



Derwood Bible Church Student Ministries Child Protection Plan



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What We Believe

We believe it is our responsibility to protect the children in our care. Children (and parents) need to know that we have taken every reasonable step to ensure children's safety in our ministry.

We believe it is our responsibility to protect staff and volunteer workers in our ministry from being exposed to false accusations of sexual misconduct. To this end, we have screening and supervision policies in place to protect our ministry workers.

We believe it is our responsibility to protect our ministry. By requiring child protection training, as well as implementing screening and supervision policies, we are modeling good safety procedures to others who look to our ministry as an example of a well-run ministry to children and youth.

What We Require

1. The Three Month Rule

Any person must attend Derwood Bible Church for at least three months prior to being considered to serve in any ministry involving minors. The purpose of this rule is to prevent predators from gaining quick access to potential victims. Three months provides a threshold of time for individuals to become better known, and gives an opportunity to evaluate their suitability for volunteer service. In some cases, this length of time is reduced based on a person's ability to provide positive character references from the other youth-serving organizations and from our ministry leaders, and a person's prior history working with children in a previous church.

2. Written Application

All staff and volunteers who work with minors are required to submit a written application. We want to be sure we're selecting the best candidates possible for our ministry programs.

3. Reference Checks

All staff and volunteers who work with kids must be involved in the church to the extent that other adult members/regular attendees can provide a positive character reference for them. These references should be able to describe the potential volunteer's involvement in the church, level of commitment, and ability to serve well. At least one of these references must be included in the volunteer application form.

Derwood Bible Church reserves the right to contact the references, churches, and/or organizations provided on the written application with the intention of asking for information regarding the applicant's character and fitness for children/youth work.

4. Personal Interview

All applicants are required to have a personal interview with the Pastor of Student Ministries, the director of the specific ministry being pursued, and/or other person designated by the Pastor of Student Ministries or ministry director. We use the interview time to explore more fully why a candidate wants to work with children or youth. We also review our ministry's policies and procedures regarding the supervision of children.

5. Background Checks

All applicants must consent to a criminal background check. This information will be kept confidential and sensitive data such as one's social security number will be destroyed upon completion of the screening.

What We Expect

1. Training

We expect all staff and volunteers to successfully complete our Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Training program.

2. Appropriate Physical Contact

No one should ever feel uncomfortable in the way they are being touched. Appropriate touching means offering a gentle touch on the shoulders, hands, arms, head, or back.

Inappropriate touching would include kissing, demanding kissing or hugs, touching of the chest, waist, stomach, bottom, or private areas, or any physical contact that feels uncomfortable or violating. Toddlers and older children should never be allowed to sit in your lap, covering your private area. Instead have a child sit beside you.

3. Responding to Inappropriate or Suspicious Behavior

All staff and volunteers should report any inappropriate or suspicious behavior to a ministry staff leader immediately. This includes reporting any suspected abuse being committed by another worker, as well as any child who presents signs of abuse. No one will ever be in trouble for reporting suspected abuse.

4. Follow Supervision Policies

Our policies are designed to reduce isolation, increase accountability, and reduce the disparity of power between a worker and a child in our program. We expect all children's/youth workers to follow the supervision policies we have in place to accomplish these goals.

Supervision Policies

Bathroom Policy

- When taking toddlers to the bathroom, no leader may take a child or children alone. Two leaders **MUST** accompany children to the bathroom at all times.
- One of the escorting leaders should check that no other adults are in the bathroom before sending the child in.
- The escorting leaders should wait outside the bathroom and then escort the child back to class. At no time should the child be left unsupervised.

Two Adult Rule

- No adult or youth leader (under 18) shall be alone with a student at any time.
- It is preferred that no adult be alone in a classroom with any number of students. A teen helper or another adult should be present. It is recognized, however, that there are times where this is not possible but such instances should be minimized by calling another adult into the classroom when available, e.g. the hall monitor, a parent of a child, etc.

Supervision Principles

No policy can cover every situation that arises. Therefore it is better to understand the principles that increase the level of risk and work to minimize the risk in any given scenario.

There are three factors that affect the level of risk: isolation, accountability, and power. Where DBC does not have a specific policy, we mitigate the risk of any given situation using the following principles:

- **Isolation should be minimized:** Four factors contribute to isolation: the number of people present (leaders left alone with child), the time of the activity (late night, off-hours, etc.), the location of the activity (offsite location, person's home, etc.), and the physical arrangements (areas where there is no supervision). In general, the more adult supervision the better.
- **Accountability should be maximized:** all prerequisites must be met by all child/youth workers, multiple adults present balances the power and control exercised at events, and ministry leaders must be fully aware of and approve the content, activities, and leadership of all activities/events in advance involving any DBC program.
- **Power should be balanced:** Programs should maintain groups that minimize disparity in age groups. A good guideline is that the age difference within a group should be less than 4 years, e.g. 9 year olds and 4 year olds should not be left alone together. A youth leader should not be the only assistant to an adult leader as they might be less likely to report misconduct or more easily intimidated.

Reporting Checklist

- ❑ Complete a “Report of Suspected Child Abuse” forms for both DBC and the state of Maryland and make copies for church records.
- ❑ Fulfill all state reporting obligations concerning alleged child abuse
- ❑ Notify DBC’s insurance agent, appropriate judicatory leaders, and our attorney
- ❑ Place appropriate restrictions on alleged perpetrators of misconduct until the case is resolved
- ❑ Maintain strict confidentiality concerning all information, and communicate with the congregational members on the basis of their need to know under the restrictions of a qualified privilege.
- ❑ Provide support to the victim and the victim’s family

Maryland Requirements and Regulations

For details regarding Maryland’s requirements and process for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect please see the [Department of Human Services page](#). Every person serving in children’s or youth ministry at Derwood Bible Church should review this information.



Statement of Understanding

I, _____, hereby acknowledge and declare that I have received, read and understood the Derwood Bible Church Student Ministries Child Protection Plan and agree to abide by and conduct my activities in accordance with this plan.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

If submitting electronically (without a manual signature) please select this box to indicate that you acknowledge this to serve as an electronic signature and the legal equivalent of your manual signature on this document.