



# Child Protection Policy

**Adopted as church policy on November 20, 2016**

# **Hopewell BAPTIST CHURCH**

## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES**

Hopewell Baptist Church is committed to providing a safe environment for preschoolers, children, youth, and at-risk adults who attend the church or any sponsored church activities.

Hopewell Baptist Church recognizes the need to have Child Protection Policies in order to have an organized and safe environment, to prevent any harm or abuse to minors, and to protect and educate the church leaders who work with minors during church services or events. The following procedures are not based on a lack of trust in church leadership, but instead are needed to protect our preschoolers, children, youth, at-risk adults, employees, approved workers, and the entire church body.

*"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them." Mark 10:14, 16*

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# **Hopewell BAPTIST CHURCH**

## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICIES**

### **I. DEFINITIONS**

- A. A minor (child) is any person under the age of 18 years and may also be referred to as a preschooler, child, or a youth.
- B. Child abuse means any of the prohibited behaviors named in section II of these policies or any behavior named in O.C.G.A. §19-7-5 (b) (4), (10), (11).
- C. At-risk adult is any person over the age of 18 with Special Needs.
- D. An “approved worker” is one who has undergone the enlistment and screening process outlined in section III of these policies.

### **II. PROHIBITED BEHAVIOR**

- A. The following behaviors are prohibited for all approved workers and employees:
  - 1. Threatening or intentionally inflicting physical injury upon a minor.
  - 2. Committing any sexual offense against a minor, or engaging in any sexual contact with a minor.
  - 3. Making any kind of sexual advance, or making a request for sexual favors, or engaging in other verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature.
  - 4. Any prohibited behaviors named in O.C.G.A. §19-7-5 (b) (4), (10), (11). {GA State Law Code on abuse}

### **III ENLISTMENT AND SCREENING**

- A. Applicants for the preschool, children, youth, and special needs areas of ministry must be actively involved with the ministries of Hopewell Baptist Church for a minimum of six months before serving in these areas. Involvement may include worship attendance, Sunday School attendance, or attendance in one of the other ministries at Hopewell Baptist Church. Attendance must be consistent and verifiable.
- B. Applicants must be a member a Hopewell Baptist Church.
- C. Applicants for the preschool, children, youth, and special needs ministries must complete the Volunteer Application Packet; including a Criminal Background Check Authorization, as well as Mandated Reporter, and undergo the volunteer screening process before they can serve. Background checks will be repeated every three years.
- D. Applicants will be asked to provide institutional and personal references. At least two of these references will be checked, with institutional references having priority over personal references.
- E. Applicants who have been arrested for, charged with, under probation for, or convicted of any of the following crimes shall not be allowed to serve in any capacity where they will have contact with minors: homicide, aggravated assault, sexual abuse, sexual assault (rape), aggravated sexual assault, injury to a child, incest, indecency with a child, any sex crime involving a minor, possession or promotion of child pornography, sale, distribution or display of harmful material to a minor, employment harmful to children, endangerment of a child, kidnapping, public lewdness, indecent exposure, and/or enticing a child.
- F. Applicants must sign a written acknowledgement receipt acknowledging they have read and understand the church’s Child Protection Policies.
- G. Applicants must sign a written acknowledgement receipt acknowledging they have read and agree to Hopewell Baptist Church’s Statement of Faith.
- H. Teen applicants must have a signed Parent Release Form as well as Policy & Procedures Acknowledgment Form and Statement of Faith Acknowledgement Form.
- I. Names of all applicants will be submitted to the ministerial staff as an additional screening procedure.

J. Ministry Leader's will be the ones to interview all applicants for their ministry area.

#### **IV. GUIDELINES FOR APPROVED WORKERS (PER MINISTRY AREA)**

##### **A. Preschool Approved Worker Conduct**

1. Under no circumstances is an approved worker allowed to be alone with a child behind a closed door without a window.
2. Two Approved workers must be present in the classroom while children are present.
3. Classroom doors without glass inserts should be kept open at all times.
4. Classes must remain in their assigned spaces. If there is to be a change, the ministry leader must be informed and approve the change.
5. Each room will maintain a class roll. Any special information provided by the parent needs to be kept on a running report. The class roll should be taken with the class in the event of a fire or emergency requiring an evacuation of the room so that attendance can be taken after the evacuation.
6. Care should be taken by the approved workers so that young children do not leave the classroom unattended.
7. Classroom doors should never be locked while occupied.
8. Approved workers should always wear their designated ID while on duty.
9. With all children, babies through 5<sup>th</sup> grade, only a parent or other person specifically designated by the parent may pick up their child. No one under the age of eighteen will be permitted to pick up a child without prior permission from the parent or guardian and the ministry leader. Parents are responsible to notify the ministry leader with any special information regarding a possible child custody dispute where leadership and security should pay particular attention to who picks up the child.
10. Approved workers need to verify that all children are wearing a name tag to allow easy identification.
11. Approved workers can comfort or affirm in an age-appropriate manner as defined in Ministry Specific Guidelines. Workers are not allowed to touch in genital areas except as necessary to change a diaper or to assist in the bathroom.
12. Precautionary measures for dealing with dirty diapers, blood, and vomit shall require the use of protective gloves. Any items needed for the precautionary measures will be provided by the ministry leader.
13. Either men or women may change diapers if it is done in open view with another adult in the classroom. Youth volunteers are prohibited from changing diapers.
14. Male approved workers are only allowed to take boys to the bathroom, and are not permitted to use the bathroom themselves when taking the children. When a child is taken to a bathroom outside the room, someone must check the bathroom before the child is permitted to enter to ensure it is safe.
15. Approved workers will treat all children equally, with respect and dignity.
16. Gifts and special snacks need to be approved ahead of time by ministry leaders.
17. Approved workers are prohibited from taking pictures, and/or posting pictures or comments listing children's names on any form of social media.
18. Approved workers are prohibited from administering any medications.
19. Approved workers should notify the ministry leader of accidents, injuries, or other serious occurrences, and a written incident report must be made immediately and a copy given to the parents.

##### **B. Children's Approved Worker Conduct**

1. Under no circumstances is an approved worker allowed to be alone with a child behind a closed door without a window.
2. Two Approved workers must be present in the classroom while children are present.
3. Classroom doors without glass inserts should be kept open at all times when children are present in the room.
4. Classes must remain in their assigned spaces. If there is to be a change, the ministry leader must be informed and approve the change.
5. Each room will maintain a class roll. Any special information provided by the parent needs to be kept on a running report. The class roll should be taken with the class in the event of a fire or emergency requiring an evacuation of the room so that attendance can be taken after the evacuation.
6. Care should be taken by approved workers so that children do not leave the classroom unattended.
7. Classroom doors should never be locked while occupied.
8. Approved workers should always check-in and wear their designated ID while on duty.
9. With all children, babies through 5<sup>th</sup> grade, only a parent or other person specifically designated by the parent and known to the worker may pick up. No one under the age of eighteen will be permitted to pick up a child without prior permission from the parent or guardian and the Ministry Leader. Parents are responsible to notify the ministry leader with any special information regarding a possible child custody dispute where leadership and security should pay particular attention to who picks up the child.
10. Male approved workers are only allowed to take boys to the bathroom and are not permitted to use the bathroom themselves when taking the children. When a child is taken to a bathroom outside the room, someone must check the bathroom before the child is permitted to enter to ensure it is safe.
11. Approved workers can comfort or affirm in an age-appropriate manner as defined in Ministry Specific Guidelines.
12. Approved workers will treat all children equally, with respect and dignity.
13. Gifts and special snacks need to be approved ahead of time by department leaders.
14. Approved workers are prohibited from taking pictures, and/or posting pictures or comments listing children's names on social media.
15. Approved workers are prohibited from administering any medications.
16. Approved workers should notify the ministry leader of accidents, injuries, or other serious occurrences, and a written incident report needs to be made immediately and a copy given to the parents.
17. Communication should not take place between an approved worker and child. All communication should take place between the approved workers, ministry leaders, and parents/guardians, this includes texting and email.

### **C. Youth Approved Worker Conduct**

1. Under no circumstances is an approved worker allowed to be alone with a minor behind a closed door without a window.
2. Classes must remain in their assigned spaces. If there is to be a change, the ministry leader must be informed and approve the change.
3. Each room will maintain a class roll. Any special information provided by the parent needs to be kept on the proper form. The class roll should be taken with the class in the event of a fire or other emergency requiring the evacuation of the room so that attendance can be taken after the evacuation.
4. Care should be taken by approved workers when youth leave the designated areas.
5. Classroom doors should never be locked while occupied.
6. Approved workers can touch to comfort or affirm in an age-appropriate manner is permitted. Side-by-side hugs are to be used instead of full body contact. Touching need not be completely avoided, but staff and approved workers must be aware of how it looks and how the person being touched may interpret the contact. Unwelcomed touching of any kind is not allowed.

7. Approved workers should never be one-on-one with a youth in the bathrooms at any time.
8. Approved workers will treat all children equally, with respect and dignity.

#### **D. Special Needs Children Approved Worker Conduct**

1. Under no circumstances is an approved worker allowed to be alone with a child behind a closed door without a window.
2. Classes must remain in their assigned spaces. If there is to be a change, the ministry leader must be informed and approve the change.
3. Each room will maintain a sign-in-sheet or class roll. Any special information provided by the parent needs to be kept on the proper form. This sign-in-sheet and/or class roll should be taken with the class in the event of a fire or other emergency requiring the evacuation of the room so that attendance can be taken after the evacuation.
4. Care should be taken by approved workers so that a child does not leave the classroom unattended.
5. Classroom doors should never be locked while occupied.
6. Approved workers should always check-in and wear their name tags while helping in the ministry area.
7. All special needs children, babies through 5<sup>th</sup> grade, only a parent or other person specifically designated by the parent and known to the worker may pick up. No one under the age of eighteen (18) will be permitted to pick up a child without prior permission from the parent or guardian and the ministry leader. Parents are responsible to notify the ministry leader with any special information regarding a possible child custody dispute where leadership and security should pay particular attention to who picks up the child.
8. Touching to comfort or affirm a child in an age-appropriate manner is permitted. Workers are not allowed to touch children in genital areas except as necessary to change a diaper or to assist a child in the bathroom.
9. Precautionary measures for dealing with dirty diapers, blood, and vomit shall require the use of protective gloves. Any items needed for the precautionary measures will be provided by the church.
10. Either men or women may change diapers if it is done in open view with another adult in the classroom.
11. Male approved workers are allowed only to take boys to the bathroom and are not permitted to use the bathroom themselves when taking the children. When a child is taken to a bathroom outside the room, someone must check the bathroom before the child is permitted to enter to ensure it is safe.
12. Approved workers will treat all children equally; with respect and dignity.
13. Approved workers are prohibited from taking pictures, and/or posting pictures or comments listing children's names on social media.

#### **E. Special Needs Teens/Adults Approved Workers Conduct**

1. Under no circumstances is an approved worker allowed to be alone behind a closed door without a window.
2. Classes must remain in their assigned spaces. If there is to be a change, the ministry leader must be informed and approve the change.
3. Each room will maintain a sign-in-sheet or class roll. Any special information provided by the parent needs to be kept on the proper form. This sign-in-sheet and/or class roll should be taken with the class in the event of a fire or other emergency requiring the evacuation of the room so that attendance can be taken after the evacuation.
4. Care should be taken by approved workers when the teen or adult leaves the ministry area.
5. Classroom doors should never be locked while occupied.
6. Approved workers should always check-in and wear their name tags while helping in the ministry area
7. All special needs teens/adults shall be released to a designated person.
8. Touching to comfort or affirm in an appropriate manner, as determined in ministry specific guidelines, is permitted

9. Precautionary measures for dealing with dirty diapers, blood, and vomit shall require the use of protective gloves. Any items needed for the precautionary measures will be provided by the church.
10. Only trained approved workers, men or women, may change or assist in changing diapers or assist in bathroom needs according to the needs of the teen/adult.
11. Approved workers will treat everyone equally; with respect and dignity.
12. While in the Quiet Room, approved workers must have another adult close by for monitoring or to assist if necessary.

## **V. GUIDELINES FOR ALL PROGRAMS INVOLVING MINORS**

### **A. Driving Rules**

1. Only qualified, approved workers may drive minors for church related events. All drivers must be 25 or older and have a valid driver's license and auto insurance. The number of persons per vehicle must not exceed the number of seatbelts, and all occupants must wear seatbelts.
2. A minimum of two approved workers must be present in all vehicles.
3. A list of people per vehicle must be present at all times.

### **B. Overnight Trip Rules**

1. Written permission and medical consent forms must be completed prior to the trip. A copy of the permission and medical consent forms will be left with church administration.
2. The total number of adults on each trip must be adjusted according to the requirement of the planned activities per the discretion of the lead administrator.
3. A list of all participants and room assignments shall be on hand with the ministry leader during a trip. Room assignments shall be left up to the discretion of the ministry leader.
4. Head counts must be taken before leaving each activity.
5. Host home volunteers must be screened approved workers.

### **C. Discipline of Children**

1. Physical discipline is never permitted.
2. Approved Workers will be advised on the best age-appropriate discipline methods.
3. A child/youth/at-risk adult who is a danger to others shall be removed immediately by the ministry leader or CPI trained volunteer and parents/guardians/designated person will be called. Using physical restraint to prevent a child from doing something disruptive or dangerous is permitted and may, in some instances, be necessary.
4. Discipline policies will be given out to all parents and approved workers. This outlines the disciplinary steps per ministry area that will be used when dealing with discipline situations.
5. Communication should take place directly from the Ministry Leader to Parent/Guardian

### **D. Communication with Parents**

1. Approved workers should attempt to keep open lines of communication with parents.
2. Children/youth/at-risk adults should not be talked about with non-volunteers or on any social media.

3. All children who participate in ministry areas must be registered. The registration form will include information on medical conditions, special needs, disabilities, medications, and will be updated annually or as circumstances necessitate.
4. For the safety and security of all children in all ministry areas, as well as to prevent classroom disruptions, parents must get approval from the ministry leader to be present in classrooms.
5. Parents shall be given a summary of the ministry specific guidelines which have an impact on them.
6. Parents will be clearly advised as to where to report suspected abuse or any other concerns regarding a classroom situation. Parents will be assured that they will not be retaliated against for making a report.
7. Parents are encouraged to pick up their children no later than ten minutes after the service or event is over unless special arrangements are made with the ministry leader. Parents should also drop off no earlier than fifteen minutes prior to the start time of each class/service.
8. Parents are encouraged to change diapers and take children to the bathroom before class. Please have a change of clothes and extra diapers on hand if your child attends the preschool department.
9. All items brought from home are to be labeled to avoid any confusion as to whose items are whose.
10. Under no circumstances should parents leave a child if the child has a fever or has had a fever within the past 24 hours, or any other severe illness. Parents must advise the workers if the child is on medication.
11. No one under the age of 18 will be baptized without permission from the parent or legal guardian.

## **E. Electronic Communication Policy**

### **A. Approved Workers**

1. Approved workers may not transmit any content that is illicit, unsavory, abusive, pornographic, discriminatory, harassing, or disrespectful when communicating with other workers or minors involved in the ministry.
2. Except in emergency situations, workers may not transmit any personal information pertaining to a minor without the consent of the minor and their parent/guardian. Personal information may include things as minor's name, phone number, email, or photograph.
3. Approved workers who become aware of possible abuse through electronic media MUST immediately notify their ministry leader.
4. Approved workers driving for ministry related functions are to AVOID cell phone usage at all times – even hands free – when transporting minors. If the driver needs to take an emergency call, they must pull over first. All electronic communication while transporting minors needs to take place with the second approved worker in the vehicle. (see Article V Section A.2)

### **B. Minors**

1. Minors are not allowed to comment or share images that are sexually suggestive, disrespectful, or insensitive. Harassment and bullying are strictly forbidden.
2. Minors must obtain permission from the ministry leader before posting photos or personal information about others on any website or social media that Hopewell Baptist Church may own.
3. Cell phones are not to be used during ministry activity times except in the case of an emergency to contact parent or guardian, or to place calls specifically approved by the ministry leader.

## **VI. BUS MINISTRY**

1. A Minimum of two approved workers must be on the bus at all times.
2. All bus participants must have the bus rider form completed by a parent or guardian before they are allowed to ride the bus.
3. BEHAVIOR POLICY – 3 STRIKE RULE  
Strike 1 – Verbal Warning.  
Strike 2 – Written Warning.

Strike 3 – One week suspension from riding the bus.

## VII. GUIDELINES FOR “BIG” EVENTS/CHURCH FELLOWSHIPS

1. All workers need to be screened approved workers before they can volunteer at any event.
2. All minors must stay in the designated area of the event.
3. Parents/Participants will be informed to supervise their minors during events.

## VIII. REPORTING AND INVESTIGATIONS

### A. Reporting Violations of These Policies

1. All approved workers and employed workers must immediately report to the ministry leader of any violation of these policies which they have observed.
2. All approved workers and employed workers shall immediately report to their ministry leader if someone has threatened physical injury upon a child, youth, or at-risk adult.
3. Ministry leaders who become aware of a violation of the procedures set by this policy are required to take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance with the violator. In the process of ensuring compliance with this policy, it may become necessary to remove the approved worker from their positions. Church leadership will be notified of all procedural violations.
  - a. Steps for Violating Procedures
    1. Verbal Discussion – documented with signed acknowledgment by Ministry leader and volunteer.
    2. Written Warning – sign acknowledgment of warning by Ministry Leader and Volunteer.
    3. Removal from Position
4. Any person making such a report shall keep the information strictly confidential.

### B. Reporting Child Abuse

1. **As of June 15, 2012, all volunteers and employees are considered Mandated Reporters; they are required by law to report suspected child abuse to the appropriate authorities when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused. An oral report should be made immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused, by telephone or otherwise and followed by a report in writing, if requested, to a child welfare agency providing protective services, as designated by the Department of Human Services, or, in the absence of such agency, to an appropriate police authority or district attorney. (OCGA 19-7-5 (b, c, e, and g))**
2. An "incident of abuse" means any occurrence in which any person:
  - a. Has inflicted physical injury or death upon a child other than by accident, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.
  - b. Commits or allows to be committed any sexual offense against a child or engages in any sexual contact with a child, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.
  - c. Any behavior named in O.C.G.A. §19-7-5 (b) is considered abuse.
3. **Failing to report child abuse is a criminal offence which is punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 or confinement in the county jail for up to one year.**

### C. Reporting Procedure

1. The person reporting an incident of abuse or has reasonable cause of abuse shall immediately contact the ministry leader of the department they serve in. A written report must be submitted to the ministry leader and the Church Mandated Reporter.

2. The Executive Pastor should also be immediately notified in all cases of reported abuse and given all the relevant facts with respect to the incident of abuse.
3. All approved workers and ministry leaders will keep all allegations of abuse confidential; allegations should not be discussed with anyone after the report has been made to the ministry leader.

#### **D. Imminent Threat**

In all cases where an imminent threat of continued or additional abuse exists, any witness shall immediately contact the person on security who is on call at Hopewell Baptist Church and request that a police officer take immediate steps to ensure the safety of the alleged victim. After the safety of the alleged victim has been secured, the person witnessing the incident of abuse shall report it as outlined above.

#### **E. Responding to the Report**

1. After receiving a report of abuse the Executive Pastor or his designee shall:
  - a. Immediately take all steps necessary to ensure the safety of the alleged victim.
  - b. Conduct an investigation and determine whether there is reasonable cause to believe that the abuse may have occurred.
  - c. Contact the parents or guardian of the alleged victim to inform each one of them of the incident and ensure that each parent or guardian has been notified. If one parent or guardian is the alleged wrongdoer, the person receiving the report shall contact the other parent or guardian and inform him or her of the incident individually.
  - d. Make the appropriate notifications to the church's insurance provider.

#### **F. Internal Investigation**

1. This ministry organization considers any allegation of abuse a serious matter. Each situation will be fully investigated by ministry leaders, always with the assistance of legal counsel and civil authorities.
2. Employees who are the subject of an investigation will be removed from their position, with pay, pending completion of the investigation. Employees who admit to the abuse will be terminated consistent with the established employment practices of this ministry.
3. Volunteer subjects of any investigation will be removed from their positions immediately pending completion of the investigation.
4. Hopewell Baptist Church will permanently remove any volunteers or employees from their duties within the organization if it is determined they committed abuse. Employees will also be terminated from employment.

### **IX. CRISIS RESPONSE**

#### **A. General Guidelines**

1. After consultation with legal counsel the Senior Pastor or the Executive Pastor shall act as spokesman to handle dissemination of information to staff, media, and congregation. Unless prior authorization is given, no one else should disseminate information concerning the situation.
2. Have ready for release a clear position statement stating Hopewell Baptist Church's policy regarding abuse of minors and established safeguards.
3. Select outside legal counsel (if necessary) who will be present with the spokesperson while answering any investigative questions from the police or social service agencies.
4. Use of a text or prepared public statement to answer press and inform congregation. At all times maintain the privacy and confidentiality of all those involved.
5. Use careful judgment so as not to compromise an ongoing investigation or place the church in unnecessary jeopardy.

## **B. Guidelines for Spokesperson**

1. Be prepared.
2. Be candid and honest.
3. Never say "no comment."
4. Be clear, concise, and in context. Do not answer more than what is asked. Do not volunteer information.
5. Always respond to all calls and questions as quickly as possible.

*“But whoever causes the downfall of one of these little ones who believe in Me — it would be better for him if a heavy millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea!” Matthew 18:6*