

POLICY TYPE: Governance

POLICY TITLE: Protection of Minors and People with Disabilities

POLICY #II-5

Policy Statement:

Introduction

Everyone who teaches, helps or cares for children and or youth under the auspices of the MBC is required to follow the guidelines and procedures as defined in this document. The church Elder's Board has reviewed and adopted them as official policy.

This policy is designed to assist church leaders in their recruiting of volunteers and, to the greatest extent possible, provide for the safety of the children served by these volunteers.

This policy is intended to further the church's obligations to the children under its care by prescribing certain policies or procedures designed to minimize the risk of child abuse or complaints of abuse. It is hoped that the policies herein will further the reality of the church as a "sanctuary" and a place of ministry. Abuse of children must be condemned and eradicated from the church and society.

Definition

Child Abuse Is defined as follows:

- It can be physical, emotional or sexual.
- All child abuse involves the misuse of power.
- Misuse of power takes place when people take advantage of the authority or power they have over vulnerable people.
- Vulnerable people include adults with physical or mental disabilities and children (from birth to 18 years).

Physical Abuse is using physical force or action that results, or could result, in injury to a child or youth. It is more than reasonable discipline. Sometimes injury is caused by over-discipline. Injuring a child or youth is not acceptable, regardless of differing cultural standards on discipline.

Emotional Abuse is the pattern of hurting a child's feelings to the point of damaging their self-respect. It includes verbal attacks on the child, insults, humiliation or rejection. A child or youth who is emotionally harmed may demonstrate severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, as well as self-destructive or aggressive behaviour.

Sexual Abuse occurs when a child or youth is used by somebody else for sexual stimulation or gratification. Sexual activity between children or youth may be sexual abuse if older or more powerful children or youth take advantage of those who are younger or less powerful.

Child Sexual Abuse includes: fondling; oral, genital or anal penetration; intercourse; forcible rape; verbal comments; pornography; obscene phone calls or conversation; exhibitionism; and allowing a child to witness sexual activity.

Selection Of Pastoral Employees

Our church will report to the Fellowship any pastoral employee whose name should be placed on the Fellowship register of abusers. Our church will consult the register before hiring any pastoral employee. Our church will obtain information about the character and deportment of candidates for pastoral employment from a number of people who have worked, studied, worshipped or otherwise known the candidate.

Our church shall never enter into an agreement with a pastoral employee who appears to have engaged in sexual abuse to keep the information confidential.

Preventative Measures at the Church Level

Our church will promote healthy lifestyles among our pastoral employees by:

- (1) developing and maintaining a written job description explicitly setting out the expectations of its pastoral employees;
- (2) having a vacation policy, which encourages pastoral employees to have adequate time away from work-related activities;
- (3) making counseling services available to pastoral employees and their spouses in times of marital stress,
- (4) budgeting for pastoral employees to regularly attend meetings or conferences where other pastoral employees will be present;
- (5) ensuring, where possible, that pastoral employees belong to a small group that meets regularly for prayer and encouragement.

Responding to Allegations of Sexual Abuse

Our church is prepared to exercise biblical church discipline in cases of sexual abuse.

All allegations of sexual abuse will be taken seriously. Every allegation will be investigated and never dismissed out of hand. A person making an allegation will never be discouraged from raising the allegation because of the disruption the process will cause to the church of the alleged abuser.

Our church will assign a support person to anyone making allegations of sexual abuse. The support person's role is to accompany and assist the complainant throughout the entire process.

Our church will ensure that where the allegations of sexual abuse appear to involve criminal acts (e.g. sexual assault) or sexual abuse of children, that the civil authorities are contacted immediately. The only exception is where the alleged conduct ceased more than five years previously, all of the persons who were alleged to have been abused are now adults and all of the persons who were alleged to have been abused are aware of their rights to report the matter to the civil authorities.

Compensation

Compensation for sexual abuse is the responsibility of the abuser, not MBC. However, MBC may try to assist any person injured by sexual abuse.

Mayerthorpe Baptist Church is committed to the following:

1. As of November 5th, 2015, all personnel, employees and volunteers, are required to complete an application form to work with children and youth at MBC. See Appendix "1" for a copy of this form
2. All applicants will be required to give the names of two references. Please fill in their names, addresses, email addresses and phone numbers on the Volunteer Application Form. References will be contacted.
3. As of November 5th, 2015, all applicants will be subject to a personal interview with such persons as designated by the board of the church.
4. All volunteers¹ shall complete a Criminal Records Check as well as a Vulnerable Sector check. In the event that a volunteer has a past record dealing with crimes against children or youth they will not be permitted to serve in children's or youth ministries at MBC, but be encouraged to serve in other areas of the church. Volunteers must update their Criminal Records and Vulnerable sector compliance once every three years.
5. Volunteers must be members or adherents of the church who have agreed to be subject to the authority of the church/elders as set out in the church constitution. Written consent of this is obtained in writing by signing this policy.
6. We will provide training sessions for all staff and helpers who work with preschoolers, children or youth, to understand the nature of child sexual abuse, how to carry out our policies to prevent abuse. Volunteers will be required to attend this training at least once every three years. They will not begin to work with children or teens until such time that they have registered for an upcoming training session.
7. We will follow the "Two-Volunteer" rule. Such a rule says that two volunteers should be present during any children's or youth activity.
8. We will follow the "Six Month" rule. Volunteers will be permitted to work with children or youth only after they have been adherents/members of Mayerthorpe Baptist Church for a period of six-months.

Child Security

1. Classroom doors, except where there are windows in the doors, shall be kept open during any time where children/youth are in the care of ministry personnel or staff, unless there are two or more adults present.
2. Individual counseling of a child or youth (under age 18) shall be done:
 - (a) only with the specific approval of the parent or guardian of the child; or
 - (b) with a minimum of two adults present, or
 - (c) in a public place.
3. No overnight functions shall be permitted unless two or more personnel are present and two or more members of the board of the church first approve the function. If both male and female children/youth are present overnight, then both a male and female (un-related) leader must be present. Single leader overnight trips shall be permitted with the written consent of all parents/guardians involved, and approved by the church board in writing.
4. All drivers must annually provide proof of valid insurance, and be made aware of their legal liability. These drivers will never allow more children or teens to occupy a ministry vehicle than said vehicle was designed for.

¹ A Volunteer is considered 18 years of age or older in reference to policy checks.

Driver's less than 18 years old will never be used to transport children or teens for an MBC ministry. If a driver is used on an irregular basis for a ministry purpose, the criminal record check, volunteer application and training requirements will be waived.

-As Of November 5, 2015 a Drivers Abstract will be required once every three years.

-Any driver with a DUI on their abstract will not be permitted to drive for MBC ministries.

-Any driver with 7 or more demerits on their record will be required to be reviewed by the Board of Elders.

5. Children are never to be dropped off in the nursery, classroom or youth function without a teacher/helper present. Doors will be supervised so that children are not able to exit alone and or an adult cannot take them from a room without the worker's assistance and consent.

6. Written parental permission documents will be obtained for all activities that are not held within the county of Lac St Anne. In the event that the parents, or those deemed by the parents' as acceptable drivers, drop off and pick up their children from said events this requirement will be waived.

7. No ministry driver of MBC will ever be alone with a child or teen of the opposite sex in any vehicle.

8. All overnight activities and or activities that leave Lac St. Anne County will be pre-approved by the Elder's board. Parents will be notified at least one week in advance of all said activities.

9. The creation and/or sharing of inappropriate material and content are prohibited on MBC property or at a church event.

Washroom Guidelines

1. As a general rule, staff in the nursery (or unorganized infant care) will not be expected to change diapers. However, in the event that this becomes necessary the following will apply: Only those 13 years old and above will be permitted to change a diaper; and the volunteer shall remain in the presence of another volunteer during the diaper changing. In the event that written parental consent is given to a volunteer, this guideline may be waived.

2. For preschool children, two volunteers will escort a group of children to the washroom. Where we do not have two adults available to take children to the washroom, the second volunteer should remain in sight of the open washroom door until the children have returned.

3. If only one child must go to the washroom, the adult volunteer should escort the child to the washroom and prop the door open. The volunteer should then remain outside the washroom door and wait for the child to finish before escorting them back to the classroom.

4. Never should a volunteer be alone with a child in an unsupervised washroom and never should an adult go into a washroom cubicle with a child and shut the door. If a child needs further assistance, the child's parents should be contacted. In the event that a preschool child needs assistance in the washroom, an adult (over 18 years old) may assist only when a second adult is within visual contact.

5. Only women will change diapers, or assist in washroom needs in MBC ministries.

Emergencies

MBC workers are not to give or apply any medication. MBC commits to offer training to all of our volunteers in the areas of Emergency first aid and CPR. In the event that a life threatening situation takes place, our volunteers will take the actions they deem appropriate to save the child's life.

APPENDIX "1"

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM

A. PURPOSE

This Application is to be completed by all volunteer applicants for any position involving the supervision or care of children (under age 18). The church has a spiritual, moral and legal obligation to provide a secure environment for those children participating in church programs and who are under the auspices of the church. To this end this application and the application process are intended to assist.

All information is strictly confidential and only persons with legitimate need will have access to any information obtained in the application process. Failure to complete any or all of the application may delay consideration. The applicant may review any questions of a sensitive, personal nature with an elder or elder- designated woman.

B. PERSONAL BACKGROUND

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

How long at this address? _____ Previous Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Marital Status: _____

What areas of children's/ youth ministry are you prepared/interested in serving?

What time commitment are you able to make? _____

Are you prepared to attend seminars or workshops on children's ministry as prescribed by the church? _____

What background/experience do you have in working with children (church or non-church)?

(provide particulars of organization, time and responsibilities)

What is your membership or adherent status in the church? _____

Do you have a criminal record or have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence involving children or assaults? _____

Have you included your criminal record check compliance with this application? _____

Do you have a driver's license? _____ Driver's license number: _____

Have you included proof of valid insurance? _____

Have you been a victim of abuse/molestation? * _____

** (This question may be discussed with an elder or elder-designated woman in confidence rather than answering on this form.)*

C. REFERENCES- Must have had a relationship longer than 3 years

Please provide two personal references: (*name, address, email address, phone number, relationship - not relatives*)

1.

2.

D. STATEMENT

The information contained herein is correct. I authorize any references listed to provide any information requested pertaining to my character and fitness to participate in children's ministry of the church.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the constitution, policies and procedures of Mayerthorpe Baptist Church, including discipline processes, and to refrain from any conduct unbecoming in the performance of my responsibilities on behalf of the Church.

I have read this policy and agree to comply with it.

Dated at _____, Alberta, this _____ day of _____, _____ (year)

Applicant's Signature

Original Approval: Dec 7, 2015

Revised: November 16, 2023

Jody Klassen- Board Chair