



# Child Protection Policy

## GENERAL

### **I. Goal**

The Bible teaches us that God loves and values children. In Mark 10:14 Jesus said, *“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.*”

It is our desire to bring children to Jesus. We desire to do all that we can to create and maintain a safe and welcoming atmosphere in which to teach our children God’s love and care for them. Our goal is to model Christ to our children. Since we recognize that we are a reflection of God’s love to those in our care, we take our responsibility to them seriously. These guidelines are set forth to provide a safe and nurturing environment in which we can bring our children to the Savior.

We view ourselves as partners with parents, seeking to provide the highest quality care and instruction in our children’s ministries. All of our guidelines are designed to protect and enrich the lives of each child involved.

Everyone who teaches, helps, or cares for children at Grace Evangelical Free Church, or in the ministries or activities of Grace, must follow these policies and procedures. This Child Protection Policy represents minimum requirements applicable to all ministries or activities of Grace Evangelical Free Church. Individual programs or activities may impose additional requirements as appropriate to their ministry setting.

### **II. Definition of “Children”**

The term “child” or “children” shall include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

### **III. Definition of “Personnel Committee”**

Personnel Committee shall consist of one of each: Pastor, Deacon, and ministry leader(s), with an appointed chairperson for the committee.

## SELECTION & SCREENING PROCESS

### **IV. Pre-employment Procedures for Paid and Volunteer Workers**

It is the goal of Grace Evangelical Free Church (herein referred to as “Grace Church” or as “church”) to adequately screen the applications of persons desiring to work with children participating in all church programs, including participants in any daily or temporary childcare programs.

### **V. Volunteers should be Members of the Church**

It is preferred that all volunteers who work with children be members of Grace Church. Under some circumstances, a member of the Pastoral Staff and the Personnel Committee may authorize an exception to this. Exceptions might include approval prior to completion of membership process, or approval of a long time attendee of Grace Church.

In the case of volunteers from a church other than Grace Church, the volunteer will be required to provide a written recommendation from the pastor of their home church as well as completing the application and interview process stated herein.

## VI. Classification of Workers

In order to screen workers appropriately for their responsibilities, the Personnel Committee and/or ministerial staff person responsible for each division will categorize workers into two categories: primary and secondary. These terms refer to the relative levels of responsibility, not to the ages of the children being served.

- A. **Primary Volunteer Workers:** Includes all paid staff members plus those volunteers in roles with greater responsibility are classified as primary workers and must be eighteen (18) years of age.
- B. **Secondary Volunteer Workers:** Persons who occasionally interact with children in a position of responsibility. i.e.: Sunday school teachers and volunteers who see children only in a group setting, on church premises, or who interact with children in the presence of an approved primary worker are classified as secondary workers. This category may also include parents of participants who help supervise activities. All volunteer workers under the age of eighteen (18) will be considered secondary workers.

## VII. Minimum Age

All primary volunteer workers must be 18 years of age or older. Younger persons may assist adults, but may not take the place of adult workers. The church may employ responsible teens (under the age of 18) only in positions with and under the direct supervision of an approved adult worker.

## VIII. Six-month Rule

No volunteer will be allowed to work with children in any capacity until they have been an active attender of the church for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

The six-month rule may be waived with the authorization of the Personnel Committee, as in the case of a new staff member. If waived, applicant will still be screened and interviewed according to screening policy.

## IX. Volunteer Applications

Volunteer applicants must complete and sign an *Application for Volunteer Workers who will Work with Children*.

Applications will be submitted to the church office. The Personnel Committee, as defined under XI, will be responsible for the interview process after the administration office has received responses from the references given on the application form.

The church keeps confidential all information received in the applicant selection process. Such information will be stored with access afforded only to appropriate church staff on a need-to-know basis.

If the church learns of false, misleading or amended information on an application that could cause potential danger to children or liability to the church, that person will be terminated from working with children.

## X. References

The church office will send a Reference Response Information form to references submitted by the applicant, to be completed and returned to the office for review prior to Personnel Committee review of application. Church must receive responses in order to conduct a reasonable inquiry into the character of all worker applicants. References will be checked by mail or in person.

Whenever possible, the three references should include reference from the list below:

- A. A person who has known the applicant for an extended period of time
- B. A current or former supervisor or teacher or co-worker
- C. A member of the applicant's immediate family
- D. An existing active church member of Grace Church

Information gained in these checks should be noted directly on the application.

## **XI. Confidential Interviews**

All applicants desiring to work with children must be interviewed for suitability for the work they desire to do. A minimum of two members of the Personnel Committee will conduct all interviews. Church policy concerning prevention and response to child abuse and neglect must be addressed during the interview.

## **XII. Criminal Background Check**

A criminal background check and child abuse registry check shall be required for all children's worker positions, both employee and volunteer workers. No one who has been convicted of a crime involving misconduct with children will be allowed to work with children. Completing the *Application for Volunteer Workers Who Will Work with Children* authorizes the church to conduct these checks. Background checks will be kept confidential in a locked file with access afforded only to appropriate church staff on a need-to-know basis.

The designated church representative will conduct criminal background checks notifying the appropriate minister if a negative report is received.

## **XIII. Vehicle Safety**

Persons who drive Grace Evangelical Free Church owned or privately-owned vehicles for conducting church business or transporting children on a regular basis must have a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance.

When transporting children in groups parents are to be informed when they will be leaving, how they will be traveling, when they expect to arrive at their destination, and when they will return.

When a worker is driving with children, he or she should avoid being alone with them without the parent's/guardian's knowledge whenever possible.

In an emergency, the leader will attempt to call the child's parent to obtain their permission and/or to make specific arrangements for their transportation. When it is not possible to reach parents, a child will be transported by two adults if possible.

## **XIV. Identification of Workers**

All employees or volunteers who are engaged to work with children must have a current photograph kept in their personnel file.

## **XV. Identification Badges**

All church employees and volunteer workers, both primary and secondary, who work with children grade six and lower, are required to wear an identification nametag whenever they are supervising children. These tags will be provided by the church.

## **XVI. Acknowledgement of Church Policies**

All applicants must acknowledge in writing that they understand the church's policies pertaining to the protection of children and that they agree to abide by them. This requirement will be met by having applicants sign the *Acknowledgement of Receipt* form.

## **SUPERVISORY REQUIREMENTS**

It is the policy of the church to provide adequate supervisory control of persons working with children participating in all church programs, including daily or temporary childcare programs of the church. The following regulations shall be applicable to all primary and secondary workers having contact with children participating in all church programs:

## **XVII. Safety of Children**

It is the responsibility of all persons having contact with children participating in church programs to promote the emotional and physical safety of the participants giving regard to all factors and circumstances known to them. If in their opinion, an unsafe condition exists; such persons shall immediately take appropriate precautions under the circumstances to protect all children. Nothing contained in any other church policy, procedure or instruction shall be construed to relieve persons having contact with children from this responsibility.

### **A. Guidelines for Physical Contact**

1. Any physical contact between a worker and a child that would provide or is intended to provide any form of sexual gratification is strictly prohibited.

Limited physical contact such as a pat on the back, or on the head, or a hand shake is permissible. Hugs are permissible within sight of others but a worker must be mindful of a child's desire not to be hugged. The worker must avoid any prolonged hugs and must stop a hug immediately when the child begins to pull away.

2. Volunteers and employees shall not abuse children/youth including but not limited to:
  - i. Physical abuse – e.g. strike, spank, shake, slap
  - ii. Verbal/Mental abuse – e.g. humiliate, degrade, threaten
  - iii. Sexual abuse of any kind, including inappropriate touching and exposure

### **B. Guidelines for Healthy Behavior Management**

1. Children who are disruptive should be taken to another side of the room, or if necessary into the hallway (leaving the door open and within sight of other people). The worker should explain to the child that a particular behavior is unacceptable. The worker may then pray with the child asking that the Lord help the child to control him/herself.
2. If the disruptive behavior persists the parents should be asked to come and sit with the child in class the following week and for as long as necessary until the child can demonstrate self-control. It may be suggested that a child attend the main worship service with their parents if it continues to be difficult for the student to control themselves in class.
3. We are committed to working with children to find what they need in order to fully participate, but not to the detriment of the other children in the class.

## **XVIII. Children's Pickup**

Children who are six years old or older are permitted to leave the area of the church activity at the conclusion of the scheduled activity without further supervision of the workers unless otherwise instructed by the parent or guardian. If their parent or guardian does not pick up a child younger than six on time, the child will be kept by their teachers in the children's area where safe supervision can be continued until the parent or guardian is located.

## **XIX. Preschool Identification System**

The Drop-Off Policy applies to all children (Infant-3 yrs.) both those registered and visitors. The church will use a sign-in form. This procedure uses a single sheet per room with separate columns for the child's name, the parent's sign-in signature (and sign-in time if desired). The parent must sign the child in when leaving him or her at the room.

## **XX. Two-Volunteer Rule**

It shall be the goal of Grace Evangelical Free Church that a minimum of two volunteers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during a church activity of participants, location or activity. At least one of these must be a primary worker.

Doors will be left fully open if one worker needs to leave the room temporarily and during the class arrival time before both workers are present. Some Youth Sunday School classes may have only one adult in attendance as the teacher while the class is in session. Windows are installed on doors of all classrooms for full visibility.

At no time should an adult ever be in an enclosed/isolated area alone with a child. One-on-one meetings must occur in public settings and with the knowledge of the parent/guardian or another approved adult worker. Exceptions may include the mentoring ministry and may require written consent to participate.

Pastors, elders, or deacons will visit children's activities on a random and unannounced basis.

## **XXI. Observation of Children**

At no time will an adult meet alone with a child in any room where the door is closed or in an area where they cannot be seen. A clear glass window is installed in the door of all rooms typically occupied by children and into the door of all offices in the church.

There will be at least one hall monitor to insure that children are in appropriate areas during regularly scheduled weeknight or special activities. The exception to this policy will be during family gatherings such as funeral/wedding/reception times, at which time the parent/guardian shall be responsible for the observation of children.

Whenever children need to use a public bathroom, one worker may escort them to the entrance and wait in the hall for the child/children. When a child needs assistance in a bathroom or stall, any door must remain open at all times. Workers must not be alone with children in a closed stall. Seventh grade and up may be excused from the classrooms to use the restroom unattended.

## **XXII. Ratio of Workers to Children**

It is required that a reasonable ratio of adults to children is maintained at all times involving the supervision of children. The Personnel Committee and ministerial staff member responsible for the division shall be primarily responsible for setting and maintaining a reasonable ratio of workers to children giving due regard to all factors present, including the number and age of the participants, the nature of the activities and the location where the activities are taking place.

## **XXIII. Worker Training**

Each new worker will be given a copy of the Grace Evangelical Free Church's Child Protection Policy. They must sign a statement indicating they have received and read this policy before they can begin working with children.

## **XXIV. Ministerial and Staff Oversight**

The Personnel Committee and ministerial staff member responsible for each division shall coordinate with the respective ministry coordinators to ensure ongoing supervision of all workers. This should include regular unannounced visits into classes and other program sites.

## **XXV. Awareness of Church Policy** *(Acknowledgement form found at the end of this document)*

The minister responsible for each division shall periodically review the definition of child abuse and neglect as defined by law and the church's policy concerning these crimes. These reviews can be conducted either with the workers individually or in groups, and following each change in or addition to such policies. Each worker shall acknowledge receipt of a written copy of the policy prior to the time they commence working with children and after each change to such policy or part of the renewal process. Each worker shall acknowledge participating in the periodic review of the church's policies and procedures. The signed acknowledgements shall be retained in the personnel file of the worker.

## **XXVI. Bi-Annual Review of BID Form**

A minimum of two (2) committee members will conduct bi-annual review of current volunteer workers. A new background check will be processed every four (4) years. The form and results of screening will be added to their confidential file.

## **XXVII. Release of Claims**

Prior to any scheduled off-site event that involves transportation by Grace Church staff/volunteers from the church campus to the site, a *Release of Claims* form will be necessary to be signed by the child's parent or legal guardian. Without the form signed and in the possession of the church, the child will not be allowed to participate in the away activity.

## **REPORTING & RESPONDING TO ALLEGED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT**

### **XXVIII. Reporting Policy**

- л Any violations of this Child Protection Policy or Code of Ethics should be reported immediately to the pastor of the appropriate area of ministry. Additionally, any worker that has reason to be concerned about the safety or welfare of a child is expected to bring his or her concerns to a Grace Church pastoral staff member immediately in the appropriate area of ministry.
- л Workers will verbally report any questionable incident or injury of a child to the appropriate pastor. The appropriate pastor will then determine if the written report will need to be filled out. The worker who observed the incident will fill out an incident report within the next 24 hours (See [Appendix B](#)).

## **APPENDIX A: The Definition of Child Abuse**

The following definition of “child abuse” corresponds with the definition provided by the Wisconsin child abuse laws, Wisconsin Statutes Annotated 48.981. We have adapted the following definition of child abuse from that provided in §48.981(1), replacing references to other statutory provisions with brief summaries of those provisions to make this definition more understandable to church staff, members and workers.

- л Physical injury inflicted on a child by other than accidental means. “Physical injury” includes, but is not limited to, lacerations, fractured bones, internal injuries, severe or frequent bruising, or great bodily harm. [See Wis. Stats. Ann. 48.981(1)(e)].
- л Sexual intercourse or sexual contact with a child. [See Wis. Stats. Ann. 940.225, 948.2, and 948.025].
- л Employing, using, persuading, inducing, enticing, or coercing any child to engage in sexually explicit conduct. [See Wis. Ann. 948.05].
- л Photographing, filming, videotaping, recording the sounds of, or displaying in any way sexually explicit conduct by a child. [See Wis. Stats. Ann. 948.05].
- л Producing, performing in, profiting from, promoting, importing into the state, reproducing, advertising, selling, distribution, or possessing with intent to see or distribute, any recording or reproduction of a child engaging in sexually explicit conduct. [See Wis. Stats. Ann. 948.05].
- л Knowingly permitting, allowing, or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution or sexually explicit conduct. [See Wis. Stats. Ann. 944.30].
- л Emotional damage. “Emotional damage” is defined by law as harm to a child’s psychological or intellectual functioning which is exhibited by severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal or outward aggressive behavior, or a combination of those behaviors, and for which the child’s parent, guardian or legal custodian has failed to obtain the treatment necessary to remedy the harm. “Emotional damage” may be demonstrated by a substantial and observable change in behavior, emotional response or cognition that is not within the normal range for the child’s age and stage of development. [See Wis. Stats. Ann. 48.981(1)(cm)].
- л Causing (by use or threat of force or violence) a child to view sexually explicit conduct. [See Wis. Stats. Ann. 948.055].

## APPENDIX B: Incident Report

Date of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Report Filed: \_\_\_\_\_

Person filing report: \_\_\_\_\_

*Instructions: As closely as possible to the time the incident occurred, a copy of this report must be filled out by the person in charge. Other eyewitnesses to the incident (preferably adults) may also fill out additional copies of this form.*

**Your involvement in the incident:**

**Describe the incident:**

**Where the incident occurred (location):**

**Individuals who were injured and a description of the injuries:**

**Describe action taken on behalf of injured:**

**Names of others involved in the incident:**

**Name of the adult in charge at time of incident:**

**Name(s) of other witness(es):**

**Cause of incident (in your opinion):**

**Additional comments:**



## RELEASE OF CLAIMS FORM

**NAME OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN** (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CHILD'S NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ACTIVITY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE(S) OF ACTIVITY:** \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby affirm that my child shall be participating in the above named activity and certify that I am cognizant of the inherent dangers associated with participation in the Activity and with the fact that participating in the Activity may take place outside of, or off of, church premises.

I understand and agree that neither Grace Evangelical Free Church, not its trustees, representatives, instructors or agents may be held liable in any way for any occurrence in connection with my child's participating in the Activity which may result in injury, harm or other damages to me or my family. As a part of the consideration for being allowed to enroll and participate in the Activity, I hereby personally assume all risks in connection with my child's participation in the Activity. I further release Grace Evangelical Free Church, its trustees, instructors, agents and representatives for any injury or damage which may befall my child while my child is enrolled in or participating in the Activity. I further agree to save and hold harmless Grace Evangelical Free Church, its trustees, instructors, agents and representatives from any claim by me or my family, estate, heirs or assigns arising out of my child's enrollment and participation in the Activity. I also authorize Grace Evangelical Free Church to render or obtain such emergency medical care or treatment as may be necessary should any injury, harm or accident occur to my child while participating in the Activity.

I further state that I am of lawful age and legally competent to sign this affirmation and release; that I understand the terms herein are contractual and not a mere recital; and that I signed this document of my own free act and volition. I further state and acknowledge that I have fully informed myself of the contents of this affirmation and release by reading it before I have signed it.

I have executed this affirmation and release on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_\_\_\_.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

## REFERENCE INFORMATION FORM

**\*\*\*CONFIDENTIAL\*\*\***

PLEASE RETURN BY:

**Applicant Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reference Contacted:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of person contacting this reference:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Method of contact:**  Letter  Email

This person \_\_\_\_\_ has applied to work with children at Grace Evangelical Free Church of Walworth, WI and has listed you as a reference, and given us written permission to contact you. Would you please answer the following questions to the best of your ability? This should only take a few minutes and is very important to our Church programs. Thank you for your assistance.

**A. How long have you known the applicant?**

**B. In what capacity?**

**C. Based on your experience, would you say that the applicant would work well with children? Why or why not?**

a. *Grades K through 6:*

b. *Junior/Senior High:*

**D. Are you aware of any allegations of child sexual abuse?**

**E. Are you aware of any problems that would affect their work with children?**

**F. Would you entrust your child to this person?**

**G. Any other comments?**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## REVISIONS TO POLICY

Revision Number(s)	Date Approved	Section	Purpose
1-2	09/24/2013	V	1. Inclusion of volunteers from another church body. 2. Added "Revisions to Policy" page.
3	07/01/2015	XXVII	3. Changed the wording of the following phrase: "Prior to any activity away from the church, a <i>Release of Claims</i> will be necessary to be signed by the child's parent or legal guardian" to read "Prior to any scheduled off-site event that involves transportation by Grace Church staff/volunteers from the church campus to the site, a <i>Release of Claims</i> form will be necessary to be signed by the child's parent or legal guardian."





# Acknowledgement of Receipt

I have been given a copy of the Grace Evangelical Free Church's Child Protection Policy. I have read and understand the document. I understand that my services as an employee of Grace Church or as a volunteer worker who works with children at Grace Church is dependent on my strict adherence to these policies.

Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_





## Application for Volunteer Workers

This application is to be completed by all applicants for positions involving the supervising or custody of children. It will assist the church in providing a safe and secure environment for all preschoolers, children and youth.

The term "child" or "children" includes all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Full Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

☎ HOME: \_\_\_\_\_ ☎ CELL: \_\_\_\_\_ ☎ WORK: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address(es): \_\_\_\_\_

Driver's License #: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security No.: \_\_\_\_\_

**Position applying for:** \_\_\_\_\_

Date you would be available to start: \_\_\_\_\_

What day(s) of the week are you available to serve? SUN MON TUES WED THUR FRI SAT

**When did you make your profession of faith in Christ?**

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**Are you a member of this church?**  YES  NO

Please list the names and locations of other churches you have attended regularly within the last 10 years:

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List the names, addresses and phone numbers of three personal references. Whenever possible, the three references should include references from the list below:

- a. A person who has known the applicant for an extended period of time
- b. A current or former supervisor or teacher or co-worker
- c. A member of the applicant's immediate family
- d. An existing active church member of Grace Church

	<b>NAME</b>	<b>ADDRESS</b>	<b>PHONE</b>
1)			
2)			
3)			

Because we care for our children and desire to protect them, we ask you to please answer the following questions. We understand they are personal and we will protect your privacy.

***Are you willing to be photographed for the confidential church personnel records?***

YES    NO

***Are you willing to wear a photo identification nametag whenever you are supervising children?***

YES    NO

**Applicant Statement**

I hereby certify that I have read and completed the above application. My answers are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

I give permission for the church to maintain my photograph on file and to conduct a criminal-court background check on me now and at regular intervals. If allowed to work with children I agree to be bound by the bylaws and policies of Grace Evangelical Free Church.

I hereby authorize all persons, schools, organizations and law enforcement agencies to supply Grace Evangelical Free Church with any information concerning my character or background in connection with working with children and I hereby release them from liability or damages which may occur as a result of their response to this request.

I authorize Grace Evangelical Free Church to supply my service record, in whole or part, to any prospective or future organization or agency with a legal and proper interest in them. I understand that if allowed to serve, that any misrepresentation made by me in this application shall be considered sufficient cause for my dismissal without advance notice. I have been appraised of and support the church's position regarding the problem of child abuse and neglect.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_