

Child Protection Policy

Belle Aire Baptist Church

1307 N. Rutherford Blvd.
Murfreesboro, TN 37130

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1.0 GENERAL

1.01 Goal

It is the goal of Belle Aire Baptist Church ("the Church") to provide a safe environment for the physical and emotional well-being of all children and youth participating in church related activities. The church will inform workers and enforce policies to ensure that all children and youth are safe and well protected while attending scheduled activities.

1.02 Definition of "Children" and "Youth"

The term "child" or "children" includes all persons 5th grade and under. The term "youth" refers to a child who is in 6th grade through high school graduation.

1.03 Definition of Child Abuse

According to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services:

"Child abuse and neglect occurs when a child is mistreated, resulting in injury or risk of harm. Abuse can be physical, verbal, emotional or sexual."

Physical Abuse is non-accidental physical trauma or injury inflicted by a parent or caretaker on a child. It also includes a parent's or a caretaker's failure to protect a child from another person who perpetrated physical abuse on a child. In its most severe form, physical abuse is likely to cause great bodily harm or death.

Physical Neglect is the failure to provide for a child's physical survival needs to the extent that there is harm or risk of harm to the child's health or safety. This may include, but is not limited to abandonment, lack of supervision, life endangering physical hygiene, lack of adequate nutrition that places the child below the normal growth curve, lack of shelter, lack of medical or dental care that results in health threatening conditions, and the inability to meet basic clothing needs of a child. In its most severe form, physical neglect may result in great bodily harm or death.

Sexual Abuse includes penetration or external touching of a child's intimate parts, oral sex with a child, indecent exposure or any other sexual act performed in a child's presence for sexual gratification, sexual use of a child for prostitution, and the manufacturing of child pornography. Child sexual abuse is also the willful failure of the parent or the child's caretaker to make a reasonable effort to stop child sexual abuse by another person.

Emotional Abuse includes verbal assaults, ignoring and indifference or constant family conflict. If a child is degraded enough, the child will begin to live up to the image communicated by the abusing parent or caretaker."

1.04 Safe Behavior

- a. Examples of Unacceptable Touch

- Sexually or physically abusive touch
- Touching a child or youth's thighs, stomach, or lower back, or giving back rubs
- Corporal punishment
- Any touch that is unwanted by a child or youth
- Any touch that is secret
- Touch that sexually gratifies the adult in any way
- Lap sitting (except with preschoolers)
- Tickling
- Playing with hair
- Full frontal hugs
- Tapping a child or youth's clothed bottom
- Piggyback rides

b. Examples of Acceptable Touch

- Sitting side by side
- High fives, fist bumps, special handshakes
- Side hugs
- Pats on the shoulder
- Carrying a small child on your hip

c. Extra Attention

- Adults are prohibited from displaying favoritism toward a child or youth or group of children or youth.
- Adults may not give gifts to individual children unless the gifts are:
 - Able to be given to other children at other times for similar reasons (e.g., gifts to graduating seniors; a new Bible for students entering middle school; end of the year thank-you gifts to older children who volunteered in the nursery)
 - Signed from the church rather than the individual

In cases where staff believe that a child or youth would benefit from extra attention:

- Staff should be able to articulate a clear reason for providing extra attention to a child or youth that focuses on the child or youth's needs, not staff needs.
- Staff must receive authorization from a supervisor before providing extra attention to a child or youth. In cases where there is no supervisor (e.g., the staff member is a senior pastor), staff should alert a colleague of the plan and request that the colleague function in the role of a supervisor.
- When possible, supervisors might organize a rotation of staff and volunteers so that extra attention is not provided solely by one individual.
- Staff providing extra attention must always abide by the Policy (e.g, meet in observable and interruptible spaces).
- Supervisors should occasionally drop by unexpectedly during outings or meetings.

- Supervisors should periodically reevaluate the situation to determine if extra attention is still necessary.

d. Sexual Language

Belle Aire acknowledges that sexual language is more than mere jokes, but a serious boundary violation. As such, the following are prohibited:

- Sexually suggestive language, racy jokes, sexual innuendo, descriptions of sexual experiences/habits
- Uploading, downloading, or viewing of pornography
- Music, video games, and movies with sexual themes

If the church staff or volunteers want to give a lecture or organize a program to help youth understand age-appropriate questions about their body or sexuality, the event must be planned in advance and parents notified beforehand. When children or youth ask questions about their bodies or sexuality, Belle Aire volunteers and staff will respond in a manner that is both respectful and age appropriate. They will also document the interaction and submit the report to a supervisor. If, after consultation with their supervisor, it is determined that the matter merits parental involvement, the concern may be shared with the youth's parent(s).

2.0 SELECTION AND SCREENING PROCESS

It is the goal of the Church to adequately screen the [applications](#) of all persons desiring to work with children and youth in any church program.

2.01 Classification of Workers

In order to screen workers appropriately for their responsibilities, the head of each department (preschool, children, youth, and weekday preschool) will categorize workers into two categories: primary and secondary. These terms refer to the relative levels of responsibility and risk, not to the ages of the children or youth being served.

Primary Workers: All paid staff members plus those volunteers in roles with greater responsibility or risk are classified as primary workers.

Secondary Workers: This class refers to persons who occasionally interact with children or youth and/or do so in less risky circumstances (e.g., a volunteer who sees children or youth only in a group setting and who interact with children or youth in the presence of an approved primary worker). This category may also include parents of participants who help supervise activities.

2.02 Minimum Age

Primary workers must be at least 18 years of age. The Church may employ responsible teens (under the age of 18) only as secondary workers under the direct supervision of a

primary worker. All workers must be at least 12 years old. (Youth serving will be placed with kids at least two grades younger than their current age.)

2.03 Six-Month Rule

Primary workers must have been an active member of the 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 or youth. The six-month rule may be waived with the authorization of the Personnel Committee, as in the case of a new staff member. This rule does not apply to the weekday preschool program. There is no requirement for these staff members to be active attendees of Belle Aire.

2.04 Volunteer Applications

The preschool, children, and youth departments shall require all volunteers to complete and sign a volunteer application form. Although the application may be tailored to meet the unique needs of each department, it must document answers to the following questions:

- Have you ever been known by another name?
- During your lifetime, have you ever been arrested for molesting or abusing a child, accused of physical assault or a sexual offense of any nature?
- Have you ever been prosecuted for child abuse or molestation?

Additional fields that will be included in the application will be:

- Name and Relevant Contact Information
- Employment History for the past 5 years (if applicable)
- Volunteer History
- Consent to a background check
- Social Media Account information

Additional fields may be added to the form on a department by department or case by case basis at the discretion of pastors and department heads.

Applications will be submitted to the department administrative office. The head of the department in which the volunteer will work will be responsible for the interview process and reference checks. If an applicant needs additional confidentiality they may choose to submit their application directly to the department head.

The Church shall keep all confidential information received in the applicant selection process. Such information shall be stored with access afforded only to appropriate staff on a need-to-know basis.

If the Church learns of false, misleading, or amended information on an application that could cause potential danger to children or liability to the Church, that person will be asked to step down from his or her position.

2.05 References

The head of the department in which the person will work must check and document at least three (3) references for each primary worker applicant and must conduct a reasonable inquiry into the character of secondary worker applicants. References may be checked by phone, mail or in person.

Whenever possible, the references should include:

- a person who has known the applicant for an extended period and
- a former supervisor

Information gained in these checks should be noted directly on the application.

2.06 Confidential Interviews

All applicants desiring to work with children or youth must be interviewed to determine their suitability for the work they desire to do. The leader of the program in which the applicant will work typically will conduct the interview. However, a team of interviewers may be used. The organization's policy concerning prevention and response to child abuse and neglect must be discussed during the interview.

2.07 Social Media

As part of the application process, church leaders and volunteers will screen applicants' social media profiles to look for objectionable content. Such content may include, but is not limited to, inappropriate interactions with minors, inappropriate content about or directed towards minors, or general violations of the church's moral beliefs. Ministry leaders may disqualify an applicant at their discretion for any content deemed inappropriate discovered as part of their social media screening.

2.08 Criminal Background Check

A criminal background check and sexual offender registry check shall be required for all children and youth worker positions, both employee and volunteer. No one who has been convicted of a crime involving misconduct with children or youth will be allowed to work with children or youth. (See Appendix A for other disqualifying convictions.)

Background checks will be kept confidential in a locked file with access afforded only to appropriate staff on a need-to-know basis.

The minister of administration will conduct all criminal background checks and will notify the applicant and the department head (or appropriate ministry leader) if a negative report is received. In the event that the applicant feels a mistake has been made in their background report, it is the applicant's responsibility to contact the reporting agency, resolve any issues, and provide evidence to the contrary before being approved to work with children or youth in any capacity.

Except for felony sex offenses, felony violence offenses, or felony offenses involving a child, the applicant may request reconsideration based upon additional information provided by the applicant that relate to or explain efforts at rehabilitation, or pertinent circumstances underlying the conviction.

2.09 Vehicle Safety

Persons who drive Church-owned or privately-owned vehicles for conducting business or transporting children or youth on a regular basis must be at least 21 years old and maintain a current valid driver's license, provide proof of insurance in such amounts as may be required by the organization, and comply with the Church Transportation Policy. The two-adult rule applies for transporting youth and children in vehicles.

Additionally, all volunteers who are driving must fill out a driver application form, regardless of whether they are driving a church-owned vehicle or a private vehicle.

2.10 First Aid Training

It will be the goal of the Church that most paid employees who work with children or youth will maintain a current certification in basic life-saving. The organization will pay the cost of this training. Employees will be paid for attending training.

Primary workers are encouraged, but not required to get training if they frequently accompany children or youth on activities such as recreational activities, camps, retreats, mission trips, or any other activity with an element of risk.

2.11 Identification Badges

All primary workers in the preschool and children's departments are required to wear a photo identification name tag whenever they are supervising children. These tags will be provided by the Church and will show the worker's name and their picture. This rule does not apply to the weekday preschool program.

2.12 Minors (6th Grade - 17 years of age) serving with minors

Minors serving with minors will have to complete three steps before serving with minors:

- Parent of a Minor Volunteer Agreement
- Minor Volunteer Guidelines
- Complete Ministry Safe Training

3.0 SUPERVISORY REQUIREMENTS

It is the policy of the organization to provide adequate supervisory control of persons working with children or youth. The rules that follow apply to both primary and secondary workers.

3.01 Safety of Children and Youth

It is the responsibility of all children's workers to promote the emotional and physical safety of the children under their care. If in their opinion, an unsafe condition exists; the worker shall immediately take appropriate precautions to protect all children. Nothing contained in any other policy, procedure or instruction shall be construed to relieve children's workers from this responsibility.

3.02 Preschool/Children Security System and Pickup

In order to pickup a child from the preschool/children's departments, the adult must have a matching sticker received at drop-off and show the sticker in order to be admitted in either hallway. Exceptions must be approved by the department head or individuals authorized by the department head. Once a child has been picked up by their parent, the parent assumes all responsibility for the child and departments will not be expected to track children at this point.

3.03 Two-Adult Rule

It shall be the policy of the Church to have two primary workers in attendance at all times when children or youth are being supervised; regardless of the number of participants, location or activity. These two primary workers should not be related to one another.

At no time may an adult meet alone with a child or youth in a room with a closed door or in any area where they are not clearly visible and within the line of sight of another adult who is present and able to intervene if necessary. Where possible, a window will be installed in the door of all rooms typically occupied by children or youth and in the door of all offices. A window is not necessary on Dutch doors if the upper section remains open.

Transportation

- An exception is made for parent-initiated agreement with other parents for pick up and drop off

3.04 Electronic Communication

Utilizing Technology to Connect with Children/Youth

The following are guidelines that must be followed when connecting with children/youth in all situations that involve electronic communication. Electronic communication includes but is not limited to text messaging, group messaging, video calls, messaging via social media, etc.

- Electronic communication of all types with children who are in 5th grade and younger is strictly prohibited.
- For youth in 6th grade through 12th grade, adults are not allowed to have contact with youth before 7 a.m. and after 10 p.m. Only in cases of emergency should an adult respond to a phone call or message from a youth between the hours of 10 p.m. and 7 a.m.
- The only method of contact between adults and youth should always be via group message, not individual message. Group messaging should include one additional non-related adult or at least two youth.
- Before initiating contact with youth in a group chat setting, adults should first notify parents/guardian of their intent and purpose for creating a group chat.
- Video call encompasses but is not limited to Facetime, Skype, Zoom, etc.
 - No Adult is permitted to meet one-on-one via video with a youth. There must be at least two (2) non-related adults present during a video call, or, 2 or more youth present at all times during the video call.
 - No Adult is permitted to use the private chat function of a video call to communicate privately with a youth one-on-one. If utilization of a chat function is necessary, either an additional non-related adult must be added or another youth should be added.
- If a youth seeks to contact an Adult privately (individually) through text message, social media, or email, the adult should use discretion when responding. If the content of the message dictates a brief response regarding date, time, and location of an event, you are able to respond. If a youth is seeking to start a spiritual or personal conversation with an adult, the adult must suggest an opportunity to meet in-person in a public setting. At no time should an adult initiate/contact a child/youth privately (individually), as this is a violation of the child safeguarding policy. If such an instance were to occur, the child/youth should not respond.
- Electronic communication that's one-on-one with youth who are currently employed with Belle Aire Baptist Church is allowed only in circumstances where communication is necessary for work purposes only.
- If a volunteer or employee of Belle Aire ever receives an inappropriate photo or message, it is the duty of the volunteer or employee to report it

Social Media Guidelines

- Staff and volunteers should not at any point invite or accept friend/follow requests from children who are in 5th grade and younger. Staff and volunteers should not at any point connect or communicate via email, messaging, and social media with children who are in 5th grade or younger.
- Belle Aire staff and volunteers are discouraged from initiating friend or follow requests for youth (6th grade through 12th grade) to be friends on personal social networking sites. Staff and volunteers are also discouraged from accepting friend/follow requests from youth with whom no personal direct connection exists. We understand there may be exceptions (a relative, a friend's child, etc.).
- If a youth seeks to contact an Adult privately (individually) through social media, the adult should use discretion when responding. If the content of the message dictates a brief response regarding date, time, and location of an event, you are able to respond. If a youth is seeking to start a spiritual or personal conversation with an adult, the adult should suggest an opportunity to meet in-person in a public setting. At no time should an adult initiate/contact a youth privately (individually), as this is a violation of the child and youth protection policy. If such an instance were to occur, the youth should not respond.
- Staff and volunteers should not post on their own social media accounts photographs or information pertaining to children/youth at Belle Aire Baptist Church that is not explicitly ministry related. An exception is if the parents have signed a photo-release form allowing it. Photographs and information pertaining to children/youth should not at any time single out or give preferential treatment to one individual over another.
- Direct messaging youth one-on-one via social networking sites is strictly prohibited.

3.05 Bathroom Policy

Preschool Ministry (birth-Kindergarten) -

Restroom Procedures:

When possible, men should take boys and women girls. A second adult should be present in the room. If not, find someone to be the second adult before allowing use of the restroom. Always leave the restroom door cracked and monitor at all times depending on the age of the child. Never allow a helper you do not know take a child to the restroom or out of the room for any reason. Allow children to do everything that they can possibly do for themselves. Wash your hands after taking children to the bathroom, if you gave assistance. Have the children wash their hands also.

Diapering Procedure

Diapers should be checked at least once per hour. Check each child just before dismissal to be sure that no child leaves your room wet or soiled. To change a child:

- Place changing paper on the changing surface.
- Place a clean diaper on covered surface.
- Put on fresh pair of gloves for each diaper change.
- Roll soiled/wet diaper and used moist diaper wipes into the waxed paper.

- Place waxed paper and diaper in gloved hand.
- With other hand, pull disposable glove over diaper.
- Place glove with diaper in gloved hand.
- Pull other glove over other end of diaper (this process seals diaper inside gloves).
- Sanitize hands.
- Return all supplies to diaper bag.
- A second adult should always be present in the room during diaper changing.

Preschool Ministry - see above

Kids Ministry - Leaders of 1st-5th grades will not go into a stand alone bathroom to help children but will stay in the hallway with two adults present if help is needed.

Special Needs - Special needs volunteers will not take children to the bathroom. Parents will be responsible for bathroom breaks. (A motorized changing table is available in the girls baptism changing room).

3.05 Ratio of Workers to Children

It is required that a reasonable ratio of adults to children is maintained at all times. The department minister shall be responsible for setting and maintaining a reasonable ratio of workers to children; giving due regard to all factors present, including the number and age of the participants, the nature of the activities and the location where the activities are taking place.

3.06 Worker Training

Each new worker will be given a copy of the Church's *Child Protection Policy*. They must sign a statement (see Appendix B) indicating they have received, read, and understand the policy before they can begin working with children. New workers will be responsible for asking any questions they may have if they fail to understand any part of the policy.

3.07 Ministry Oversight

The department head shall coordinate with all ministry leaders in their age group to ensure compliance with the Church's *Child Protection Policy*. This should include regular unannounced visits into classes and other program sites.

3.08 Awareness of Organization Policy

Each department head shall review the Church's *Child Protection Policy* with their children's workers annually and whenever a change is made to the policy. These reviews may be conducted either with the workers individually or in groups. Each worker shall acknowledge participating in the periodic review of the Church's policies and procedures and having received revisions to the policy

when they are issued. The signed acknowledgements shall be retained in the personnel file of the worker.

4.0 REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO ALLEGED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

4.01 Reporting Policy

By Tennessee law, anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that a child is being physically abused, sexually abused, or neglected is required to report this information. Any worker of the Church who has cause to believe that a child is being abused or neglected shall report that belief according to the following procedure:

- The worker shall report such belief to the local Child Abuse Hotline (1-877-237-0004 or 1-877-54ABUSE) or any local law enforcement agency and to the appropriate department head.
- The department head receiving the report will immediately verify that the Department of Children's Services has been notified.
- The department head will notify the authorities (unless the parent is the person responsible for the abuse or neglect).
- The department head, in consultation with the pastor, minister of administration, and Board of Trustees will notify the appropriate legal counsel.
- The minister of administration will notify the church's insurance agent that an abuse report has been filed with the appropriate local or state agency.

It is the policy of the Church to report any incident of child abuse or neglect toward any child. This would include participants in temporary childcare programs. Workers must abide by the following rules:

- Do not treat any suspicion as frivolous.
- Notify your supervisor immediately.
- The staff member in charge should suspend the accused person from the performance of his/her duties involving children until the official investigation has been completed.
- Cooperate fully with law enforcement officials.

- The department head will inform the victim and the victim's family of all steps being taken, and continue to keep them advised of the status of the investigation.
- If child abuse is confirmed, ask the victim and the victim's family what action they would like to take in the matter and fully cooperate to address their requests within the bounds of a legal and prudent response. (Legal counsel should assist in this determination.)
- In an instance where child abuse is confirmed, the Church will immediately dismiss the worker from their position. Termination will be considered appropriate in the circumstances.
- In instances where evidence is inconclusive, the Church should take action with the advice of legal counsel in consultation with law enforcement officials depending on the strength of the evidence available and after consideration of the victim and the victim's family's requests.
- The department head, in consultation with legal counsel, will determine the amount of information they believe is appropriate to relate to the Church's membership. Usually, commenting in detail on an ongoing investigation is not wise.

The person making a report should identify:

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

4.02 Confidentiality

All reports of child abuse or neglect shall be handled with discretion. No person shall communicate any information concerning the alleged event to any person except as necessary and to cooperate with any official investigation. Any breach of this confidentiality by an employee shall be cause for immediate dismissal. The pastor, in consultation with the official conducting the investigation may authorize limited additional disclosure if necessary to protect other children from harm in the near future (particularly where the person responsible for the abuse cannot be identified) but in no case shall the identity of the victim or the accused person be disclosed except as required by law.

4.03 Investigation of Alleged Abuse or Neglect

No person shall attempt to conduct a detailed investigation either through examination or interrogation of the child, the accused person, or a witness. It is acceptable to obtain a reasonable amount of information to have cause to

believe a child has been abused or neglected. Interviews shall be conducted only by authorized officials of the agency to whom the suspected crime has been reported or, when appropriate, by legal counsel or persons representing the organization in an official capacity. All employees and volunteers shall cooperate with the official investigation as requested.

4.04 Suspension of Duties

A person accused of child abuse or neglect will be suspended from all duties involving children. This would include all childcare, teaching, transportation or sponsorship duties.

If the accused is an employee of the Church, the Personnel Committee shall be allowed to monitor any such investigation and receive confidential information concerning the incident as may be necessary to determine issues concerning continuation of employment and compensation. The person accused should be suspended on 'paid leave' until the validity of the accusation is determined.

Removal from duty should occur in such a way that an innocent person is not immediately deemed guilty. If the allegation is determined to be unsubstantiated, the employee may be returned to their prior position.

4.05 Preservation of Records

Copies of all documents relating to an event of abuse or neglect, including a list of all persons known to be present or in the vicinity shall be collected by the department head. The department head will review them to verify they are complete and in accordance with the Church's policy. Once reviewed, the documents will be transferred to the minister of administration and the child safeguarding committee for safe keeping until advised that all criminal and civil investigations and actions have been completed.

4.06 Ministerial Care

The staff shall encourage and assist the child and the parents in securing appropriate counseling, care and support. In the event the abuse or neglect involves a member or employee of the Church, the staff shall encourage and assist the individual in securing appropriate spiritual care and support, including third-party counseling, being mindful of the potential for a conflict of interest. It is also important that an accused or established offender not attend any such meetings with any of their victims, which can be re-traumatizing.

4.07 Liaison with the Community

The pastor, or his appointed agent, will serve as the Church's sole access to the media. The Church should emphasize to the public its position on child abuse, its concern for the victim and the extensive steps being taken to address the safety of all children.

Note

Major portions of Sections 1.0 – 4.0 have been copied with permission from resources found at kentuckybaptistconvention.org

5.00 REPORTING POLICY VIOLATIONS

5.01 Purpose

The purpose of this reporting process is to:

- Protect children and youth from harm
 - Identify concerning patterns of behavior early
 - Provide accountability for all volunteers and members
 - Deter inappropriate behavior through clear consequences
 - Ensure concerns are handled promptly, confidentially, and responsibly
- Every report is taken seriously and reviewed by the Child Safeguarding Committee.

5.02 Who Must Report

All staff, volunteers, and church members are required to report any observed or suspected violation of the Child Safeguarding Policy, including but not limited to:

- Inappropriate physical contact
- Being alone with a minor in violation of policy
- Boundary violations
- Use of inappropriate language, media, or conduct
- Any behavior that feels unsafe, concerning, or inconsistent with policy

Failure to report a known or suspected violation may itself result in disciplinary action.

5.03 What Should Be Reported

A report should be made when someone:

- Sees a violation occur
- Hears a direct disclosure from a minor or another person
- Suspects a concerning pattern or boundary violation
- Feels something is “off,” unsafe, or inappropriate

You do not need proof. You only need reasonable concern.

The responsibility to investigate belongs to leadership, not the reporter.

- For allegations of abuse or neglect see section 4.01

5.04 How to Report a Violation

Reports may be made in any of the following ways:

1. Directly to a member of the Child Safeguarding Committee
2. To a Pastor or Ministry Director, who is then required to forward it to the Committee
3. Through the church’s designated written reporting form or email (if applicable). A link to the reporting form will be available in children/youth areas. Additionally, forms can be sent to the Director of Operations.

Reports should include:

- Name(s) of the person(s) involved
- Date, time, and location of the incident
- Description of what was seen or heard
- Names of any witnesses (if applicable)

Reports may be made in writing or verbally, but written follow-up will be requested for documentation.

5.05 Confidentiality and Protection from Retaliation

- All reports are handled with strict confidentiality to the greatest extent possible.
- Information is shared only with those who must know to protect children and carry out an appropriate response.
- Retaliation of any kind against a person who makes a report is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

5.06 Review and Documentation

- All reports are reviewed by the Child Safeguarding Committee.
- A representative from the CSC will try to respond within 48 hours to the person reporting the violation to confirm that it's been received
- Every report is documented and described in a secure confidential file, even if it does not rise to the level of criminal misconduct.
- The committee will:
 - Identify patterns of behavior
 - Determine appropriate next steps
 - Recommend restrictions, retraining, suspension, or removal when necessary

5.07 Outcomes and Discipline

Depending on the nature and severity of the violation, outcomes may include:

- Policy retraining
- Temporary suspension from volunteer service
- Permanent removal from ministry roles
- Church discipline
- Law enforcement involvement when required

5.08 Our Commitment

We are committed to:

- Taking every report seriously
- Acting swiftly and responsibly
- Protecting children above reputations
- Supporting reporters

- Creating an environment where unsafe behavior is neither ignored nor hidden

SEXUAL OFFENDER POLICY

6.01 Guiding Principle

We believe that any addictive or compulsive habit, life hurt, or struggle may be overcome through the grace of God as it is given to us by way of his son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and his people, the church. We also believe that the local church should be a place where genuinely repentant people can come to worship and grow in their personal relationship with Christ. However, when the nature of a person's sin demands it, specific measures must be taken to ensure that the church remains a safe haven for all who wish to attend.

6.02 Requirements for Attendance

If a person who is a registered sex offender (RSO) wishes to attend Belle Aire Baptist Church the following procedures shall be followed:

- The RSO must meet with a Church minister and the leader of the ministry in which the RSO wishes to participate. The minister will serve as the RSO's accountability partner on matters related to his/her relationship with the Church.
- The Church minister performing the interview will also talk to the RSO's parole officer/case worker/counselor and any government officials involved with the RSO to inform them of our actions, to gather pertinent information about the RSO's situation, and to receive permission to allow the RSO on our property.
- All information gathered about the RSO's crimes and current situation will be discussed with the pastor who must grant his approval for the RSO to attend.
- The RSO shall be assigned a Church escort who will meet the RSO at his/her car and escort him/her at all times (including restroom visits) while on the Church premises or at any Church event the RSO wishes to attend.
- The RSO can only attend those functions specifically approved by the assigned Church minister. These functions should be limited to Church worship services and one small group (life group or Bible study).
- The RSO shall not approach or initiate contact with children (ages 0-17) nor enter areas of the facility designated for children.
- A photo ID of the RSO will be provided to all ministerial staff, children's teachers, and the Church safety team.

6.03 Termination of Privileges

Should the RSO violate any of the terms of this policy, attendance privileges shall be immediately and permanently terminated.

6.04 Commitment Form

The RSO shall carefully read and sign the Registered Sex Offender Commitment form (see Appendix B) prior to attending any Church function.

6.05 Alleged Sexual Offender

Prudence requires the Church to ban persons charged (but not arraigned or tried) with child sexual molestation from attending Church events or coming on campus until their legal status is officially determined by the courts. This conditional ban should be handled in such a way that an innocent person is not unjustly assumed to be guilty. If the allegation is determined to be unsubstantiated, the person can return to his/her former place of service.

Child Safeguarding Committee

7.01 Membership

Ex-Officio Members: Senior Pastor, Executive Pastor

Regular Members: Preschool Minister, Children's Minister, Student Pastor, and 5 volunteers to be approved by the congregation at a Business Meeting.

7.02 Responsibilities

Ongoing Responsibilities

1. Ongoing Evaluation and Maintenance - Meet regularly as a Standing Committee at least 3 times a year in order to evaluate the church's compliance with the Policy.
2. Advisement – Answer questions about the Policy and advise on child safety issues. Work with staff on all incidents requiring elevated oversight or incidents that may require reporting to other agencies.
3. Compliance and Response – Respond to Policy violations and other allegations of misconduct or abuse quickly and skillfully.
4. Policy Review – Review and amend the Policy as needed.
5. Review of volunteers – Work with staff to evaluate new and existing Volunteers.
6. Volunteer Screening Subcommittee - The Committee will appoint a subcommittee to assist Staff in the screening process for all volunteers.

Appendix A. Criminal Background Checks: Disqualifying Convictions

1. Felony Sex Offenses – regardless of the amount of time since the offense, including but not limited to:
 - Child molestation
 - Rape
 - Sexual assault
 - Sexual battery
 - Sodomy
 - Prostitution
 - Solicitation
 - Indecent exposure
2. Felony Violence Offenses – regardless of the amount of time since the offense, including but not limited to:
 - Murder
 - Manslaughter
 - Aggravated assault
 - Spousal abuse
 - Kidnapping
 - Robbery
 - Aggravated burglary
 - Arson
3. Felony Offenses Involving a Child – regardless of the amount of time since the offense, including but not limited to:
 - Child abuse or gross neglect
 - Contributing to the delinquency of a minor
 - Child pornography
 - Internet luring of a child
 - Child trafficking
 - Child endangerment
4. Felony Offenses (Other) – within the past 10 years that would be considered a potential danger to children or is directly related to the functions of the applicant, including but not limited to:
 - Drug offenses
 - Burglary
 - Theft
5. Misdemeanor Violence Offenses – within the past 5 years, including but not limited to:
 - Simple assault
 - Battery

Domestic violence
Hit & Run

6. Misdemeanor Drug and Alcohol Offenses – within the past 5 years or multiple offenses in the past 10 years, including but not limited to:

DUI or DWAI

Simple drug possession

Drunk and disorderly

Public intoxication

Possession of drug paraphernalia

7. Misdemeanors Offenses (Other) – within the past 5 years that would be considered a potential danger to children or is directly related to the functions of the applicant.

8. Other Disqualifying Factors

a. Pending Charges. Should the background check indicate that an applicant has criminal charges of any nature pending, including a deferred judgment or deferred prosecution, the applicant will be considered on a case by case basis and may be rejected until there is a resolution of the charges or successful completion of the deferred period.

b. Subsequent Charges. Should an approved applicant subsequently have any criminal charges brought against him/her during their term of service, they will be required to disclose the nature of the charges to the church administrator and voluntarily terminate their duties until a determination is made regarding the effect of the pending charges on the employee's/volunteer's functions.

Appendix B. Related Forms

Registered Sexual Offender Commitment

I, _____, will strive to live a life worthy of the calling that Christ has given me. I also know that doing so will take time. Therefore, I agree to abide by all requirements made of me by this agreement while attending Belle Aire Baptist Church. Furthermore, I agree to adhere to the guidance, counsel and requests made of me by the leadership of Belle Aire Baptist Church, not only while in attendance at church functions, but in my personal life as well.

The following requirements are in order that I may be restored to a right relationship with my Savior and my fellow believers. I understand that time will show my fellow believers when I am worthy of their trust.

Please initial each item below:

_____ I agree to allow the official church escort to be with me at all times while on the church premises and at designated church functions, which may be off campus.

_____ I will work out the details of connecting with my assigned escort prior to arriving at church.

_____ If I am on church premises without the official church escort, I understand that I will not be allowed to return to Belle Aire Baptist Church.

_____ I understand that my assigned Belle Aire minister must grant approval for me to attend any church functions that are in addition to those already approved.

_____ I will refrain from being in designated children's areas of the building and I will not initiate contact with children, making every effort to avoid being in contact with children, on or off church premises.

_____ I commit to being honest with myself and with the leadership of Belle Aire Baptist Church.

Printed Name: _____

Phone: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Belle Aire Minister: _____

Phone: _____

Ministry Leader: _____

Phone: _____

Official Escort: _____

Phone: _____

Phone: _____

Belle Aire Baptist Church
Child Protection Policy
Acknowledgement of Understanding

I have read and understand the **Belle Aire Baptist Church Child Protection Policy** dated September 10, 2024. I understand that my service as an employee of Belle Aire Baptist Church or as a volunteer worker who works with children at Belle Aire Baptist Church is dependent on my strict adherence to these policies.

Name (please print): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Indicators

(Taken from *The Child Safeguarding Policy Guide for Churches and Ministries*, by Basyle Tchividjian and Shira Berkovits, pages 37-40)

Because the majority of children who are sexually abused will be moderately to severely symptomatic at some point in their life, Belle Aire Baptist Church is familiar with and attentive to potential indicators of child sexual abuse. As the church's front-line for children's and student programming and pastoral counseling, church professionals and volunteers have regular opportunities to observe children's behavior, family dynamics, and care-giving styles. They are often privy to the intimate details of congregants' lives. Unlike formal educators, church professionals have ongoing contact with the entire family unit and its acquaintances, and as such may be in the unique position to detect child sexual abuse and other forms of child maltreatment.

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse if a child has:

- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- Difficulty, pain, or blood in the genital area when walking, sitting, or using the bathroom
- Discharge from the penis or vagina
- Injuries (e.g., bruises, tearing, bleeding), itching, or swelling in the genital, vaginal, or anal area
- Urinary tract infections, yeast infections, sexually transmitted diseases
- Pregnancy

It is atypical for children to engage in the following sexual behaviors:

- Placing mouth on sex part
- Asking others to engage in sexual acts
- Trying to have intercourse or imitating intercourse
- Undressing others, especially if done forcefully
- Imitating sexual positions with dolls
- Inserting an object into vagina or anus, especially if child continues to do so despite pain
- Manually stimulating or having oral or genital contact with pets
- Making sexual sounds
- Inserting tongue in mouth when kissing

Emotional or behavioral signs of child sexual abuse may include:

- Depression; emotionless or passive behavior; withdrawal from family, friends, church, or school; exhibiting low self-esteem or self-loathing

- Lack of attachment to a caregiver; displaying distrust or wariness at the approach of adults, caregivers, or specific people; fear of going home that may manifest by arriving at youth groups early, staying late, and appearing frightened or upset when it is time to return home
- Being constantly watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen
- Sudden changes in behavior, including academic changes
- Extremes in behavior, such as over-compliance, over-achieving or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or behaving more responsibly than would be expected of a child that age
- Aggressive, destructive (e.g., fire-setting), demanding, or disruptive behavior; frequent and inexplicable anger, rebellion, or running away
- Self-degradation; self-injury (e.g., "cutting") or wearing long sleeves on hot days (to hide bruising or other injuries); suicide attempts
- Delays in emotional, cognitive, physical, or academic development
- Unwillingness to change for or participate in certain youth department activities such as a gym night or swim program
- Being inappropriately adult (e.g., parenting other children) or infantile (e.g., rocking or head-banging)
- Bed-wetting in children who have previously outgrown it; nightmares; difficulty sleeping
- Exhibiting high anxiety, including through physical problems associated with anxiety, such as chronic stomach pains or headaches
- Frequent, unexplained absences at school

Consider the possibility of physical abuse if you notice:

- Frequent injuries of any kind (e.g., bruises, cuts, fractures, burns)
- Especially if the child is unable to provide an adequate explanation of the cause of the injury
- These injuries may appear in distinctive patterns such as grab marks, human bite marks, cigarette burns, or impressions of other instruments
- Pay particular attention to injuries that present on both sides of the head or body, as accidental injuries typically only affect one side of the body

Consider the possibility of neglect if a child:

- Is obviously malnourished, listless, or fatigued
- Begs, steals, or hoards food or complains frequently of hunger
- Is constantly dirty or has severe body odor
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Untreated illness, injuries, health (e.g., unfilled cavities) or serious educational needs
- Broken or missing eyeglasses, hearing aid, or other necessary aids or equipment
- Has an untreated need for glasses, dental care, or other medical attention
- Stays at school outside of school hours
- Frequently absent or significant academic struggles

- Is inappropriately left unsupervised
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs

Appendix D: People who Sexually Abuse Children

(Taken from *The Child Safeguarding Policy Guide for Churches and Ministries*, by Basyle Tchividjian and Shira Berkovits, pages 59-60)

People who sexually abuse children utilize authority, trust, or physical force/threats to gain access and control over children so they can perpetrate the abuse.

The three primary categories of people who sexually abuse children are the stranger, the acquaintance, and the intra-familial offender

Stranger offenders are people that the child has never seen, or people with whom the child has had only minimal prior interactions. Stranger offenders secure access and control over children with authority, trust, and physical force/threats but most frequently utilize physical force/threats and are the smallest category of offenders.

Acquaintance offenders are non-family members - such as a family friend, clergy member, next-door neighbor, pediatrician, teacher, or church volunteer - who is acquainted with the child or the child's parents. Acquaintance offenders generally prefer to leverage trust to gain access and control. To secure this trust, the acquaintance offender grooms child victims by providing a variety of services and gifts, including but not limited to attention, affection, kindness, privileges, recognition, alcohol, drugs, money, and pornography. The trust that develops as a result of the grooming process will often reduce the child's inhibitions and increase the offender's control over the child. This toxic trust eventually renders the child virtually helpless, creating an environment for ongoing abuse, while increasing the likelihood that the victim will remain silent.

Intra-familial offenders are related to the victim and are people who usually, but not always, live in the same house as the victim. The intra-familial offender is generally considered the largest of the three child molester categories. Because of greater accessibility, intra-familial victims tend to be overall younger than most non-familial victims. The primary challenge for the intra-familial molester is not access, but the ability to exert sufficient control in order to both abuse and silence the victim. A seemingly greater correlation and interplay exists between the use of trust, authority, and physical force utilized by the intra-familial offender.

Appendix E: Standard Interview Questions

(Taken from *The Child Safeguarding Policy Guide for Churches and Ministries*, by Basyle Tchividjian and Shira Berkovits, pages 76-77)

Interview Questions

• Please tell us about your experience working with children.

- For younger applicants with less experience:
Do you have younger siblings?
If so, do you help take care of them?
If not, have you helped care for other children, such as cousins, or neighbors?
- Why do you want this job? Why are you interested in working with children? [Be wary of answers that focus on children filling the adult's needs (e.g., "children are non-judgmental and make me feel good about myself") rather than the adult meeting the child's needs ("I'm good at helping children learn to study the Bible")] What do you find most rewarding/challenging about working with children?
- Describe a child you enjoyed working with and a child that was particularly challenging.
- What strategies do you use to respond to challenging behaviors?
- Have you ever encountered problems with children you were caring for?
- Have you ever been in an emergency situation while taking care of a child?
- What is your opinion on drugs/alcohol use for adults/teenagers? Do you use drugs/alcohol? If so, when? Have you ever used drugs or alcohol before or while you were caring for children?
In a situation where you may have lost your temper with children:
 - What was the trigger?
 - How did you manage it?
 - What was the outcome?
 - What strategies did you implement upon reflection?
 - Have you ever mistreated a child? Have you ever abused a child?
 - Are there any children with whom you would not wish to work and, if so, why?
- Is there a specific age/sex you prefer to work with? How would you feel about working with a different age/sex? [Some child abusers select victims with specific characteristics, so be wary of inflexibility. At the same time applicants may request a specific age group/sex because of previous experience. Ask some follow-up questions to determine if there is cause for concern.]
- Have you ever suspected that one of the children in your care was being abused? [Denial would be concerning.] What type of supervisory situation do you prefer? [If your Policy requires close supervision, an independent applicant who resists supervision may not be the right fit. Child abusers seek settings with minimal supervision, so be wary if an applicant stresses the importance of privacy and complete autonomy in interacting with youth.]

- **What would your friends, colleagues, or supervisors say about how you interact with youth? Is there anyone who might suggest that you should not work with youth? Why or why not?**
- **Please outline any action taken against you in relation to working or volunteering with children. This may include, but is not limited to, allegations and disciplinary action.**
- **Do you own a gun? Where do you use it? Is there ever a time when you might think it would be appropriate to bring a gun or weapon to the church?**
- **What other hobbies or activities do you enjoy? [Determine if applicants have mature, adult relationships and interests that do not involve youth. If an applicant reports relationships with youth to the exclusion of adults-be wary.]**
- **If you were me conducting this interview, is there something you would make sure to ask? Is there something I should have asked about? Is there anything else you would like to tell us?**
- **Do you have any questions for us?**