



WADE BAPTIST CHURCH

**CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION
POLICY**

November 29, 2021

Wade Baptist Church

Child Abuse Prevention Policy

Date: 11/29/2021

I. Purpose

- A. To help Wade Baptist Church provide a caring, safe, and secure environment for children in all phases of church life.
- B. To help Wade Baptist Church reduce legal risk and liability exposure.

II. Biblical Foundation

Wade Baptist Church seeks to express God's love of children and provide for their personal wholeness. This caring community seeks to prevent child abuse of any form to our children and youth and to minister to victims of abuse and their families. The Bible is foundational to our understanding upon which all policies, procedures, and ministries must stand.

And they brought young children to him that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them. Mark 10:13-16

And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Matthew 18:5-7

Our goal in response to these Biblical mandates is to maintain a safe, secure and loving place where children may grow: a place where caregivers, teachers, and leaders (both paid and volunteer) minister appropriately to their needs.

III. Child Abuse Prevention Policy

Wade Baptist Church DESIRES TO BE A SAFE PLACE FOR ALL CHILDREN AND ADULTS WHO ATTEND ANY ACTIVITY. Individuals they know and trust sometimes victimize children. The church is not immune to such abuse, either by its members or by those in leadership positions. Incidents of child abuse or neglect cut across racial, social, economic, and religious boundaries. Although no organization or individual can assure complete protection, this Child Abuse Prevention Policy reflects Wade Baptist Church's commitment to help to protect children from harm. This policy applies to all volunteer and compensated workers of Wade Baptist Church.

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Wade Baptist Church will not tolerate child abuse or neglect. Your cooperation in this commitment not only reflects your concern about children's safety in this society, but also your willingness to take steps toward halting child abuse and its detrimental effects.

For the safety and protection of our children and workers, all people who participate in church-sponsored activities with children are required to comply with the guidelines provided in this policy.

IV. Definitions -- In this policy the following definitions apply:

- A. **Chaperone** - Any person age 18 or older who is assigned to monitor, manage, or coordinate activities of children or youth under age 18. All chaperones shall be under the supervision of a Church Leader responsible for the event or activity.
- B. **Activity Helper** -
 - 1. A person 16 years or older who assists with activities or events under the direct supervision of the responsible adult chaperone.
 - 2. A person 12 to 15 years old who may be assigned limited responsibility in assisting in an activity supervised by an adult.
- C. **Child or Youth** - Any person age 18 or younger
- D. **Child Abuse** - Child abuse refers to an act committed by a parent, caregiver or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare. The law typically uses the following definitions and explanations in determining whether abuse of a child has occurred.
 - 1. **Physical Abuse** - A physical injury, threat of injury or creation of a real and significant danger of substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or impairment of bodily functions. Such injury or threat of injury, regardless of intent, is inflicted or allowed to be inflicted by non-accidental means. Examples: asphyxiation; bone fracture; brain damage; skull fracture; subdural hematomas; burns; scalding; cuts; bruises; welts; abrasions; internal injuries; poisoning; sprains; dislocations; gunshot; stabbing wounds.

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2. **Physical Neglect** - Failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, or supervision for a child if the child's health or safety is endangered. Physical neglect may include multiple occurrences or a one-time critical or severe event that results in a threat to health or safety, such as a toddler left alone. Other types of neglect include abandonment, inadequate supervision, inadequate clothing, inadequate shelter, inadequate personal hygiene, inadequate food and malnutrition.
 3. **Sexual Abuse** - Abuse that consists of sexual contact or interactions with a child, including physical contact (fondling, sexual intercourse) and non-physical contact (exhibitionism, child prostitution, pornography, voyeurism, cybercrime).
 4. **Medical Neglect** - Refusal or neglect by caretaker to obtain and/or follow through with a complete regimen of medical, mental, or dental care for a condition which, if untreated, could result in illness or developmental delays.
 5. **Failure to Thrive** - A syndrome of infancy or early childhood that is characterized by growth failure, signs of severe malnutrition, and variable degrees of developmental retardation. Children are considered to be in this category only when the syndrome is diagnosed by a physician and is caused by non-organic factors.
 6. **Mental Abuse/Neglect** - A pattern of acts or omissions by the caretaker that result in harm to a child's psychological or emotional health or development.
 7. **Educational Neglect** - The child's caretaker is directly responsible for the failure of the child to attend school or an approved alternative program of study.
 8. **Bizarre Discipline** - Any actions in which the caretaker uses eccentric, irrational, or grossly inappropriate procedures or devices to modify the child's behavior.
- E. **Compensated Worker** - Hourly, salaried, part-time, or full-time employee who works with children at any church sponsored activity.
- F. **Volunteer Worker** - Any non-compensated individual who works with children at any church sponsored activity that is 16 or older and is supervised by a responsible activity leader.

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- G. **Mandated Reporter** - Any person with the responsibility for the care of children is a mandated reporter. Mississippi law states that if a caregiver has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect or observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances that would reasonably result in abuse or neglect, that a person shall immediately report or cause a report to be made to the Jackson County Department of Child Protection Services (228-769-3444 or 1-800-222-8000). They shall also report the observation to one of the Church staff.
- H. **Corporal Punishment** - Any physical punishment applied to the body but not limited to slapping, spanking, pinching, poking, scratching, or excessive shaking when intended as punishment.

V. Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse

In an effort to create the safest possible environment within Wade Baptist Church, several abuse prevention measures will be used. These measures include, but are not limited to, screening of paid and volunteer workers for past child abuse convictions and sex offender registries, provision for regular training on child abuse issues to paid and volunteer staff members, use of the two-adult rule, standards for appropriate classroom discipline and open classrooms.

A. Six-Month Rule

Volunteer workers must have been members or regular attendees of Wade Baptist Church for at least six months prior to the time they begin serving with children in church sponsored activities. (Please Note: Most ministry-related positions of service require church membership, only a few do not.) There is an exception to the six-month guideline. If a volunteer worker:

1. Has served in ministry with children for at least six months in the church he or she attended prior to coming to Wade Baptist Church, and
2. Can provide a reference from the staff person with whom they worked at that church, they may be considered for service prior to the six months of regular attendance at Wade Baptist Church.

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B. Screening

The following procedures reflect Wade Baptist Church's commitment to provide protective care for all children and workers who participate in church sponsored activities.

1. All volunteer and compensated workers 18 years and older must complete the following procedures before participating in any church sponsored child or student activities.
 - a. All volunteer and compensated workers must complete an application and background authorization form. References will be checked.
 - b. The staff person responsible for the area of ministry will conduct an interview.
 - c. All persons who work with children or students must attend orientation/training activities appropriate to the level of the volunteer or compensated worker involvement.
 - d. Applicants must sign written acknowledgement stating they have received and reviewed a copy of the *Child Abuse Prevention Policy* of Wade Baptist Church.
2. No adult members of the congregation, volunteers, or compensated workers, who have been convicted of a felony against a child or a violent felony against another adult, will provide services in any church sponsored activity or program for children or youth.
3. All volunteer and compensated workers 18 or older are required to have background checks for the purpose of obtaining information regarding criminal history or child abuse findings.
4. Applications and the results of any screening will be kept confidential by authorized church staff.
5. There is an ongoing reporting requirement should they be charged with any further abuse, neglect or any other crime covered by this policy.

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C. Two-Adult Rule

Whenever possible, teachers will be assigned in teams of two or more for church nursery, fifth grade and below activities, Sunday school classes, and student activities. Concerted effort will be made to recruit sufficient numbers of volunteer teachers to permit such team teaching. Other church sponsored groups of children or students, whether they meet at the church or elsewhere, shall have two or more adult sponsors present and be under the supervision of the Church Leader responsible for the activity. When a church sponsored children's or student activity has both male and female participants, both male and female adult sponsors shall also be present.

D. Classroom Discipline

All teachers and workers will use the following discipline measures if a child is behaving inappropriately:

- The teacher or worker will tell the child specifically what he/she is doing that is not acceptable and state what the expected behavior is, e.g., "We do not throw blocks. We use blocks for building."
- If this measure is not effective, the child will be guided to another activity.
- If inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be placed at a table to work alone away from the other students.
- If the child's disruptive behavior continues after these steps have been taken, the child may be taken to the Church Leader or other appropriate leader and left under the supervision of that person. Where possible, parents shall be involved in managing the disruptive behavior.
- No corporal punishment or verbal abuse, e.g., ridicule, is to be used at any time.
- If isolating the child within the classroom or removal of the child from the room becomes necessary, the situation will be discussed with the child's parents or guardian as soon as possible.

E. Open Classrooms

Classrooms or childcare rooms may be visited without prior notice by Church Staff or Leaders, parents, or other volunteer church workers, e.g., Sunday School Superintendent. The Sunday School Superintendent or his delegate will conduct brief observations of childcare rooms and classrooms of children or youth during Sunday school and other meeting hours.

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F. Gifts

No staff, either paid or volunteer, is to give gifts to individual children or young people without the prior knowledge of the parent(s) or responsible leader. Because gift giving can be a form of buying loyalty or silence, gift giving should be done on a group basis or for special occasions only. Gifts may not be elaborate, but should be modest and appropriate to the occasion.

G. Food

Children kept in the nursery and those through fifth grade may be given a small snack during normal worship services. However, care must be taken to ensure equal distribution of food and only enough to curb appetites.

H. Overnight Trips

Situations where staff members are taking children or students out of the area for long periods of time or for overnight outings are to be carefully planned. Only known, proven staff will be permitted to sponsor/chaperone trips. New staff or volunteers may be used as additional sponsors, but shall not be left alone with the children or students in a situation where there are no other staff to observe. In no circumstance will one adult be allowed to take children or youth on an overnight outing.

VI. Age Specific Guidelines for Working With Children

A. Nursery – Refer to Appendix A – Nursery Ministry Handbook

B. Preschool Ministry (Children ages 3 Years by Sept 1 Through Kindergarten)

1. When possible, a minimum of two caregivers (one being an adult) must be present with each group of children regardless of how few children are in attendance.
2. The windows of classroom doors and between classrooms will remain uncovered to allow a clear view of classroom activities.
3. When possible, children will be encouraged to take care of their own bathroom needs. Should assistance be required, the outer bathroom door must remain ajar while the teacher assists the child.

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4. Children will be released to parents at the door of the preschool classroom. Persons other than the children's parents or guardians must be authorized to pick up the children.
5. When the children are taken out of the classroom (playground, etc.) the teachers are to take a count of the children to ensure all are present.
6. Only assigned workers are allowed to stay in preschool rooms or to be in the preschool area during sessions.
7. A positive approach to discipline will be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits will be established to help the children function appropriately. **Corporal punishment is never allowed.**
8. The Pastor or one delegated to do so by him, must approve any preschool activities that are held off-site. Parental permission will be secured for off-site activities, and there will be a minimum of two adults present. All preschool activities, on or off the church campus, must be scheduled on the official church calendar.

C. Children's Ministry (First - Fifth Grades)

1. When possible, a minimum of two caregivers (one being an adult) must be present with each group of children regardless of how few children are in attendance.
2. The windows of classroom doors and between classrooms will remain uncovered to allow a clear view of classroom activities.
3. When possible, children will be encouraged to take care of their own bathroom needs. Should assistance be required, the outer bathroom door must remain ajar while the teacher assists the child.
4. A positive approach to discipline will be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits will be established to help the children function appropriately. **Corporal punishment is never allowed.**
5. The Pastor or one delegated to do so by him, must approve any children's activities that are held off-site. Parental permission will be secured for off-site activities, and there will be a minimum of two adults present. All activities of children, on or off the church campus, must be scheduled on the official church calendar.

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D. Student Ministry (Sixth - Twelfth Grade)

1. A minimum of two adults must be present regardless of how few students are in attendance. (Where possible)
2. Organized events on or off the church campus (excluding educational such as Sunday School or Discipleship training) will be staffed with a minimum ratio of one adult to eight (8) students.
3. The Pastor or one delegated to do so by him, must approve any student activities that are held off-site. Parental permission will be secured for off-site activities, and there will be a minimum of two adults present. All student activities, on or off the church campus, must be scheduled on the official church calendar.
4. Overnight events that are attended by students of both genders must also be chaperoned by adults of both genders at least one adult will be present in each sleeping area.
5. A positive approach to discipline will be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits will be established to help the students function appropriately. **Corporal punishment is never allowed.**
6. It is recognized that certain counseling and ministerial situations may require the presence of two adults. These guidelines beginning in Section V for supervision of workers should not restrict situations where individual counsel and guidance is necessary. Such counseling should only take place in a room where interior windows allow a clear view of the activities in the room.

VII. Reporting Child Abuse

When Wade Baptist Church receives an allegation of child abuse, our Church will respond with the utmost concern for the victim, parent or other party making such an allegation. The accused will be treated with dignity and support. Without clear and convincing evidence to the contrary, Wade Baptist Church personnel will assume that such complaints are made in good faith. Persons making such complaints should have no doubt that Wade Baptist Church takes them seriously and will take appropriate action.

When it becomes necessary to report suspected child abuse or neglect, the protection of children must be the most important concern. It is the legal responsibility to report all cases of child abuse, and further, to report visible signs of alleged abuse. Failure to report could lead to liability on the part of the church, the observer or both. While confidentiality is very important, reporting reasonable suspicion of child abuse may prevent further harm to a child.

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What is reasonable suspicion? Reasonable suspicion means that there is credible evidence of a discrepant or inconsistent history in explaining a child's suspected abuse. A report based on reasonable suspicion does not require proof that abuse or neglect has actually occurred or that the reporter witnessed the incident in question. Reporting is not a determination that child abuse or neglect has actually occurred; rather, it is a request for an assessment of the condition of a child. Because we believe children are our most important concern, Wade Baptist Church has adopted the following guidelines for reporting:

- A. Treat each allegation of child abuse seriously.
- B. Attempt to assure the safety and protection of persons who have been harmed.
- C. Pray for the church and all persons affected by the allegation.
- D. Immediately begin documenting all steps observed in handling the allegation.
- E. Immediately notify the Church leader most responsible for oversight of the function or activity in which the alleged abuse occurred. A key leadership person shall immediately initiate an internal investigation of the allegations. (Investigative resources shall include, but are not limited to, the Church's video camera recordings, documentation of witness interviews, and use of outside professional personnel or agencies when needed.) *Key leadership shall be the Senior Pastor, Student Pastor, Children's Director, other called Ministers or the Office Administrator.*
- F. Immediately notify the appropriate state office of the allegation.
- G. Immediately notify the parents if it is not known that they have previous knowledge of the allegations.
- H. As appropriate, a key Church Leader shall immediately notify the church's insurance carrier of the possibility of a claim.
- I. If the accused has assigned duties within the life of the church, that person must be temporarily relieved of his/her duties until the investigation is concluded.

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- J. The pastor should extend whatever care and resources necessary. In providing care to the principals (alleged victim and the accused) and their families, the pastor or church leader should under no circumstances be drawn into a discussion of the truth or falsity of the allegation which could contaminate an official investigation. Do not assign blame or take any steps that involve establishing or negating the allegation.
- K. It is appropriate to show care and comfort for the alleged victim. This should be the pastoral objective from the moment the allegation is received or otherwise made known.
- L. Observe confidentiality for both the alleged victim and the accused until advised to the contrary by the Pastor.
- M. Do not confront the accused until the safety of the child or student is secured.
- N. Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously and reach out to the alleged victim and his or her family, showing care and support to help prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the alleged victim is the first priority. In some situations, churches have responded in a negative or non-supportive manner to the alleged victim. This can increase the anger and pain of the alleged victim and his or her family. Further reconciliation can then be more difficult and the possibility of damaging litigation increases.
- O. Treat the accused with dignity and support. However, that person, out of an abundance of caution, should be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is completed.
- P. If the media or other parties contact a church official about a pending allegation of child abuse, they should be referred to the Pastor. Only the Pastor or his designee should make comments about the allegations. The Pastor will use the text of a prepared public statement to answer the press and to convey news to the congregation. The prepared statement shall be made only after consultation with the church's attorney. The privacy and confidentiality of all involved shall continue to be of primary concern.

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VIII Implementation

- A. All employees and volunteers that work with children and youth 18 years and younger shall be screened in accordance with par. B (Screening) of this policy before being assigned to such duty. The Church Leader responsible for activities of this age group shall be the coordinator to ensure compliance.
- B. All new employees and volunteers will complete the following familiarization activities.
 - 1. Be provided with a copy of Wade Baptist Church's Child Abuse Prevention Policy and Vehicle Operation policies.
 - 2. Acknowledge in writing that they have and understand the policies.
 - 3. Receive a briefing on the procedures and the expectations in working with this age group.
- C. Receive an annual refresher briefing.

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Important Contacts and Their Phone Numbers

National Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-4-A-CHILD

State Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-222-8000

County Child Protective Services Office 1-228-769-3449

Jackson County Sheriff's Dept. 1-228-769-3063

Approval of Policy

Sr. Pastor, Brannon Lott

Date

Student/Family Pastor, Garon Tate

Date

Children's Director, Belinda Thornton

Date

Deacon Chairman, Jimmy Smith

Date

*Constitution, Bylaws & Policy Committee Chairman,
Tim Brown*

Date

Approved by Constitution, Bylaws and Policy Committee: 11/29/2021

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Acknowledgement

I hereby acknowledge that I have reviewed and understand the guidelines within the Child Abuse Prevention Policy of Wade Baptist Church. I understand it is my responsibility to comply with the policy and procedures included in this document.

Signature of Staff/Volunteer

Printed Name

Date

Signature of Witness

Printed Name

Date