

Sample Child Protection Policy for UPCI Churches (Abbreviated Policy)

This sample is intended to generate ideas for each Church's own separate and distinct policy development. Each Church should secure legal counsel to determine what provisions of this policy should be adopted and to ensure any that are adopted are in compliance with all applicable federal, state/provincial, and local laws and regulations.

General Purpose Statement

<UPCI 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 <UPCI CHURCH> from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior, while also protecting our staff and Ministry 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 and individuals that are eighteen (18) years or older but, due to a significant physical, mental or emotional disability, are unable or unlikely to be able to report possible child abuse without assistance from a competent adult. The term "Ministry Worker" includes both paid and unpaid persons who work with children at <UPCI CHURCH>. This includes anyone involved in a day care or church school, in overnight activities involving minors, in counseling of minors, or in one-on-one mentoring of minors.

Selection of Ministry Workers

All persons ("Ministry Workers") who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a) Six Month Rule

No person will be considered for any ministry position involving contact with minors until he/she has been involved with <UPCI 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.

b) 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 church affiliation, reference, and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in a secure and confidential file in the church office.

c) 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.

d) Reference Checks

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has previously worked with children. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in a secure and confidential file in the church office.

e) Criminal Background Checks

A national criminal background check and/or applicable or additional state criminal background check are required for all staff (regardless of position) and Ministry Workers. **[Depending on location, also consider fingerprint background checks.]**

Before a background check is run, prospective Ministry Workers will be asked to sign an authorization form or forms allowing <UPCI CHURCH> to run the check. If an individual declines to sign any authorization form, he/she will be unable to work with children.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by <IDENTIFY TITLE/POSITION OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON OR TEAM> on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances and in accordance with federal and state law. Unless federal and/or state law prohibit, 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, as well as the failure to disclose a criminal conviction on any application form.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in a secure and confidential file in the church office. Background checks will be administered every two years. Should a current Ministry Worker receive an allegation or criminal charge after the initial application is approved and the background check has been completed, that Ministry Worker is required to immediately disclose the charge to <IDENTIFY TITLE/POSITION OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON OR TEAM>, regardless of severity or disposition. At that time, leadership will determine whether the charge is a disqualifying offense and may deny the Ministry Worker from participating further in current roles or in any future positions.

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated Ministry Workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation. In a counseling situation, the Open Door Policy shall apply.

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, but is not limited to, 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 for the purpose of sexually arousing or gratifying either person, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, explicit sexual verbal enticements, and pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Ministry Workers may 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 <UPCI CHURCH> becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the <IDENTIFY TITLE OF PERSON TO WHOM ABUSE SHOULD BE REPORTED> and to the Pastor. The incident must be reported to authorities, as mandated by state law. The Ministry Worker, <IDENTIFY TITLE OF PERSON TO WHOM ABUSE SHOULD BE REPORTED>, and Pastor should make the reporting call together and must not delay reporting, as abuse or suspicions of abuse must be reported to authorities immediately. All details of the incident that were shared by the victim should be thoroughly documented and communicated to authorities, and the call to report the abuse to authorities should also be documented.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at <UPCI CHURCH> or during our sponsored programs or activities at any location, the following procedure shall be followed and <IDENTIFY TITLE OF PERSON> will be responsible that the following occurs:

1. The parent or guardian of the child shall be notified and a commitment will be expressed to provide comfort and spiritual and emotional support, which may include an offer of counseling, spiritual assistance, or other services as may be mutually agreed upon.
2. All allegations of abuse shall be reported to the civil authorities, and the organization will comply with the mandatory reporting of abuse as required by law. The organization will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
3. The worker or church member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct (the "Accused") will immediately be placed on leave pending an investigation. The Accused shall be instructed orally and in writing to remain away from the premises, not to have any contact with the victim, his or her family, or with any witnesses or potential witnesses, that the civil authorities are investigating, and of his or her right to retain an attorney.
4. The insurance company will be notified, and the organization will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. <UPCI CHURCH> will designate a spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the congregation.
6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it. This should be for the purpose of providing pastoral support during the time of crisis, and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation. Additional support such as offering professional counseling, etc., can also be provided to anyone who desire it.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their ministry position.

Open Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it.

Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for workers (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 in Selection of Workers.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

Check-in/Check-out Procedure

For children through fifth grade, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be signed in by a parent or guardian, who will receive a “child check” for the child similar to a claim check. The parent or guardian must present the “child check” in order to sign out the child from our care. In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to present the “child check,” <INSERT TITLE OF CHILD CARE LEADER> the ministry director will be contacted. He or she 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. If the parent is unknown to the ministry director, the parent can use his/her driver’s license or another form of legal ID to authorize pick up.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at <UPCI 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;
- Coughing, sneezing or green or yellow runny nose;
- Eye or skin infections;
- Lice or nits; and/or
- 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 <UPCI 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 ministry director to develop a plan of action.

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of <UPCI CHURCH> not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the ministry director if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Training

<UPCI CHURCH> will provide training on this child protection policy, as well as mandated reporting, to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers must attend these training events.

Restroom Guidelines

Children five years of age and younger should use a classroom bathroom if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. 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 open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the worker should coach the child from outside the stall. If there is an emergency, two workers should help address the problem, with the stall door open while they assist the child, and possibly call for the parent(s)/guardian.

For children over the age of five, at least one adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female should take girls. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom is empty, and then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

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.

Policy Considerations

This policy applies to all people (regardless of age, status or training) who have interaction with children at **<UPCI CHURCH>**.

This policy is not exhaustive and cannot address all situations. Any questions regarding the applicability of this policy should be directed to the ministry director and/or pastor(s).

Special Needs: Ministries that affect people with special needs will use this policy as a guideline for establishing protocols, and will broaden the terms "child" or "minor" to include all persons dependent upon care beyond that which they are able to give to themselves.