

I. What is Safe Sanctuaries?

When the crowd tried to keep the children away from Jesus, he was quick to respond "Let the children come to me." Jesus taught that children were to be included and provided for within the community of faith. Today, the church may be the only place where some children find the unconditional love and care they so desperately need to grow and thrive. As Christians, we must take our responsibilities to our children very seriously. We fail in our responsibilities if we neglect to take adequate precautions against abuse in our churches. It is unlikely that we can completely prevent child abuse in every situation, but it is possible for us to greatly reduce the risk by following a thorough practical policy of prevention. This policy attempts to do just that for Hurt Pentecostal Holiness Church (furthermore known as HPHC) children and youth ministries. This policy has a threefold purpose: First, to protect the children that come to us; second, to protect our Church Staff and Volunteers from potential allegations of abuse; third, to limit the extent of legal liability of our church. We adopt this policy for the protection of children and prevention of abuse in our church. As a Christian community of faith, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth as well as all of the church workers and volunteers. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers and volunteers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all of our workers and volunteers with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods (including first aid and discipline); we will establish a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to State law; we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident or allegation occurs. This Safe Sanctuary Policy is a "living document" and as such, will need to be revised periodically. The official church board is charged with the annual review of this policy and accompanying procedures. Any proposed revisions will be presented by the official church board to the church body at its annual business meeting for approval. This policy applies to all events, meetings, sessions and/or programs that are considered ministries of HPHC. In all our ministries this local church is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ.

II. VOLUNTEERS: Qualified makes for Quality

1. Definitions – "Volunteer" means any person 18 years of age or older who assists in the conduct of children or youth activities under the supervision of a staff person and who will have regular and direct contact with or control over children and/or youth. A person is deemed to have regular and direct contact with children or youth if the individual is in any leadership or supervisory role such as a teacher, chaperone, driver, counselor, music leader or worship leader. A "Helper" means anyone under the age of 18 years old who assists a Volunteer or Staff member in the conduct of any church activity. Helpers are exempt from the screening provisions of this policy but are required to be directly supervised by a qualified Volunteer or Church Staff member. A "Worker" means any Church Staff Member or Volunteer.

2. Volunteer Screening Procedures

Prior to consideration for a position, any volunteer candidate who may be assigned to work with children or youth shall complete and return an application, a release form authorizing a complete criminal records background check, and a minimum of two character references. The completed application, criminal records background check, and character references shall be carefully reviewed by the pastor and official church board. If the applicant appears to be appropriate for the ministry work the candidate may be assigned or interviewed by the pastor and/or the official church board. The criminal records background check will be conducted by a selected contact agency and will include a check of the Virginia Criminal Records and Nationwide Sex

Offender Records, a Nationwide Criminal Database check, a Residency History check and a Motor Vehicles Records check. Should HPHC have sufficient reason to believe that an applicant poses a threat to children or youth, and/or has any prior history of physical or sexual abuse directed against another person, then such applicant shall be immediately removed from consideration for assignment as a volunteer or staff member at HPHC. Prior to beginning work at HPHC the applicant must familiarize him or herself with this Safe Sanctuaries policy. All completed applications and background check materials are considered "Confidential Materials" and will be maintained in a locked file cabinet by the pastor and/or church secretary. Access to these materials will be granted only by the pastor and/or the official church board. Copies should be made available to the applicants upon request.

3. Drivers – Drivers who volunteer to drive for scheduled church youth/children activities will be designated by the pastor, administrative church council, and/or youth director(s). Persons who volunteer to drive vehicles for the conduct of church children /youth activities must complete all requirements as a volunteer, be insured, and have a valid driver's license.

4. Employee Screening Procedures

All persons applying for an employee position with children or youth will submit an employment application and an authorization and release for a criminal records background check regardless of position being considered. The only exception will be a licensed and/or ordained member of the Cornerstone Conference International Pentecostal Holiness Church which does a complete and exhaustive criminal records background check at the Conference level. The application and other materials shall be carefully reviewed by the pastor and/or official church board to determine applicant's qualifications. If the applicant appears to be qualified and appropriate for further consideration, at least two of the references will be checked to confirm the information provided on the application. A personal interview is not required for every applicant but a personal interview is required before the hiring of that candidate. A background check will be conducted by a contract agency and will include a check of the Virginia Statewide Criminal Records and nationwide Sex Offender records, a nationwide Criminal Database check, a Residency History check and a Motor vehicles Records check. Should the pastor and/or church council have reason to believe that an applicant poses a threat to children or youth, and/or has any prior history of physical or sexual abuse directed against another person, then such applicant shall be immediately removed from consideration for employment. Prior to beginning employment, the new employee must familiarize him or herself with this policy. All completed forms and background check materials are considered "Confidential Materials" and will be maintained in a locked file cabinet by the pastor and/or secretary. Access to these materials will be granted only by the pastor and/or administrative church council and copies should be furnished to the applicant upon request.

5. Employee/Volunteer Worker updates

This policy and related procedures shall be reviewed annually by all church employees and volunteers. Church employees and volunteers working in any capacity with children or youth at HPHC may be asked to update their initial employment application every five years. Formal background records checks shall be conducted as deemed appropriate at any time by the pastor and/or administrative church council.

II. PROCEDURES FOR SAFE MINISTRY AT SPC:

1. Two Adult Rule – There should always be at least two workers present at all times for any church sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children or youth. When the "two adult rule" is not feasible, a "roamer" (aka "Shepherd") will periodically check into rooms and situations where only one supervising adult is present with youth or children. An example of such a situation would be a Sunday morning when a second teacher is unavailable.

2. Open Door Rule – All events for children or youth will be open door whenever possible. This means that workers, parents, and church members have a right to observe any activity if they are able to do so without disrupting the activity. Each room or space set aside for children or youth use shall have an observation window in the door or wall or the door shall be left open at all times.

3. Counseling Children & Youth: During any counseling session with children or youth, the door of the room used should remain open for the entire session unless there is visibility from the outside through an observation window. Ideally, the session will be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not in listening distance. All formal counseling sessions shall be conducted with parental consent and shall be conducted either by an ordained minister or under the supervision and support of an ordained minister. Should it become known that a professional/licensed counselor is involved, the church should immediately withdraw from the situation and defer to the professional/licensed counselor. In these events the church shall operate in a supportive role to the professional/licensed counselor.

4. Punishment - Corporal punishment or the threat of corporal punishment (hitting, spanking, or any form of punishment involving pain) is prohibited at HPHC! Workers should consult parents regarding behavior problems.

5. Never Alone – When entering the church, parents/guardians should accompany children below the sixth grade level to the designated children's activity area. No child should be left in any church area that is unattended or without proper adult supervision. Children below the sixth grade level shall not be released to await transportation. Workers shall release children only to parents, guardians, or persons specifically authorized to pick up the child.

6. Age Requirement – Volunteers or staff working in any facet of the Children or Youth Ministries must be at least eighteen years of age. Any person serving as a "Helper" must work under direct adult worker supervision at all times. Any church employee or volunteer must be at least five years older than the children/youth group with which he/she is scheduled to work.

7. Liability Release Forms – Parents will be notified in advance of any event in which a worker will be alone with a child or youth. Before this event, the parents must give written permission for their child's participation in this event. In addition, parents will be given advance notice and full information regarding any event(s) in which their children /youth will be participating. A liability release form for each child/youth must be completed and signed before the child/youth will be allowed to participate in a day or overnight trip. Parents/guardians may sign a yearly, "blanket" liability/permission form for day trips only. All liability/permission forms will be kept with the worker at all times during any trip. Copies should be made and left with the pastor and/or an appointed emergency contact person at the church. At least two workers must accompany the children/youth on any overnight trip.

9. Use of Cell Phones/Cameras for Children and/or Youth: Misuse of electronic devices will result in the loss of the item for the duration of the event. The leaders have the right to determine inappropriate use.

10. Medication: Medication may be administered to children (excluding nursery age children) and youth under the following guidelines: (a) A parent or guardian must furnish a written statement authorizing HPHC workers/volunteers to administer the required medication. In addition, the drug must be contained in a prescription container, and the label on the prescription will serve as written instructions to administer a specific medication. The label must reflect that the medication is provided and dated by a licensed physician, and the drug must be prescribed for the specifically named child. The label on the prescription must contain complete instructions for each medication to include the child's name, current date, and an exact dosage to be given, the specific number of dosages to be given daily, and the method of administration. No medication will be administered if it has been removed from the original container. (b) Non-prescription fever-reducing medications that do not contain aspirin or non-prescription cough or cold medications that do not contain codeine may be administered with written instructions from the parent or guardian. The medication must be in its original container with the label intact. The full name of the child who is to receive the medication must be printed on the container. Exact dosages must be clearly stated on the label, and no dosages will be given that exceed those recommended on the label. Non-prescription medications may be administered for no longer than three consecutive days.

10. First Aid/CPR – First Aid/CPR Training is encouraged for all workers.

11. Additional guidelines for Nursery/Staff/Volunteers: Only assigned workers are allowed to remain in the nursery. The only exception to this guideline is a mother nursing her child or a parent called to the nursery to calm an upset child. Only assigned workers are allowed to remain in classrooms. The only exception to this is a parent, guardian, or a person previously authorized to pick-up or drop-off a child. Parents are to sign in their child into the nursery upon arrival. Children will only be released to a parent, guardian, or the person authorized to pick up the child. Children, 5th grade and under, must be accompanied to the restroom. Workers should remain outside the restroom. A worker may enter the restroom to assist the child as needed but the door must remain open.

12. Additional Guidelines for Children's Ministry Staff/Volunteers: Children should request permission from workers to go to the restrooms. Workers should remain outside the restroom. A worker may enter the restroom to assist the child as needed but the door shall remain open. Children's Ministries include extension ministry workers who represent and provide supervision from the represented facility (i.e. Scouts, etc.) These extension ministry workers' responsibility is limited to the children they serve from their facility. The extension ministry workers are authorized to be present in the hallways or classrooms where their children are present, and are responsible for supervising their children with the restroom if assistance is required; however the restroom door shall remain open during this time.

13. Additional Guidelines for Youth Staff/Volunteers: Teams of adults (preferably male and female) will supervise activities. At least two adults will supervise overnight activities. If the participants are male and female, then 2 male and 2 female chaperones must be present. Males and females attending events must not share the same sleeping quarters and should have separate access to bathroom facilities. The church recognizes that informal contact between worker and youth occurs frequently and is usually legitimate and beneficial. Informal contact refers to phone calls, letters, e-mail, instant and text messaging or other forms of internet/electronic communication, or face-to-face contact between an adult worker and a youth that is not connected to official church activities. However, workers must advise the parent(s)/guardian of the nature of this relationship and seek permission of the parent(s)/guardian before establishing an informal contact

relationship with their youth. Transportation to and from meetings is not part of church or youth group activities. Parents are responsible for providing or arranging for this transportation. Parents are discouraged from asking leaders to transport youth. However, if a leader does transport a single youth at the parent's request, there must be two adults present at all times. No adult worker is to date a youth or be romantically or sexually involved with a youth. All staff and volunteer workers with children and youth are required to familiarize themselves with this policy and sign a statement that they understand the policy fully. Parents and guardians are encouraged to execute blanket permission forms consistent with the policies stated herein.

III. PLAN FOR RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE:

1. When an allegation of child abuse is made against a staff member or volunteer, the parents of the child will be notified immediately. The person who receives the report of the allegation of abuse will place the alleged victim in a secure area, with the supervision of at least two adults not involved in the abuse incident, until the parents arrive. **The safety of the victim is the church's primary concern.**

2. The alleged abuser will be informed of the allegation immediately. The alleged abuser will be treated with dignity, but will immediately be removed from further involvement with children or youth. The alleged abuser will be furnished notice in writing that he/she is to have no further contact with the children/youth at HPHC. Any employee of HPHC who is the subject of an investigation shall be removed from his/her position, with pay, pending completion of the investigation. Any volunteer worker who is the subject of an investigation shall be removed from his/her position pending completion of the investigation.

3. The pastor will be notified immediately of the abuse allegation. The pastor will consult the church attorney and will be responsible for notifying the appropriate child welfare agency or law-enforcement authorities and any other appropriate authorities including the church's insurance carrier within 24 hours of learning of the abuse allegation. If allegations are made against the pastor, the Bishop of the Cornerstone Conference shall be contacted immediately.

4. The person who receives the allegation of child abuse will complete a written report within 24 hours of receiving the allegation. This report should be furnished to the pastor. If requested, the pastor will share the report with the appropriate child welfare agency or law-enforcement officials. Otherwise the report will be marked "Confidential" and maintained in a locked file cabinet by the pastor and/or secretary/treasurer.

5. The pastor and church attorney will prepare a brief statement about the allegation of abuse to share with the public if deemed necessary. This statement will inform the public that an allegation of child abuse has been made without giving unnecessary details, placing blame, or revealing the identities of the child, the child's parents, or the alleged abuser.

6. The pastor will maintain a written record of the steps taken by the church in response. All employees/volunteers involved in the incident will maintain written records documenting events and action taken.

7. The church attorney is the designated media spokesperson and will make all necessary statements or responses to the news media.

8. All church employees and volunteers are to fully cooperate with any investigation conducted by law enforcement officials or child protective services.

Safe Sanctuaries Policy

*“But Jesus called them unto him, and said,
Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not:
for of such is the kingdom of God” Luke 18:16 (KJV)*



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