

# Child Safety Policy and Procedures for Volunteers and Staff at Hope Community Church

Hope Community Church is committed to having a safe and healthy environment for our children and youth. Our congregation highly values the education and formation of children/youth, and we encourage fostering healthy and meaningful relationships among all ages of our church family. We know that we need to protect and intentionally care for those who are more vulnerable within our church and under the supervision and influence of others.

Therefore, we will take the following steps in order to prevent physical, emotional, sexual, or any other kind of harm from occurring at our church. This policy applies to every person (paid and unpaid), who is a child or youth volunteer, teacher, or worker in any form.

## I. Recruiting, Training and Maintaining Records for Volunteers/Staff Working with Children and Youth

### **A. Qualifications for Each Volunteer/Staff Member**

- i. They show a belief in the Gospel and demonstrate character and a lifestyle consistent with the Gospel's active work in their lives. They confess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and adhere to Hope's Core Values and Statement of Faith.
- ii. Either a member in good standing or a regular attendee for at least six months. Exceptions may be made by decision of the children and youth ministry leadership or by the Moms' Group leadership for each ministry's volunteers.
- iii. Have no history of being an abuser.
- iv. Have completed an interview and background check within the last three years. Those who work exclusively in the nursery or with the Moms' Group will only be required to complete a background check.

### **B. Procedures for New Volunteers or Staff Working with Children/Youth**

- i. Contact and interview with HCC children or youth leadership, when applicable.
- ii. Sign the written consent form to a confidential background check.
- iii. The person will be presented to the Executive Staff of HCC for any

concerns or comments. Moms' Group volunteers will be presented to its leadership team for review.

- iv. If any concerns are raised, either through the background check or review process, then a committee of Pastoral staff and others whom they deem appropriate will evaluate and address said concerns. The Governance Team will be involved as needed.
- v. Complete a follow-up interview if requested.
- vi. Complete training related to the Child Safety Policy for HCC.

### **C. Procedures for Maintaining Records and Training**

- i. Each fall the church staff will review together this policy and discuss any additional efforts needed to reduce the risk of abuse.
- ii. All church staff and the Governance Team will have a copy of these policies.
- iii. Copies of these guidelines will be made readily available for any church attendee through the church office.
- iv. The Executive Staff will review the list of active volunteers/workers annually for any potential concerns.

## II. General Procedures for Child/Youth Workers to Practice at all Times

### **A. Avoid Isolation**

- i. Child/Youth Workers will strive to observe the "Two-Worker Rule." This means that Child/Youth Workers should not be in an isolated setting with children or youth without another Child/Youth Worker.
- ii. Events: When away from the church on an outing or at a church "overnight," Child/Youth Workers are to work together as a team and not be isolated with a child or youth.
- iii. If it is necessary for a Child/Youth Worker to meet individually with a child or youth, then this should be done in a public setting or where they are clearly visible by others. Additionally, the worker should notify one of the full-time pastors 24 hours before the meeting, or in the case that this is not possible, as soon as feasible after the meeting. These mentoring meetings should never be opposite genders. A Child/Youth Worker should never be isolated with a child/youth of the opposite gender.
- iv. Child/Youth Workers should not spend time alone with a child or youth

without the permission of that individual's parent/guardian; ideally the worker would have a relationship with the child's parent/guardian as well as the child.

## **B. Release Guidelines**

- i. Parents or their approved designee should be encouraged to pick up all children from youth events, Sunday School, or other activities no later than 10 minutes after the event ends. Exceptions include: upper grades of Sunday School classes as determined by the Hope Kids leadership each year, or youth from youth events when they have advanced permission of their parents/guardians.

## **C. Keep Communication Open**

- i. If volunteers are ever unsure about how to handle a situation or feel uncomfortable about a particular issue, they should contact the Associate Pastor of Youth and Visual Communications and ask questions. Open communication is of high value as we all continue to learn about how to best protect students while also enjoying valuable ministry relationships within the church.

### *III. Reporting Procedures for Incidents*

#### **A. Reporting Obligations**

- i. Child/Youth Workers are to immediately report any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate that they witness or any incident reported by a child or adolescent.

#### **B. Line of Reporting**

- i. Child/Youth Workers shall report alleged abuse to the Children's Ministry Director or the Associate Pastor of Youth and Visual Communications immediately.
- ii. A member of the pastoral staff shall witness the Child/Youth Worker making the report to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and/or the police department.
- iii. Abuse must be reported verbally within 24 hours and written within 72 hours in Minnesota.

#### **C. Response Plan to Allegations of Abuse by a Church Worker**

- i. When an allegation of abuse by a Child/Youth Worker is brought to the attention of pastoral staff, they will meet with the victim and his/her family as soon as possible after the allegation occurs and work to create a safe and healing environment for the following process.
- ii. A Crisis Task Force will be assembled and will comprise of the Associate Pastor of Youth and Visual Communications, the Children's Ministry Director (depending on the age of the alleged victim), and a non-vocational elder of HCC. Additional members may be added to this task force as deemed necessary by the Senior Pastor (for the purpose of supporting the victim and family and/or providing a safe and helpful context to proceed). At least one member of the Task Force must be the same gender as the alleged victim (i.e., three men may not solely comprise the Task Force if the alleged victim is a female; in this case the pastor should recruit a trusted woman involved in the female's life to also join the Task Force.).
- iii. The Children's Ministry Director or the Associate Pastor of Youth and Visual Communications is responsible for immediately convening the Task Force and moving its work along in a quick and timely manner. The Task Force will also be the primary group informed of the interaction with DCFS and/or the police in response to reporting the incident.
- iv. The Task Force and/or the pastor will also meet with the Child/Youth Worker who is the alleged abuser to discuss the allegation and inform them that they may not participate in Children's or Youth Ministry until the investigation is complete. Written notification of their status and removal from ministry work will also be given to the worker and kept on file at the church.
- v. Permanent removal or reinstatement of the Child/Youth Worker will be determined at the conclusion of the investigation and will be at the discretion of the Task Force.
- vi. The Task Force will document all of its activities.
- vii. The pastoral staff will also make note of the allegation and its outcome in the Child/Youth Worker's file for the future.