

## PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE POLICY

The first goal of Portland Harvest Church Children's Ministries is, "to provide a safe, secure, and loving environment for children to enjoy and where parents feel comfortable leaving their child." Therefore we have a policy that reflects our desire to prevent child abuse and to stop child abuse, as we become aware of it.

Our first line of defense in preventing child abuse is the application, screening, and interview process that all staff and volunteers in our ministry must complete prior to being placed to serve in a classroom. All people who work with or in the vicinity of children regardless of their area of ministry are expected to adhere to the following policies. Failure to do so may result in dismissal from their ministry position.

### 1. Worker approval and identification:

- All workers and Staff must have a completed and approved application on file in the church office.
- All workers must wear an approved identification name tag, when on duty.
- All visitors to the classroom (**including parents**) must first register with the Head Teacher.
- Unauthorized people or suspicious activity, should be reported to the Administrator on duty.

### 2. Restroom procedures:

- Workers may never take a child, alone, to the restroom. They must always be accompanied by another adult or other children.
- Children should have as much privacy as possible. Enter a bathroom stall only when absolutely necessary to assist the child, keeping the door open.
- Diapers are only to be changed in designated areas and in the presence of other workers.

### 3. Classroom procedures:

- Physical discipline, of any kind, is never allowed by church workers in the church setting.
- Physical contact with children should be minimal and only in the presence of other adults. Appropriate touching should be limited to handshakes, "high fives", brief hugs or a brief touch on the shoulder.
- At least two workers should be present at all times. No child should be alone with a worker. If a child arrives before other members of your teaching team arrive, he/she must wait until your teaching team is in place.
- Window blinds are to be kept open at all times unless it is necessary to darken the room for proper showing of videos or projected audio visual equipment.
- Workers may not have the children sit on their lap while the room is darkened or when other workers are not present.

### 4. Approved activities:

- Activities or outings outside of regularly scheduled classes or childcare must be pre-approved by the Children's Pastor.
- Workers are never to take a child to the child's home without another adult accompanying them.

### 5. Definitions of Child Abuse:

As defined by "The National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse".

- Physical Abuse

*Non-accidental injury, which may include beatings, violent shaking, human bites, strangulation, suffocation, poisoning or burns. The results may be bruises and welts, broken bones, scars permanent disfigurement, long-lasting psychological damage, serious internal injuries, brain damage or death.*

- Neglect

*The failure to provide a child with basic needs including food, clothing, education, shelter and medical care; also abandonment and inadequate supervision.*

- Sexual Abuse

*The sexual exploitation of a child by an older person.*

- Emotional Maltreatment

*A pattern of behavior that attacks a child's emotional development and a sense of self worth, such as constant criticizing, belittling, insulting, manipulation; also, providing no love, support or guidance.*

## **6. Reporting Suspected Child Abuse:**

- A preschool, children's or youth worker who suspects child abuse has occurred should report the incident or suspicions to his/her supervising Department Head. The supervising Department Head will immediately inform the Director of Pastoral Ministries and the Business Administrator of the incident. The supervising Department Head will assist the worker in reporting the incident to the Portland Police Department's child abuse investigators.
- Inappropriate behavior with a child, even though it may not be considered abuse, should also be reported to the supervising Department Head, Children's Ministries or Youth Department Pastor.
- When an allegation is made the Church leadership will follow the guidelines in "Responding to an Allegation of Child Abuse Within the Church", an outline, used with permission, from Richard Hammar, (Christian Ministry Resources, Matthews, North Carolina).
  - \* All allegations will be taken seriously.
  - \* All allegations will be handled confidentially.
  - \* Compassion will be shown towards the victim.

