

MIDDLETON BAPTIST CHURCH

Abuse Prevention Policy

Revised: February, 2020

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Middleton Baptist Church acknowledges and is grateful to the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches, Immanuel Baptist Church, Ecclesiastical Insurance, and New Minas Baptist Church for the assistance with the material in this policy.

2. ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY PURPOSE STATEMENT

WHEREAS we acknowledge that the abuse, harassment, or neglect of people (sexual, physical and emotional) can happen anywhere, including in this Church or in other facilities used by our Church with children, youth, and adults;

And **WHEREAS** we understand that the effects of such abuse have a profound short-term and long-term impact on the victim;

And **WHEREAS** we understand that, as members of this Church, we must seek to ensure that children, youth, and adults who participate in any program offered through our Church, may do so without fear of abuse, harassment or neglect;

And **WHEREAS** we acknowledge that a person who would prey upon others may see this Church as a place where he/she may have access to children, youth, or adults;

And **WHEREAS** we understand that any abuse, or allegation of abuse, can seriously compromise our witness for Christ within our community and beyond;

We, the members of Middleton Baptist Church, solemnly agree to adopt the following Abuse Prevention Policy, to prevent harm to the children, youth, and adults in our programs and to protect our staff and volunteers from false or wrongful allegations, effective immediately and dated 23 day of February, 2019.

3. DEFINITIONS

A. Child Abuse

Child abuse means harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare by a parent, legal guardian or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare which occurs through non-accidental physical or mental injury; sexual abuse; sexual exploitation or maltreatment.

B. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse means any non-accidental human act that results in physical pain or injury to a person – whether or not it leave a cut, or a mark or a bruise. Physically abusive behaviour ranges from slapping, pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, and biting to more severe forms like choking, severe spanking, beating, hitting with an object, burning, stabbing and shooting. Physical abuse is any intentional means of inflicting pain or injury to another person. It can be a single event, or it can also be a chronic pattern of behaviour.

C. Physical Neglect

Negligent treatment means harm or threatened harm by a person responsible for the health or welfare of a child through behaviours such as the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care. It means placing a child at an unreasonable risk to the child's health or welfare by failure of the parents, legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare to intervene to eliminate that risk when that person is able to do so and has, or should have, knowledge of that risk.

D. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is the exploitation of a child or any sexual intimacy forced on a child for the sexual stimulation or gratification of another person. Child sexual abuse can refer to taking advantage of a child who is not capable of understanding sexual acts or resisting coercion such as threats or offers of gifts. Sexual abuse may or may not involve sexual contact. Examples of

non-physical sexual abuse include people exposing themselves, displaying pornographic material, photographing a child for pornographic materials, obscene telephone calls, spying on people, and requests to engage in sexual activity (where no physical contact occurs). Examples of sexual abuse involving physical contact includes fondling of body parts such as breasts, crotch, buttocks, or sexual organs; intercourse; oral and anal sex.

E. Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse means attempting to control a person's life through words, threats, and fear; destroying a person's self-worth through harassment, threats, and deprivation. Emotional abuse weakens a person's, especially a child's, mental and physical ability to resist, cuts off his or her contact with others, and causes a gradual loss of self-esteem – all of which reinforce a sense of helplessness and dependence on the abuser.

F. Improper Discipline and Touching

Corporal punishment (slapping, hitting, pushing), abusive verbal discipline (hurling insults, threatening), or behavior as consistent with physical or emotional abuse (A, B and E above) constitutes inappropriate application of discipline. Proper discipline includes expectations that are consistent with the age of the child, and informing parents when children and youth misbehave beyond minor correction. Inappropriate touching also includes sexually suggestive or prolonged touching for the gratification of the person in authority, revenge-seeking behavior, or behavior consistent with A, B, or D above.

G. Harassment

Harassment means to engage in a course of vexatious or malicious conduct or comment that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome. Harassment is normally a series of incidents but can be one severe incident which has a lasting impact on the individual.

H. Leaders

Leaders include those members/adherents attending MBC for longer than six months who oversee the various ministry programs.

I. Volunteers

Volunteers are individuals who serve in church programs and/or who have direct contact with minors or vulnerable people in their care of supervision.

J. Staff

Staff are those individuals paid by the church to carry out the objectives of the church as outlined in their job descriptions.

K. Adherent

An adherent is considered anyone who attends MBC regularly but is not a member.

L. Adult

An adult is a person 19 years of age or older.

4. POLICY FOR CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

A. SCREENING

All persons desiring to work with children and youth through MBC, whether as a staff member, adherent or volunteer and who may potentially be placed in a position of trust with them, must first meet the following qualifications: (Note: All screening documentation will be kept confidential and on file indefinitely)

a. Complete a Criminal Records Check and a Child Abuse Registry Check every three years. A record involving any abuse of children will, **in all cases**, disqualify the individual from working with children, youth and/or in some cases adults, through this ministry.

b. Upon request, complete an application form and supply references;

c. Be interviewed or recruited by the Pastor(s), or Governance board.

d. Regularly attend MBC as a member or adherent for at least six months (an exception to this requirement may be granted by Pastors or Elders).

e. Participate in annual training which will include the review of this policy and the viewing of a video/training tool approved by the Pastor of Family Ministries or Lead Pastor.

B. CLASSROOM STAFFING AND SUPERVISION GUIDELINES

* A two adult guideline should be used whenever possible, or windows are to be in all classrooms where one adult is with the children or door must be left open.

* Being alone with any child 'one on one' is **STRONGLY** discouraged. Young children should not be left in an individual's care behind closed doors or in an isolated and private location, whenever possible.

* Volunteers 11-18 years of age are permitted to assist as long as an adult volunteer is readily available.

* Leaders and children should remain in the classroom until parents arrive at the door to pick up their children, unless written parent permission to let them go on their own is received.

* Leaders to child ratio is recommended as follows:

Infants – 1 adult to 4 infants

Toddlers – 1 adult to 6 toddlers

3-5 years – 1 adult to 8 children

5 years and over – 1 adult to 15 children

- * No child should be dropped off without a leader present

C. WASHROOM POLICIES

NURSERY

- * Nursery workers may be required to change diapers. Some parents may specify that they would like to be called to change their child themselves.

- * Permission should be received from the parents before diaper changing takes place

- * Diaper changing must always take place in such a way that another nursery worker can easily see the child that is being changed, as well as the other children and workers in the room

PRESCHOOL & ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

- * Parents are encouraged to take their preschool age children to visit the washroom prior to each class or service.

- * Young children should be accompanied by a leader/volunteer that escorts the child to the washroom and checks the bathroom for safety. The leader/volunteer should then remain outside the main washroom door and wait for the child before escorting them back to the classroom. The volunteer should call the child's name if they are taking longer than seems necessary. Our desire is that no adult or teen leader/volunteer is to be behind a closed washroom door or closed washroom cubicle with a child. The Family Life Center main bathroom door should be propped open during ministry times.

- * When preschool children need assistance in the washroom, a leader/volunteer may enter the washroom cubicle (cubicle door remains open) to assist only when a second volunteer is within

visual contact. If this is not possible, inform another volunteer when taking a child to the washroom and when returning.

* Older children may go to the washroom with a buddy

* If there is an emergency bathroom situation, the parent or supervisor should be notified immediately.

D. YOUTH (GRADES 6-12)

* A two adult guideline should be used at all times, whenever possible, or windows are to be installed or door must be left open when there is only one adult present.

* When the two-person policy cannot be used, notify a parent before a proposed one-to-one contact with a youth (e.g. in a mentoring relationship) and ask permission to meet. Meet in either a public area either inside or outside the church where both people can be seen by others.

* Staff members, adherents, and volunteers who work with youth will be reminded of the importance of avoiding potentially compromising situations in which an allegation of abuse, harassment or neglect could be made.

* Parental consent forms will be used for all activities or events, which require an overnight stay or travel.

E. TRANSPORTATION/OVERNIGHT EVENTS

* Parental permission must be given for field trips or overnight events. Both medical release forms and permissions slips are required.

* Minimum of 2 adult leaders for overnight events. If the group is comprised of children/youth of both genders, leaders of both genders must be present.

* When transporting, all drivers must have a valid driver's license, current insurance, and seat belts for all children. Drivers must be at least 21 years of age with a non-graduated license. Two adults per vehicle is preferred.

F. TRAINING

* Staff members, leaders and volunteers will be kept informed of the dangers of abuse, harassment and neglect and to remind them of the importance of adherence to the Abuse Prevention Policy. A mandatory training program will be set up, implemented and completed every year.

* The congregation will annually be informed of the dangers of child abuse and reminded of the importance of strict adherence to this policy. This policy will be read at every Annual Meeting.

G. REPORTING

* Any person who has reasonable grounds to believe that a child or youth is in need of protection is legally required to report the matter. In addition, every person who performs professional or official duties with respect to a child/youth (including a youth leader) that, in the course of that person's professional or official duties, has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be suffering or may have suffered abuse is required to report the matter.

* Every individual in the province of NS has a legal obligation to report concerns of abuse or neglect of a child under the age of 19

in order to ensure children are protected from harm. Failure to report is a criminal offence.

* In the event that an allegation of abuse, neglect of a child/minor is made, it will be reported immediately to the Lead Pastor. The Lead Pastor shall report the situation to the Moderator of the Governance board.

* If for any reason the above procedures have not been followed, the leader must report their suspicions of child abuse or neglect directly to Family and Children's Services, or local police.

* The process will be carefully documented using the accompanying reporting forms, including dates, time, and content of all conversation pertaining to the alleged abuse or harassment.

* When appropriate, legal counsel will be contacted and the incident will be reported to the insurance company.

* Strict confidentiality will be maintained for alleged victim and alleged perpetrator.

* One person, preferably a member of the governance board, will be appointed to report to Media.

* All paperwork concerning allegations will be kept under lock and key.

* The alleged perpetrator will be relieved of their position immediately pending an investigation. In the event the accused is a staff member, they will be suspended pending an investigation.

* Any incident, in which there is a concern for the safety or well-being of a child or youth under the care and supervision of our ministry, will be taken seriously.

* Prayer support and pastoral care will be provided for all involved.

* If a pastor is accused of abuse, the guidelines contained in the Convention of Atlantic Baptist Churches Moral Failure document will be followed.

* If a member/adherent of MBC is accused/convicted of child abuse outside of Middleton Baptist Church, that person may be asked to appear before the governance board and be subject to church discipline.

This policy will be posted in the Church Office and will be read at each annual business meeting of the Church.

Revised by:
