

Child Safety and Supervision Policy
Hope Fellowship
Effective Date January 1, 2000

PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to provide a safe environment for the children and youth attending Hope Fellowship. Our children are one of the greatest treasures our Lord has given us. The Hope Fellowship Policies Manual Section V addresses children's health issues. This policy focuses on prevention of child abuse, kidnapping, and other offenses committed against children.

This policy is to be read by all adult workers (paid or volunteer age 18 and up) who work with children or youth within the ministries of Hope Fellowship Church. A signature on the application to work with children and/or youth of Hope Fellowship indicating that this has occurred is required before approval to work with children or youth at Hope Fellowship will be granted.

In the case of youth (ages 13-17) who work with children or other youth within the ministries of Hope Fellowship, it is required that a parent or guardian of the youth to read this policy and to discuss it with them in a manner that helps them understand the seriousness of and steps necessary to be taken in the case of witnessing or becoming aware of child abuse and other such offences committed against children who are participants in the ministries of Hope Fellowship Church. A signature by the parent/guardian and the youth applicant on the youth application to work with children and/or youth of Hope Fellowship indicating that this has occurred is required before approval to work with children or youth at Hope Fellowship will be granted.

INTRODUCTION

Child abuse is a serious problem that is on the rise in the United States. As the Boy Scouts and other youth organizations have tightened up their screening and supervision policies, potential child molesters have been forced to seek other avenues to gain victims. Churches are a primary target.

Churches are susceptible to being used by those who seek out children. Churches tend to be fairly trusting of people. A high volume of volunteer workers maintains their ministries. They often are desperate to find more workers. They often have no screening or supervision requirements in place for their children's workers. These realities produce a tempting target for child molesters.

Child abuse is damaging to the children for years. When it occurs in the context of a church and with people who supposedly believe in God and represent him, the victim's own relationship with God can be seriously damaged or prevented from ever developing. The family of the victim experiences great harm and the church does as well. Lawsuits, bad publicity, congregational strife resulting from a child abuse case can damage and threaten a church's existence for years to come.

Concern for our children as well as our church requires us to adopt a prudent plan and procedures to provide a safe place for all of our children. Some of the procedures in this policy may be difficult to implement and may engender some frustration to those who try to keep the

children's ministry staffed, but we cannot afford to ignore them. The possible price of failing to implement this policy is not one that we are willing to pay. All who work with children in this church are expected to comply with the procedures in this policy.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE-A DEFINITION

Child sexual abuse includes involving children in any sexual behavior including but not limited to: prolonged kissing on the lips; fondling; oral, genital and anal penetration; intercourse, rape; sexual comments, pornography, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, and allowing children to witness sexual activity.

CHILD ABUSE-A DEFINITION

Any physical striking, slapping, or hitting of a child by an adult who is not the parent/guardian of the child will be considered to be child abuse. Included in child abuse is threatening with physical force or harm; causing or expressly permitting or encouraging a child to use or ingest drugs, alcohol, controlled substances or toxins; or any behavior that seriously threatens a child's safety and health.

1. WORKER SCREENING

Paid Staff and Permanent Paid Workers

All paid staff and permanent paid workers (those who are paid for performing a service on a repetitive basis) will complete the following steps before being considered for working with youth or children:

- An employment application that includes personal references
- A screening form (see Appendix 1)
- A personal interview with a Pastor or Ministry Team Leader
- A criminal records check authorization form (see Appendix 2)
- A signed statement that the person has read this policy and agrees to abide by its terms.

The person hiring must contact all references (possibly asking for additional references from the submitted references), and must contact as a minimum the last church the applicant attended. These reference checks must be written down on a reference check form (see Appendix 5) and filed with the employee's application and screening form as part of their permanent record. Permanent records will be locked with the Senior Pastor and elder chairman having the only access.

A criminal records check will be made on all paid and permanent paid workers (see Appendix 2).

Volunteer Workers and Temporary Paid Workers

All temporary paid workers (those who are paid for a service performed on an intermittent basis) and all volunteer workers who come in regular contact with youth or children will complete the following steps before being allowed to serve:

- Attend the church regularly for a minimum of three months.
- A screening form (see Appendix 1)
- Personal interview with a Pastor or Ministry Team Leader
- Provide personal references
- A signed statement that the person has read this policy and agrees to abide by its terms (see Appendix 1 last page). In the case of a youth working with younger youth, it is permissible for a parent/guardian to read the statement and review it with their child. If so, then the parent/guardian and youth applicant must sign that the statement has been read and reviewed with them.

The Ministry Team Leader is responsible to give the appropriate screening form (adult or youth) to the applicant who will then fill out the form and give it to the church secretary who will call the references (see Appendix 5), if applicable (may not be required in the case of a youth applicant known by a Pastor). The Senior Pastor or his designate will review the screening form and record of contact with references before giving final approval to work with children or youth. The Senior Pastor or his designate may at his discretion also interview the applicant. The Ministry Team Leader will check with the Senior Pastor or his designate to make sure that the applicant is cleared for ministry with children and youth before allowing them to serve as a regular member of the ministry team.

No applicant, paid or volunteer, will be allowed to work with children or youth who has been convicted of or pleaded guilty to child sexual or physical abuse regardless of intervening circumstances. If a person is an adult survivor of child abuse they must meet with the Senior Pastor or his designate before working with children or youth.

2. WORKER SUPERVISION

At no time should one worker spend extended time alone with one child unobserved. No youth leader should spend extended time alone with a youth without prior permission from the parent/guardian.

Ministry Team Leaders should discuss with their workers acceptable behavior parameters and should immediately notify them of any unacceptable behavior observed. Failure to stop unacceptable behavior is cause for dismissal from the ministry team. Inappropriate behavior should be reported by anyone who observes it to the Ministry Team Leader. Behavior that constitutes sexual or physical abuse as defined by this policy shall be handled as prescribed in the section on reporting procedures.

Child discipline:

- No one is allowed to use any form of corporal punishment such as spanking in any church ministry. The parent/guardian of a child may remove their child to administer corporal punishment privately if they deem that the situation warrants it.
- Children with persistent discipline problems should be referred to the parents/guardians immediately. Parents/Guardians are responsible to train their children so that they can participate in church activities in a healthy and non-disruptive way.
- Children second grade and under should not be released from Sunday School or nursery until picked up by the child's parent/guardian or the parent/guardian's designee.

3. REPORTING PROCEDURES

Child abuse is a serious problem. It indicates a spiritual problem within the perpetrator and it can have long-term devastating consequences upon the victim. In many cases it is also a criminal act. The best thing for both perpetrator and victim is for a witness to immediately report the behavior because without intervention the behavior invariably is repeated causing even greater harm to the perpetrator, to the victim, and to other future victims. While understandably a witness to such behavior may hesitate to report the witnessed behavior for fear of being mistaken or of involving others in an embarrassing or stressful situation, the harm of failing to report the incident is much greater. By following the procedures in this policy the church will attempt to minimize embarrassment to the accused and protect those falsely accused, but when potential abuse is involved we must err on the side of protecting the child.

An adult witness to abusive behavior or inappropriate behavior should consider confronting the perpetrator with their behavior following the guidelines of Matthew 18:15-20; however, since those instructions appear to apply most directly to a person who has been sinned against (Matthew 18:15) and whereas most child abuse reporting is on behalf of the victim, the witness should still follow the guidelines of this document whether they confront the perpetrator or not. A youth who witness abusive behavior or inappropriate behavior should tell their parent/guardian and a pastor or ministry team leader what they have observed.

Inappropriate behavior that is not abusive behavior may be reported to the ministry leader supervising the worker or in the case of the ministry leader to the Senior Pastor. Any behavior defined as abusive by this document must be reported in writing within 24 hours to the Senior Pastor and to local law enforcement.

In addition, a reasonable suspicion of abuse must be reported as per the Texas Family Code Section 261.101

a person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person shall immediately make a report as provided by this subchapter.

The Texas Family Code stipulates that any person believing the above conditions have been met will immediately report their observations to *the Lake Jackson Police Department*. Their report shall identify, if known:

1. The name and address of the child
2. The name and custody of the person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the child and
3. Any other pertinent information concerning the alleged or suspected abuse or neglect.

In addition, the witness must report the evidence observed in writing to the Senior Pastor. Possible evidence of abuse includes the following:

Physical signs:

- Lacerations and bruises
- Nightmares
- Irritation, pain, or injury to the genital area
- Difficulty with urination
- Discomfort when sitting
- Torn or bloody underclothing
- Venereal disease

Behavioral signs:

- Anxiety when approaching church or nursery area
- Nervous or hostile behavior toward adults
- Sexual self-consciousness
- “acting out” sexual behavior
- withdrawal from church activity or friends

Verbal signs may include the following statements:

- I don't like [a particular church worker]
- [A church worker] does things to me when we are alone.
- I don't like to be alone with [a church worker]
- [A church worker] fooled around with me

Not all of the above necessarily indicate actual abuse. The law reads that one must have cause to believe that abuse is occurring. The presence of multiple signs or a change in the child's normal behavior in conjunction with a sign provide a stronger indication than one sign in isolation. However, any suspicion should be reported to the Senior Pastor.

4. RESPONSE PLAN FOR ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

All allegations of child abuse must be taken seriously. As noted in the previous section, all observed abusive behavior and all evidence of suspected abusive behavior must be reported to the Senior Pastor. The witness to abusive behavior or suspected abusive behavior must also report to the local law enforcement their observations if they have cause to believe that abuse has

occurred. Witnesses who report abuse are protected from legal liability as long as their report is not done with malicious intent and no knowingly fraudulent statements are made. In addition, the State of Texas will keep confidential all reports made in response to state statute.

In the case where the witness is not sure that they have cause to believe that abuse has occurred, the Senior Pastor or his designate at his discretion, may notify *the Lake Jackson Police Department* anyway. Whenever the police or State officials investigate a case of potential abuse, the church and its officers will cooperate fully with the investigation. As per Texas Family Code Section 261.101 communications to a member of the clergy that entail knowledge of child abuse are not a privileged clergy communication and the clergy is required by law to report knowledge of child abuse even though gained through counseling.

Upon receiving an allegation of child abuse the Senior Pastor will notify the elders, the church insurance carrier, and the EFCA District Superintendent of the allegations. The elders and Senior Pastor will secure the services of an attorney for legal guidance. The Senior Pastor along with at least one elder will then arrange to meet with the parent/guardians of the child to report the allegation to them. The Senior Pastor and elders will be responsible for providing spiritual care and comfort to the parent/guardians and child.

Any person accused of child abuse will be removed from any ministry responsibilities as soon as the safety of the child or youth member is secured. This removal shall be done as discretely as possible to protect the rights of the accused. Should the allegations prove to be unfounded the person may be restored to their ministry responsibility unless in the opinion of the Senior Pastor and elders the accused violated the guidelines of this policy or demonstrated a lack of reasonable care in the discharge of their responsibility.

In the case where suspicion of child abuse exists but there are no signs or unclear signs of its actual existence, the person entertaining the suspicion should still report the suspicion to the Senior Pastor or his designate. The Senior Pastor or his designate and at least one elder will meet with those accused and the child's parent/guardians to try to ascertain the truth. If child abuse is *indicated* they will report it as required by State Law. If *suspicion is not confirmed*, this information will be passed on to the person who made the allegation. If there is no resolution the Senior Pastor or his designate and elders will decide on what further course of action if any needs to be taken.

The content of all meetings in response to allegations of child abuse will be recorded in writing and stored in a secure storage accessible only to the Pastors and the elders.

All inquiries about the allegations from the press or other parties will be forwarded to the Senior Pastor or his designate.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

This policy will be implemented beginning with the Effective Date as stated above. Screening will not be done on workers already in place before the Effective Date.

The Senior Pastor will maintain a secure file of all applications, screening forms, and criminal records checks. The Senior Pastor will also be responsible to ensure that all paid staff who work with children are selected, supervised and educated under the provisions of this policy. The

Senior Pastor is also responsible to ensure that all reporting and response to allegation procedures described herein are followed.

The Youth Ministries Team Leader, Nursery Coordinator, and Children's Ministry Team Leader are responsible to see that all workers in their ministry are properly screened, supervised and educated under the guidelines of this policy.

**Application for Adult (Age 18 and older)
to Work with Children or Youth**
(Appendix 1)

INTRODUCTION:

We appreciate your interest in working with children and youth. Our workers are some of the best in the world and we consider these two ministries to be essential for the health and well being of our church. We want people to serve in the church where their gifting, abilities, and life experiences most equip them to minister effectively. Thank you for taking the time to fill out this application. We will use the information to help us evaluate whether the Lord is leading you to help us in these areas of ministry.

PERSONAL:

Date: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Name: _____
(Picture id. required if not a member of Hope Fellowship)

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Home phone: _____ Cell: _____

E-mail: _____

For which ministries, or positions, are you applying?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Ministry | <input type="checkbox"/> K-Rocks Children's Worship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nursery | <input type="checkbox"/> (1 st -4 th grade) Backyard Bible Club |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sunday School | <input type="checkbox"/> Pine Cove Camp |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preschool Children's Worship | <input type="checkbox"/> Paid Childcare Worker |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Date you would be able to start? _____

Minimum length of commitment you can make? _____

Have you taken a spiritual gift assessment? _____

If so, please list the following:

Spiritual gifts: _____

Are you a member of Hope Fellowship? _____

How long have you been attending Hope Fellowship? _____

Home church if not attending Hope Fellowship _____

How long have you been a member of your church? _____

Adult Applicant (Age 18 and older)
Authorization of Criminal Records Check
(Appendix 2)

I hereby consent to the search of any records of conviction databases, including any criminal files maintained on me, whether at the local, state, or national level.

Signature	Today's date
Print full name	Print maiden name if applicable
Date of birth	Social Security #
Place of birth	Race

APPLICANT'S STATEMENT

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references, churches, or organizations listed in this application to give you any information that they may have regarding my character and fitness for children or youth work. I hereby release any individual, church, or organization from any and all liability, for damages of whatever kind or nature, which may result to me or my family on account of any attempts to comply with this authorization, except the communication of knowingly false information.

I waive any right that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me in this application.

If applicant is an adult (age 18 and above): I have read the six (6) page, Child Safety and Supervision Policy of Hope Fellowship and I agree to be bound by its provisions.

Applicant's signature	Date
Witness' signature	Date

The Apostles' Creed: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

Applicant's signature	Date
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**Application for Youth (Ages 13-17)
to Work with Children**
(Appendix 3)

INTRODUCTION:

We appreciate your interest in working with children. Thank you for taking the time to fill out this application. We will use the information to help us evaluate whether the Lord is leading you to help us in these areas of ministry.

PERSONAL:

Date: _____ Date of Birth: _____ Age: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Home phone: _____ Cell: _____

E-mail: _____

For which ministry, or position, are you applying?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nursery | <input type="checkbox"/> Backyard Bible Club |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sunday School | <input type="checkbox"/> Pine Cove Camp |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preschool Children's Worship | <input type="checkbox"/> Paid Childcare Worker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> K-Rocks Children's Worship
(1 st -4 th grade) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Are you a member or regular attender of Hope Fellowship? _____

How long have you been attending Hope Fellowship? _____

Home church if not attending Hope Fellowship _____

How long have you attended your church? _____

List name, address, and phone number of churches you have attended regularly in the last five years:

PRIOR EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH CHILDREN:

If applicable, list all previous church work involving children (list each organization's name and address (if not listed above), type of work performed, and ministry overseer).

Youth Applicant Authorization of Criminal Records Check

(Appendix 4)

I hereby consent to the search of any records of conviction databases, including any criminal files maintained on me, whether at the local, state, or national level.

Name of Parent/Guardian

Today's date

Print applicant's full name

Date of birth

Social Security #

Place of birth

Race

APPLICANT'S STATEMENT

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references, churches, or organizations listed in this application to give you any information that they may have regarding my character and fitness for children or youth work. I hereby release any individual, church, or organization from any and all liability, for damages of whatever kind or nature, which may result to me or my family on account of any attempts to comply with this authorization, except the communication of knowingly false information.

I waive any right that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me in this application.

If applicant is a youth (under the age of 18), it is permissible for a parent/guardian to read and review the Child Safety and Supervision Policy with them in lieu of the youth reading it themselves. It is also required to have a parent/guardian's authorization before a youth can be approved to work in a ministry with other youth and children.

Parent/Guardian: *I have read the six (6) page Child Safety and Supervision Policy of Hope Fellowship Church and have reviewed it with my child who is applying to work with the children of Hope Fellowship Church and my youth has agreed to be bound by its provisions. I also authorize my child to work with other children in the ministries of Hope Fellowship Church:*

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness Signature: _____ Date: _____

Youth Applicant: *My parent/guardian has reviewed the Child Safety and Supervision Policy with me and I agree to abide by its requirements for those who work with youth or children at Hope Fellowship Church.*

Youth Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness Signature: _____ Date: _____

The Apostles' Creed: *I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.*

Applicant's signature

Date

Reference Contact Form (Appendix 5)

Name of Applicant: _____ Name of Reference: _____

Date and time of contact: _____ Person contacting the reference: _____

Reference or organization contacted (if an organization, identify both the organization and the person contacted).

Recommended reference questions:

- How long have you known the applicant?
- In what capacity have you observed the applicant's interaction with children/youth?
- Was your direct observation of this applicant in their ministry or job role a positive one?
- Would you place this applicant in the same job /ministry /role again?
- Would you consider them for another type of ministry /job /role? If yes, which one?
- Is there anything comment you would like to add about applicant?

Summary of the conversation (summarize the reference's remarks concerning the applicant's fitness and suitability for youth or children's work).

_____ Legible Signature

_____ Position