

Shirley Hills Baptist Church

Child Protection Policy

1. General Purpose Statement:

Shirley Hills Baptist Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of Shirley Hills Baptist Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also providing accountability and support for staff and volunteers.

2. Definitions:

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

3. Selection of Workers:

All employees and all volunteers who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities shall be screened. All employees shall comply with paragraphs (B) and (C) below. The requirements of paragraph (B) are covered in the employment application. The screening for all volunteers includes:

- A. Six Month Rule: No volunteer will be considered for any position working with our children until s/he has been attending Shirley Hills Baptist Church (SHBC) for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.
- B. All employees and volunteers will complete an application which will include the following information:
 - 1) Individual's name with their identity confirmed by driver's license or other form of government I.D. with a photograph
 - 2) Current address and telephone number
 - 3) Type of child work in which the applicant is interested
 - 4) Any education or prior training received for such work
 - 5) A list of churches the applicant has attended over the past five years
 - 6) A description of all work involving children including work in churches or private organizations
 - 7) Information as to whether the applicant has ever been accused of, charged with, or convicted of actual or attempted sexual molestation of a minor. A signed statement to this effect must accompany the application
 - 8) Names, addresses and phone numbers of three references who are not relatives.

- C. All volunteers and employees who work with children in any capacity will give written permission for:
 - 1) Reference check on all prior work with children as well as personal references.
 - 2) A background check which will be performed by a professional agency which is in compliance with the Fair Credit Reporting Act.
 - 3) All applications and results of background checks will be maintained in locked file cabinet by the Associate Pastor of Administration. No one will have access to this information except for the pastoral staff and one administrative assistant. All information will be treated as strictly confidential.
 - 4) Background checks will be repeated on all employees and volunteers at least every five years.
- D. Each volunteer applicant will be interviewed by the supervisor of the ministry area. A documented input will be provided by the supervisor and will be considered in the decision making process.

4. Determination of What Constitutes a Disqualifying Application / Background Check:

- A. What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Pastoral staff on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for a felony offense in the last five years will be grounds for the person being precluded from working with children at SHBC. Any offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission may preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Any failure to disclose a criminal conviction or any falsification of information on the application form will be a disqualifying event.
- B. Adults who have been convicted of child abuse, either physical or sexual, or who have a history of other such inappropriate conduct will not be allowed to serve as an employee or a volunteer in any church sponsored program or activity involving children or students at SHBC. In the case of an adult who has been charged with child abuse, but not convicted, the individual must authorize a release of all court records before a determination can be made.

5. Other Prevention Strategies:

- A. The “Two-Person Rule” requires a minimum of two, non-related adults to be present with children at all times. If a second person is not immediately available, e.g. has not arrived yet, the door to the room should be open. If a parent is available, ask her/him to remain until the third worker arrives.
- B. When spouses work together, they count as one for the “Two-Person Rule” and item A applies. At no time should the husband and wife be in the room alone with one non-related child.
- C. The Open Door Policy is to be followed by volunteers or staff who need to counsel or work with children in one-on-one situations. The Open Door Policy states that the door will be open at all times. A window in a closed door will also meet this requirement.
- D. Male employees or volunteers who serve in the preschool department will not change diapers or take children to the bathroom. Female employees or volunteers who assist children to the

bathroom will stand near the doorway of the bathroom, close enough to assist the child but also clearly visible to other teachers in the room.

- E. Children will be released only to a properly identified person. A two-tag security system is in place for children from birth to kindergarten.
- F. The ministry director for each department will make frequent unannounced visits to classrooms or other ministry areas.
- G. Volunteers who serve with children will receive annual in-service training on prevention of child abuse and church policies that relate to this subject. The format of the training will be determined by the ministry leader for each group of volunteers.
- H. The pastoral/ministry team of Shirley Hills Baptist Church will be responsible for implementing and enforcing these guidelines and procedures

6. Reporting of Alleged Abuse

A. 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 many different ways and includes:

- 1) Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- 2) 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.
- 3) Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- 4) Neglect – depriving a child of their essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

B. Volunteers and employees 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 should be reported immediately to the Associate Pastor over that area for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

C. 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 procedures shall be followed:

- 1) The parent or guardian of the child will be notified immediately by a member of the Pastoral staff.
- 2) 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.
- 3) Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report.
- 4) We will comply with the state’s requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists.

- 5) 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, a team will be formed to investigate the circumstances of the incident. The team should act only in consultation with our insurance company and/or attorney.
- 6) Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position with children at SHBC.
- 7) The Associate Pastor for Administration or other member as designated by the Pastor will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he is alleged to be involved. All other workers shall refrain from speaking to the media.
- 8) A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.
- 9) Shirley Hills Baptist Church will protect the victim and any other person involved in the incident by keeping the matter strictly confidential. The matter will not be discussed with anyone other than the legal authorities and members of the pastoral staff who need to know.