

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Child Safety Policy and Procedures for Volunteers and Staff</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>at Ravenswood Covenant Church</b></p>
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Ravenswood Evangelical Covenant Church is committed to having a safe and healthy environment for our children and youth. Our congregation highly values the education and formation of children/youth, and we encourage fostering healthy and meaningful relationships between all ages of our inter-generational church family. We know that we need to protect and intentionally care those who are more vulnerable within our church and under the supervision and influence of others.

Therefore, we will take the following steps in order to prevent physical, emotional, sexual, or any other kind of harm from occurring at our church. This policy applies to every person (paid and unpaid), who is a child or youth volunteer, teacher, or worker in any form.

**I. Recruiting, Training and Maintaining Records for Volunteers/Staff Working with Children and Youth**

A. Qualifications for Each Volunteer/Staff Member

- i. Confess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and adhere to the affirmations of faith of the church. (Required for Sunday School teachers; preferred for helpers. If prospective helpers are not believers, they must be approved at the discretion of the Senior Pastor along with the Chair of the Children and Family committee.)
- ii. Either be a member in good standing or a regular attendee for at least six months. Exceptions may be made by decision of the Senior Pastor and the Child or Youth Commission Chair.
- iii. Have no history of being an abuser.
- iv. ***Have completed a Child Safety Volunteer Forms within the last five years.***

B. Process for Acquiring Records

- i. ***Commission Chairs for Children/Youth are responsible for*** turning in a list of all volunteers working with their age students to the church office by end of the summer for the coming school year. (These lists must include names of any volunteers who work with Sunday School, youth group, special events, AWANA or evening programming, 5<sup>th</sup> quarter or outreach events, Children's Church, nursery, Confirmation, church play, etc. - any volunteers working with children and youth in the coming year.)
- ii. ***The church office is responsible for*** maintaining an up to date list of all volunteers/staff who have applied and had background checks completed for working with children/youth. The office will also inform Commission Chairs and the Senior Pastor of who needs to be checked each year, and when volunteers may need to be re-checked a

the five year mark, so that volunteers are not working with children of youth who have not been checked.

- iii. ***The Senior Pastor is responsible for*** making a list of any paid staff working with children/youth who need to also fill out Child Safety paperwork. The Pastor should also consider performing background checks on other office or church staff who may be in regular contact with children and youth, even if outside of their formal job description.
- iv. ***The Senior Pastor maintains the confidential Child Safety Forms and Background Checks that have been completed.***

C. Procedures for New Volunteers or Staff Working with Children/Youth

- i. Complete the confidential Child Safety Volunteer Form.
- ii. Sign the written consent to a confidential background check.
- iii. Complete an interview if requested.
- iv. Provide references.
- v. Complete training related to the Child Safety Policy for RCC (as of August 2012, training consists of reading this policy form through and attending a meeting with the Commission Chair at the start of the year where any questions or details related to this policy may be discussed.)

D. Procedures for Maintaining Records and Training

- i. ***Each fall at the start of the school year/youth programming, Child and Youth Commission Chairs*** will review this policy with all of their volunteers and remind them to read it through. Chairs will also provide any additional training or education needed to uphold safety and reduce the risk of abuse.
- ii. ***Each fall the church staff*** will review together this Policy and discuss any additional efforts needed to reduce the risk of abuse.
- iii. All church staff and the council will have a copy of these policies in print form.
- iv. Copies of these guidelines will be made readily available for any church attendee online and through the church office.

## II. **General Procedures for Child/Youth Workers to Practice at all Times**

A. Avoid Isolation

- i. Child/Youth Workers are to observe the two-Worker rule. This requires that Child/Youth Workers should not be in an isolated setting with children or youth without another Child/Youth Worker.
- ii. Events: When away from the church on an outing or at a church “overnight,” Child/Youth Workers are to work together as a team and not be isolated with a child or adolescent.
- iii. If it is necessary for a Child/Youth Worker to meet individually with a child or youth, it should be done in a public setting or where they are

clearly visible by others. Additionally, the Worker should notify one of the full-time pastors 24 hours before the meeting, or in the case that this is not possible, as soon as feasible after the meeting.

- iv. Child/Youth Workers should not spend time alone with a child or adolescent without the permission of that individual's parent/guardian; ideally the worker would have a relationship with the child's parent/guardian as well as the child.

- B. Release Guidelines: All children should be picked up from youth events, Sunday school, or other activities no later than 10 minutes after the event ends by a parent or an approved designee. Exceptions include: upper grades of Sunday School classes as determined by the Christian Formation Committee each year, or youth from youth events when they have advanced permission of their parents/guardians.
- C. Keep Communication Open: If volunteers are ever unsure about how to handle a situation or feel uncomfortable about a particular issue, contact the Senior Pastor and ask questions. Open communication is of high value in this area as we all continue to learn about how to best protect students while also enjoying valuable ministry relationships within the church.

### **III. Reporting Procedures for Incidents**

- A. Reporting Obligations: Child/Youth Workers are to immediately report any behavior which seems abusive or inappropriate that they witness, or any incident reported by a child or adolescent.
- B. Line of Reporting
  - i. Child/Youth Workers shall report alleged abuse to the Senior Pastor immediately.
  - ii. The pastoral staff shall witness the Child/Youth Worker making the report to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and/or the police department.
- C. Response Plan to Allegations of Abuse by a Church Worker
  - i. When an allegation of abuse by a Child/Youth Worker is brought to the attention of pastoral staff, a Crisis Task Force will be convened. This Task Force will meet with the victim and his/her family as soon as possible after the allegation occurs and work to create a safe and healing environment for the following process.
  - ii. The Crisis Task Force will be comprised of the Senior Pastor, the youth or family commission chair (depending on the age of the alleged victim), and the VP of the Council. Additional members may be added to this task force as deemed necessary by the Senior Pastor (for the purpose of supporting the victim and family, and/or providing a safe and helpful context to proceed.) At least one member of the Task

Force must be the same gender as the alleged victim (i.e., three men may not solely comprise the Task Force if the alleged victim is a female; in this case the Pastor should recruit a trusted woman involved in the female's life to also join the task force.)

- iii. The Senior Pastor is responsible for immediately convening the Task Force and moving its work along in a quick and timely manner. The Task Force will also be the primary group informed of the interaction with DCFS and/or the police in response to reporting the incident.
- iv. The Task Force and/or the pastor will also meet with the Child/Youth Worker who is the alleged abuser to discuss the allegation and inform them that they may not participate in children's or youth ministry until the investigation into the allegation is complete. Written notification of their status and being removed from ministry work will also be given to the worker and kept on file at the church.
- v. The Task Force will document all of its activities.
- vi. The pastoral staff will also make note of the allegation and its outcome in the Child/Youth Worker's file for the future.

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