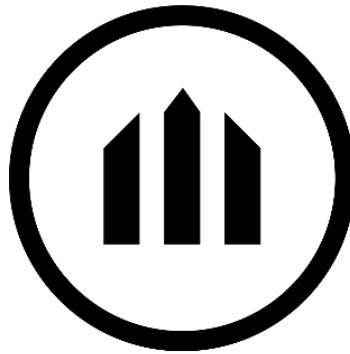


# **Morningside Baptist Church**

## **CHILD SAFETY POLICY**

**Approved As Of: March 2019**



**MORNINGSIDE**  
BAPTIST CHURCH

## INTRODUCTION

At Morningside Baptist Church, children with all their energy, laughter, curiosity, and sincere faith bring much joy. Jesus agreed. He gladly welcomed children and gave attention to their needs when others did not (Mark 10:14). He said in Mark 9:37, "Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me." When we at Morningside welcome children in Jesus' name it is the same as welcoming Him.

Morningside places a strong emphasis on welcoming children and is committed to cultivating a proactive culture of protection. This culture will prioritize our children's safety, provide a loving, nurturing environment, and discourage perpetrators and abusers. This commitment is in accordance with Biblical principles, our church's mission, and federal law.

Because of this commitment, Morningside has adopted the following Child Safety Policy for parents and for all those who serve in our children's ministry, which includes all volunteers and compensated workers of Morningside Baptist Church. Although we cannot ensure complete safety, Morningside's Child Safety Policy states our commitment to the following: (1) protecting the most innocent and vulnerable children at Morningside (2) ensuring their safety with zero tolerance for any form of abuse (3) educating our parents and children's ministry volunteers. Keeping this commitment will help us prevent child abuse, and guarantee intervention. Most of all, just as Jesus did, it will help children be safely guarded, nurtured in love, and welcomed with open arms.

## DEFINITIONS

- MBC – Morningside Baptist Church
- Child/Children – A person under 18 years of age participating in a church-sponsored children's program that is at MBC or provided by MBC. (Please note that the parent or guardian is responsible for supervision and care in situations that fall outside of the parameters of this definition.)
- Staff Member – A paid employee of MBC
- Screened Volunteer – A volunteer who has gone through the required steps of the screening and training process and has been approved to work with children

- Child abuse and neglect – Any wrongful treatment of a child which results in any non-accidental injury to the child, including any physical, emotional, and/or sexual injury. Evidence of injury may include scars, bruises, wound, medical findings, etc. (Specific definitions of abuse and neglect as prescribed by the South Carolina Code of Laws are available at S.C. Code 63-7-20, <https://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t63c007.php>)
- Child Sexual Abuse – Committing, permitting, or encouraging the commission of any sexual act, touching, or contact, intercourse, or other sexual gratification, or exposing a child to any material that is sexually charged. This includes any physical sexual contact or non-physical exposure to sexually-charged behavior. (Specific definitions of child sexual abuse as prescribed by the South Carolina Code of Laws are available at S.C. Code 16-3-655, <https://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t16c003.php>)

## **GENERAL POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

- MBC is subject to South Carolina law regarding the protection of children and the reporting of suspected child abuse in any form.
- MBC will endeavor to protect children by:
  1. Ensuring volunteers and staff members are known to ministry leaders
  2. Maintaining high standards of screening
  3. Creating opportunities for training
  4. Limiting opportunities for abuse to occur
  5. Periodically reviewing and updating all approved volunteer workers

## **SCREENING**

MBC will implement safety measures by requiring the following:

- Potential volunteers are required to be a member of MBC for at least six months prior to serving with children. Exceptions to this requirement may be made by the pastoral staff.
- All potential staff members and any potential volunteers involved in the care of children must complete our confidential Employment Application or Child Worker Application, as applicable. This application asks questions related to criminal history and includes a request for personal references. Once completed, the application is submitted to the MBC leader responsible for the

ministry area. References will be contacted. MBC may also reach out to additional individuals as circumstances dictate.

- A national, criminal background screening will be performed on all staff members and on any volunteers desiring to work with children.
  1. Background screening will be conducted by Protect My Ministry, an independent, fee-based service. Oversight of the screening process will be performed by the Children's Ministry Director or Student Pastor.
  2. Background screening will be completed on a three-year rotation.
  3. If information is reported within the background screening which is a potential cause for concern, the MBC leader responsible for the ministry area will discuss that situation with the individual.
  4. The Child Safety Committee will be responsible for making decisions on individuals with alerts noted on their background screening results. Adults who have been convicted of either sexual or physical abuse are not permitted to provide supervisory services in any church-sponsored activity or program for children.
- All staff member and any volunteer desiring to work with children will receive a copy of this policy. They will be asked to sign a statement that they have read, understand, and agree to abide by this policy.
- Approval for hiring or volunteering is determined after all of the above steps are completed.
- Information obtained during the screening process will be kept confidential. Access will be limited to the Child Safety Committee and MBC staff directly responsible for the ministry area in which the staff member or volunteer would be serving.

## **TRAINING**

Training for staff members and volunteers working with children will be both general and specific to the area in which they serve.

Training is provided on three levels.

- Prerequisite Training: Online training for individuals 18 years of age and older. This training is required to be completed one time, prior to the start of volunteering or within 30 days of employment, whichever is applicable.

- Supplemental Training: MBC will provide church-wide training related to child safety on two different occasions each 12-month period. All volunteers working with children are required to attend this training at least once. This training must be completed by at least the second occurrence of the training following the volunteer's approval date.
- Ongoing Training: Each individual ministry area will hold annual training, which will include training on the MBC Child Safety Policy and specific safety procedures by area. MBC will also provide training updates for staff members as beneficial.

**NOTE:** A checklist will be utilized to ensure that all of the required steps noted under "Screening" and "Training" have been completed. A copy of this checklist is included as **Attachment A** to this policy.

## **SUPERVISION**

- Individuals involved in the custody and care of children must observe the "two-person rule." This rule prohibits one-on-one interaction between a staff member/screened volunteer and a child in secluded or isolated areas. See *\*ministry worker manual* for further detail on how this requirement is implemented by age-group.
- All rooms used by adults and minors together should be accessible (unlocked doors) and have open visibility (a window in the door or the door left wide open).
- Ministry leaders and designated individuals will observe and periodically make unannounced visits to classrooms, small groups, and meeting areas involving children and screened volunteers.
- Parents or legal guardians are welcome to visit any program (1-2 times in a 12-month period) involving their child; known sex offenders, however, are prohibited from entering designated child classrooms.
- Children in nursery through 5<sup>th</sup> grade will follow check-in/check-out procedures. Children may only be released to one of their own parents or those to whom the parents have given permission, in keeping with individual ministry policies.
- If assisting children with the bathroom, screened volunteers should not enter the bathroom with one child alone, but rather another adult or child must be present.

- No staff member or screened volunteer is ever to be in a motor vehicle with only one child. There should always be another adult present or a group of children.

For further information related to procedures of specific ministry areas and age-groups, please see *\*ministry worker manual*. (\*In process)

## REPORTING

- South Carolina law requires that certain professionals report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. These individuals are known as “Mandated Reporters.” Mandated Reporters of child abuse or neglect in South Carolina include but are not limited to: physicians, nurses, dentists, emergency medical services, mental health or allied health professionals, teachers, counselors, principals, school attendance officers, childcare workers, foster parents, police or law enforcement officers, undertakers, funeral home directors or their employees, film processors, computer technicians, judges, and clergy (subject to laws governing privileged communication).
- Suspected, Reported, Discovered – with reference to child abuse, child sexual abuse or neglect, a report must be made to the proper authorities when a Mandated Reporter has “reason to believe that a child’s physical or mental health has been or may adversely affected by abuse or neglect. A decision to report must be based upon a reasonable belief that a child has been or may be abused or neglected. Thus, mandatory reporters need not have conclusive proof that a child has been abused or neglected prior to reporting abuse or neglect to the proper authorities.” (Information for Mandatory Reporters, November 2010, <http://childlaw.sc.edu>)
- While not every individual is a Mandated Reporter, the law encourages all persons to report, and the moral imperative to protect children extends to all situations where abuse is suspected, reported, or discovered.
- The safety of our children is the responsibility of all staff members and screened volunteers who work with children. Both staff members and screened volunteers are responsible to report all suspected, reported, or discovered cases of child abuse, including injury suspected to have occurred as a result of corporal punishment. Failure to do so endangers children and in some cases is a violation of South Carolina law.
- In the event of suspected, reported, or discovered child abuse, the following course of action should be taken:
  - Listen**
    1. Compassionately – the child has potentially been hurt to a great degree

2. Carefully – inform the person that you may write down things in order to remember and attempt to record as much of the victim’s actual words as is possible
3. Specifically – the role at this point is not of investigator. Focus on the following questions for a Minimal Facts Interview:
  - Who – child’s name, age, date of birth, address, present location, names and ages of siblings, parent’s name and address, reason(s) for concern, any known history of violence in the home, the name of the alleged perpetrator if known
  - What – what happened to the child? Do not ask leading questions. Rather, restate what the child is saying and then say things like “Tell me more about that.”
  - Where – where did the alleged abuse occur?

### **Think**

- Does the information you have received lead you to suspect that abuse has or may happen? Remember, you are not required to have conclusive proof. The law states that you must only “have a reason to suspect.” If so a report must be made.

### **Speak**

- Do not make commitments or promises to the victim.
- Do communicate hope and continued care for them.
- Do communicate that you have to report the abuse.

### **Do**

- Immediately notify the staff member supervising your ministry area for assistance through the reporting process.
- Promptly complete a Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse Form (see **Attachment B**) and turn it in to your supervising staff member within 24 hours.
- If the alleged perpetrator is a parent, guardian, or person acting as a parent, report to DSS (864-467-7750). If the alleged perpetrator is any other person, inform local law enforcement (864-609-5321).
- Inform a member of the Child Safety Committee of your report.

## RESPONSE

- The care and safety of the victim is our first priority. We will not confront the accused without the approval of the local child protection service or law enforcement authorities.
- We will not prejudge any person accused, but we will take any allegation of child abuse seriously and will reach out in love and support to the victim and the victim's family, extending whatever resources are needed. We will fully cooperate with any authorities investigating an allegation of child abuse.
- We will treat the accused with dignity and respect. If the accused is a screened volunteer, that person will be temporarily relieved of his or her duties during the investigation. If cleared by authorities, the individual may resume regular ministry service. If the accused is a staff member of MBC, the individual will be temporarily relieved of his or her duties; however compensation will be maintained during the investigation. The staff member may return to work once cleared by authorities.
- All inquiries or requests for information from the media, attorneys or any other parties shall be referred to the official spokesperson. No third party other than the official spokesperson is to release any information regarding any alleged incident of child abuse without the express approval of the official spokesperson.
- All communication by the official spokesperson to the media, congregation and public will protect the privacy and confidentiality of all involved. All efforts in responding to the alleged incident of child abuse shall be documented by the official spokesperson and maintained in a secure and confidential file.



**Staff Member & Screened Volunteer Checklist**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Ministry Area: \_\_\_\_\_

*Required Prior to Service:*

Application completed

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

Policy Acknowledgement Received

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

Criminal Background Check Completed

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

Online Training Completed (18 or older)

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

Approved

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

*Checklist Completed:*

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

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

**Attachment B**

**Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse**

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- Please fill out a separate form for each victim.
- Do NOT ask leading questions of the child. Use simple WHO, WHAT, WHERE questions.
- This form should be filled out immediately after incident or report was taken.
- Return completed form to Lara Cropsy

(Please Print All Information)

1. Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Your Role at MBC: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Victim's Information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth, if known (M/D/Y): \_\_\_\_\_

3. Date & place of initial conversation with/report from victim: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Location in which the incident occurred: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Victim's statement (give your detailed summary here using the victim's own words wherever possible):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Name of person accused of abuse: \_\_\_\_\_

Address, if known: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Relationship of accused to victim (staff member, screened volunteer, family member):

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Reported to what other MBC Staff member: \_\_\_\_\_ Date/time: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary:

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9. Call to victim's parent/guardian if not the accused:

Name and relationship to victim: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/time: \_\_\_\_\_ Summary: \_\_\_\_\_

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10. Call to local Department of Social Services (DSS) - 864-467-7750

Date/time: \_\_\_\_\_ Spoke with: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary: \_\_\_\_\_

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11. Call to local law enforcement (24/7 non-emergency dispatch) - 864-271-5210:

Date/time: \_\_\_\_\_ Spoke with: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary: \_\_\_\_\_

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12: Other Contacts Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/time: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to Victim: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of person filling out this form: \_\_\_\_\_