervision of younger children, whether in the classroom or other activities, is of primary importance in helping them feel secure while assuring their parents and caregivers of their safety. The maturity, independence, and mobility of youth require differing forms of supervision that provide for their safety and protection while allowing opportunities for their spiritual growth and fellowship. The following policies set forth guidelines regarding the proper supervision of these individuals while in the care of Bethel Baptist Church:

Children-Newborn through Grade Five:

1. There will be an adequate number of approved workers, a minimum of two, in each classroom and/or accompanying each group of children at all times. Except in extenuating circumstances, workers are to avoid any situation that would cause them to be isolated with an individual child away from the sight and sound of others.
2. All classrooms utilized by children will be equipped with a door containing a window that will remain clear and unobstructed at all times. Doors of rooms in which a children's activity is occurring will remain unlocked.
3. During children's activities, program coordinators and/or church staff members will randomly visit room and areas in which the activity is taking place.
4. All activities, including Sunday School, will be conducted as "open door" activities where a parent or caregiver may visit or check-in at any time. Dismissal of children from activities, through the teamwork of workers and the children's parents/caregivers, will be conducted in a manner that will assure the well being of the child, utilizing such methods as Kiddie Keepers.
5. The appropriate staff minister will approve in advance all children's activities occurring off church premises. For off-premise activities the parent/caregiver will be informed of the location and details of the activity, date, time of departure and return, mode of transportation, responsibilities to be borne by the children and/or parents, and the coordinator of the event. In order for a child to participate in an activity away from Bethel Baptist Church Premises, a signed parental permission form and medical release form must be received by the appropriate worker or staff minister in advance of the activity.
6. Each vehicle transporting a child(ren) will contain at least two adult workers. Church owned vehicles, operated by drivers according to church policy, should be used for transportation. Private vehicles should be used only in extraordinary circumstances and with the approval of the appropriate staff minister.
7. The coordinator or sponsor of any children's activity will be responsible for seeing that the appropriate type of supervision is provided. For example, if the activity involves swimming, water skiing, boating, etc. workers will be provided capable of reacting promptly and effectively in an emergency situation. The

parental permission form for a water activity will indicate the child's swimming proficiency and whether any restrictions are to be in effect. For an activity away from the church premises, a first aid kit will be taken and available in case of an accident.

8. Medications required by children while at a church sponsored activity will be administered as follows:
 - a. Workers will maintain children's medications in a secured location.
 - b. At church, the parent will assume responsibility for administering any medication(s) to their child(ren). Workers will administer medications only in extenuating circumstances and after having received prior signed, written permission and instructions from the parent.
 - c. While away from the church premises the worker may supervise the administration of medications to the children. The parent will provide signed, written permission and detailed instructions regarding dosages, method of application, and any other pertinent information.
9. The worker in charge of an activity will document in writing all accidents, especially those involving an injury to a child's head or face or the letting of blood. The worker will inform a parent/caregiver of the circumstances of the accident and remedial actions taken. The worker will forward the documentation of the accident to the appropriate staff minister. In the event of an accident requiring medical treatment, the worker will immediately summon the proper medical authorities and notify the parent/caregiver as quickly as possible.
10. All toys and furniture within areas utilized by children will be periodically inspected and those that pose a potential safety hazard repaired or replaced.

Youth Grade Six through Grade Twelve:

1. There will be an adequate number of approved workers, a minimum of two, present at each youth activity.
2. During youth activities the program coordinator and/or church staff members will be responsible for randomly visiting rooms and areas in which the activity is taking place.
3. All activities will be conducted as "open door" activities where a parent or caregiver may visit or check-in at any time.
4. Upon completion of an activity at the scheduled time, youth will be dismissed and their parent/caregiver will assume responsibility for their youth unless the worker or staff minister is instructed otherwise, in writing, by the parent/caregiver.
5. All youth activities occurring off church premises must be approved in advance by the appropriate staff minister. For off-premises activities the parent/caregiver will be informed of the location and details of the activity, date, time of departure and return, mode of transportation, responsibilities to be borne by the child(ren) and/or parent(s) and the coordinator(s) of the event. In order for a youth to participate in an activity away from Bethel Baptist Church premises, a signed parental permission form and medical release form must be provided to the appropriate worker or staff minister in advance of the activity.
6. Any vehicle transporting youth for a church sponsored activity will contain at least three occupants, one of whom will be worker/driver. Church owned vehicles, operated by drivers according to church policy, should be used for transportation. Private vehicles should be used only in extraordinary circumstances and with the approval of the appropriate staff minister.

7. The coordinator or sponsor of any youth activity will be responsible for seeing that the appropriate type of supervision is provided. For example, if the activity involves swimming, water skiing, boating, etc. workers will be provided capable of reacting promptly and effectively in an emergency situation. The parental permission form for a water activity will indicate the child's swimming proficiency and whether any restrictions are to be in effect. For an activity away from the church premises, a first aid kit will be taken and available in case of an accident.
8. Unless specified otherwise to the worker in writing by a parent/caregiver, youth will be responsible for securing and administering their own medication while at a church sponsored activity. The worker may assist in securing and administering medications for youth as requested. If the worker, on instruction of the parent/caregiver, assumes the responsibility for securing and administering medications, the parent will provide signed, written permission and detailed instructions regarding dosages, method of application and any other pertinent information.
9. Any accident requiring professional medical attention shall be documented by the worker in charge and reported as soon as possible to the appropriate staff person. A parent will be informed as soon as possible regarding the circumstances of the accident and remedial actions taken. The worker will provide documentation concerning the accident to the appropriate staff minister.
10. When counseling or working with youth individually, the worker will avoid meeting with the youth behind closed doors or in secluded areas. Meetings should occur in a public setting within the view of others.
11. The workers at any youth activity will strive to structure the activity so that one-on-one contact between youth of the opposite sex will not occur in private or secluded areas. Workers will have knowledge of the whereabouts of all youth during the activity.

Section 4: Worker Training

All children's and youth workers will be offered periodic training in topics and areas appropriate for their ministry. Topics will include, but not limited to, understanding the necessity of using appropriate language, appropriate means of behavior management, and appropriate touch in working with children and youth; instruction in child abuse issues and signs that would indicate possible abuse situations, instruction in dealing with children with physical or mental limitations; and methods and forms of supervision.

Section 5 Procedures for Instances, or Suspected Instances, of Abuse, Sexual Molestation and Sexual Assault

The following procedures will be utilized in response to any situation involving actual or suspected abuse, sexual molestation, or sexual assault of a child or youth. All matters related to the implementation of the following procedures shall be held in strictest confidence.

Procedure for Workers

Any worker who notices marks of a suspicious nature on a child or youth, such as unusual bruises, burns, or hand prints across the face or upper arms or who hears from children or youth comments of concern and/or stories of

unacceptable or extreme methods of punishment, times of questionable deprivation, or details that suggest neglect should:

1. Refrain from asking the child leading questions regarding the marks or any statements they make, but should listen carefully to any statement the child or youth may voluntarily offer.
2. Contact as soon as possible the appropriate staff member or activity coordinator who will view the markings in a discreet manner.
3. Assist the appropriate staff person or activity coordinator in documenting the day, time, and circumstances under which the markings were first discovered and any statements made by the child or youth.

Procedures for Activity Coordinators

Any children's or youth program or activity coordinator who receives information from a children's or youth worker of a suspected instance of abuse, sexual molestation, or sexual assault should:

1. Respond to worker's request to view any suspicious marks on a given child or youth and listen carefully as the worker relates any information shared by the child or youth. With the assistance of the worker, document all pertinent information in writing.
2. See that the appropriate staff person is notified of the situation as soon as possible and given all available information.
3. Encourage the worker to continue being observant and sensitive to all signs of a child or youth might display and bring any further information to the attention of the activity coordinator or the appropriate staff person.

Procedures for Pastor, Staff Persons, and Church Administrator

Church staff members who receive information of a suspected instance of abuse, sexual molestation, or sexual assault from a children's or youth worker or activity coordinator should:

1. Respond to a worker's or coordinator's request to view a suspicious marks on a given child or youth and listen carefully as the worker or coordinator relates any information shared by a child or youth. With the assistance of the worker or coordinator, document all pertinent information in writing.
2. Encourage the worker or coordinator to continue being observant and sensitive to all signs a child or youth might display and to bring any further information to the attention of the appropriate staff person.
3. Formulate a plan of action based on circumstances and information available. In formulating this plan, all requirements as set forth in the Code of Virginia will be followed.
4. All written documentation regarding incidents of actual or suspected abuse, sexual molestation, or sexual assault of a child or youth will be maintained in a confidential file available only to the Pastor, appropriate staff persons and the Church Administrator.

By my signature below, I acknowledge that I have received, read, and will comply with the document entitled
“Safety Policies for the Children’s and Youth Ministries of Bethel Baptist Church” adopted_____.

Printed Name

Applicant Signature

Date

Please give to one of the staff ministers when completed. Thank you for your willingness to serve!