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# Child Protection Policy

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## General Purpose Statement:

East Hills Community Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children and youth of East Hills Community Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

## Definitions:

For purposes of this policy, the terms "child" or "children" include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years or 18 years old and still in high school.

## Selection of Workers:

All employees and all persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes:

### 1. Six Month Rule

No volunteer will be allowed to work with children until s/he has been a member or regular attendee of East Hills Community 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. Any exceptions will be at the discretion of the Senior Staff and/or Board.

### 2. Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by East Hills Community Church. 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 confidence on file at the church office.

### 3. Personal Interview

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview must be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

For office use, please PRINT your first and last name: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 4. 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 worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at the church office.

#### 5. Criminal Background Check (Fingerprinting)

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position), elders, deacons, ministry leaders and for the following categories of volunteers:

- Those who will be involved in our weekday and weekend children and youth ministries;
- Those who will be involved in overnight activities with minors;
- Those counseling minors;
- Those involved in one-on-one mentorship of minors;
- Those having occasional one-on-one contact with minors (i.e., church-sponsored athletic team coaches and vehicle drivers)

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Senior Staff and/or Board on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. 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. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the church office.

### Two volunteer Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two volunteers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and/or window coverings opened.

### Transportation Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two adult workers be in the vehicle when providing transportation for a child or children. The two adults must either be a married couple or two adults of the same sex of the child. If that is not possible, then one adult can transport multiple children, provided they are never alone with the child in the car (e.g. they are dropped off together). Written parental permission and approval must be granted for one-on-one transportation. Drivers for/to/from church activities or events must be 21 years of age.

## Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) which endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes:

- Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child which 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 at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- Neglect – depriving a child of their essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to 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 this church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this must be reported immediately to the Senior Staff member overseeing that particular ministry for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at this church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

- The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
- The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation.
- Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report.
- We will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists and we will cooperate with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities.

In the event there is no investigation of the incident by state or local authorities, the East Hills Elder Board will investigate the circumstances of the incident and act in consultation with our insurance company and/or attorney.

Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position with children or youth.

The Lead Pastor will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he is alleged to be involved. All other workers should refrain from speaking to the media.

A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.

## Open Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it or there are other windows in the classroom with open shades. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

## Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for youth (paid or volunteer) who are under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to such workers:

- Teenage workers must be at least two (2) years removed from the classroom/ministry they desire to be a volunteer in.
- Teenage workers must have the written approval of their parent or guardian and must not have been involved in any inappropriate situations prior to.
- Teenage workers will be screened as specified above.
- Teenage workers must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.
- Nursery workers must be at least in eighth grade to work with the infants in nursery.

## Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at East Hills Community 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:

- Runny nose (colored discharge)
- Colored discharge from eyes
- Inflamed mouth or throat
- Coughing/sneezing
- Chest congestion/labored breathing
- Diarrhea/vomiting within the past 24 hours
- Fever within the past 24 hours
- Listlessness/unusual fatigue or irritability/excessive crying
- Open sores
- Contagious disease (i.e. Chicken Pox/pink eye)
- If your child is taking any antibiotics, he/she should have received treatment for at least 48 hours before coming to church even if the symptoms are no longer present.
- Our nursery policy prohibits volunteers from administering any medications.

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 East Hills Community 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 to be 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) or to parents whose child is attending a retreat. Parents of such children should address their situation with the ministry leader. In such cases as retreats, over-nighters, or all-day activities, the student's parent or guardian must give the medication(s) and instructions directly to the ministry leader. Medications must be in a sealed bag(s) with the student's name and written instructions for the medications inside the bag.

## Check-in/Check-out Procedure

For children at or below grade six (6), a check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child must be signed in by a parent or guardian, and signed out by that same parent or guardian at their classroom. In the event that one picking up/signing out the child is not the same as those who signed the child in, the appropriate ministry leader will be contacted. That ministry leader 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.

## Discipline Policy

It is the policy of East Hills Community 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 leader if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

## Restroom Guidelines

Children four (4) years of age and younger should utilize a classroom bathroom, if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort a group of children to the primary bathrooms in the facility. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. If using the primary bathrooms, one should adhere to the guidelines listed below...

For children over the age of four (4), at least one volunteer worker should take children to the restroom. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, then allow the children inside. The worker 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 workers should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall door open as he/she assists the child. Should someone come to use the restroom, they should be asked to wait until the child is done and outside the restroom with the worker.

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.

## Conduct

At East Hills we desire to be above reproach in all areas, including our interaction with children. As such, we ask that volunteer workers...

- Refrain from tickling any of the children they work with or even one another. This can easily be misread.
- Refrain from "full body" hugs. Should you get caught off guard, the hug should be quickly ended. You should give "side hugs" as an alternative.
- Refrain from children (K and older) sitting on your lap.
- Refrain from kissing children. Should they attempt to kiss any worker, they should offer them their cheek.
- Refrain from leaving children unattended in a classroom or allowing them to leave the classroom unattended.

## Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

- 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.
- 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.

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.

## Training

East Hills Community Church will provide training on this child protection policy 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.

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I have read and agree to the above-stated East Hills Community Church Child Protection Policy.

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_