

# **Child/Youth Protection Policy**

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**Grace Fellowship Evangelical Free Church  
Child/Youth Protection Policy**

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# GRACE FELLOWSHIP EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH CHILD/YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

## GENERAL POLICY

The church has a profound moral and legal obligation to reduce the possibility of child abuse from ever occurring. This policy has been formed with that obligation in mind. Incidents of child sexual, emotional, and physical abuse or neglect cut across all boundaries. Each year, over one million children are victims. Abuse causes deep and sometimes lifelong psychological damage to its victims and their families. Further, when abuse occurs in the church, the reputations of the church and its staff are jeopardized. Both the church and staff may become vulnerable to costly and time-consuming legal action.

Therefore, both in response to provisions of the National Child Protection Act of 1993 and because Grace Fellowship Church desires that the church be a safe and secure place for all children and youth who attend or participate in activities, Grace Fellowship has adopted the following Child/Youth Protection Policy.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to define child abuse and to ensure that all volunteers and compensated child and youth workers understand Grace Fellowship's employment selection practices (as they relate to child abuse), the reporting of suspected abuse, the appropriate supervision and conduct of workers, child abuse training of workers, and the process of dealing with workers who have been accused of child abuse.

## PROCEDURE

### A. Definition of Child Abuse

#### 1. What is a child?

Missouri and Kansas law defines a child as any person, regardless of physical or mental condition, under 18 years of age.

#### 2. What is considered abuse?

Missouri Law defines "abuse" as "any physical injury, sexual abuse, or emotional abuse inflicted on a child other than by accidental means by those responsible for his/her care, custody, and control..."

Kansas Law defines "abuse" as "harm to the child that may be physical or emotional injury (or serious risk of injury), excessive punishment, sexual offenses, or child torture by a parent, family member, boyfriend, or girlfriend of the parents, or any person responsible for the child's welfare, such as a babysitter, daycare provider or any other substitute caregiver."

NOTE: Grace Fellowship Evangelical Free Church (Grace Fellowship) does not allow spanking as an appropriate form of discipline. Therefore, no spanking is permitted by anyone under the responsibility and authority of Grace Fellowship. **Volunteers or compensated staff cannot use spanking as a form of discipline.**

### 3. What is child sexual abuse?

In general, it is “any sexual activity with a child – whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day care situation, a foster/residential setting, or in any other setting, including on a street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child, provided the child is four years older than the victim” (National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse, 1992).

Child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent. All child sexual abuse is an exploitation of a child’s vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the actions. Child sexual abuse is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially, and developmentally ready.

Child sexual abuse includes behaviors that involve touching and non-touching aspects.

Types of abuse that involve touching include:

- Fondling
- Oral, genital, and anal penetration
- Intercourse
- Forcible rape

Types of sexual abuse that do not involve touching include:

- Verbal comments
- Exposing children to pornographic videos, pictures, literature, or other materials.
- Obscene phone calls
- Exhibitionism
- Allowing children to witness sexual activity

### B. Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

Missouri Law states “If a child care worker...teacher...or other person with responsibility for the care of children has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to conditions or circumstances which would reasonably result in abuse or neglect, he/she shall immediately report or cause a report to be made to the Division of Family Services.”

Kansas Law states “Certain people—doctors, nurses, teachers, child care center staff, social workers, and others—are required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect...”

1. How to Report an Incident

Missouri Law states that **“evidence of sexual abuse or sexual molestation of any child under eighteen years of age shall be turned over to the division within twenty-four hours by those mandated to report.”** Report your suspicions immediately to your supervisor (paid staff member), both verbally and in writing on the Form for Reporting Abuse. The supervisor is responsible to bring the concern to the attention of the Pastoral Staff.

2. After a Report is Made

The Pastoral Staff will see that an immediate investigation is conducted in conjunction with Grace Fellowship’s attorney and Elders. If it is determined that actual or suspected child abuse has occurred, or if reasonable cause exists to suspect that child abuse has occurred, they will place a “HOT LINE” telephone call (1-800-392-3738) to the Missouri Department of Family Services-Central Registry, or Kansas Child Abuse “HOT LINE” (1-800-922-5330).

The state (Missouri or Kansas) that is telephoned is dependent upon the state of residence of the abuse victim. If the victim has divorced parents that live in two states, a telephone abuse report is to be made in each state. Legal counsel will be involved at the earliest possible time.

Once the Division of Family Services accepts the telephone report as legitimate (probable basis of truth), they will assign a caseworker to investigate.

3. Allegations Made Against Staff or Volunteers

a. Paid Staff

Grace Fellowship Church’s policy is to immediately place the paid staff person whom the allegation is brought against on paid leave. This means that the accused is not allowed to work but will continue to receive his/her usual pay. A paid staff member is on leave until the leadership team makes its final determination. Normally, an investigation by the state agency takes thirty days.

b. Volunteer

Grace Fellowship Church policy is to immediately relieve the volunteer from his/her duties. The volunteer is not permitted to serve in a volunteer capacity until the allegations are resolved.

c. Grace Fellowship’s Internal Reporting Procedure

Any inappropriate conduct or relationships between an adult volunteer worker and/or compensated worker and a member of the youth group or a child should be reported to the appropriate staff person (who must keep a permanent written record) and confronted immediately and investigated. Prompt warnings (a written record must be kept) will be issued when appropriate, and the situation monitored very closely. The adult worker’s services will be terminated

immediately for continued violation of such warnings, or for a single violation of sufficient gravity.

Grace Fellowship's Personnel Team, Insurance Company, and attorney will be advised of an allegation of sufficient gravity. At the discretion of the Personnel Team a non-Grace Fellowship professional may be hired to monitor the caseworker's interviews and/or investigation.

d. Accused's Rights

If a staff member or volunteer is being investigated because of a report of child abuse, he or she has certain rights. These include:

- (1) The right to be informed of the nature of the report (not including information about the person(s) who reported the alleged abuse or neglect).
- (2) The right to provide full information regarding his/her knowledge of the alleged report and to identify witnesses who can support his/her explanation.
- (3) The right to deny the social worker entrance to his/her home or to discuss the allegations. (If he/she chooses not to cooperate with the social worker conducting the investigation, the assistance of law enforcement may be obtained).
- (4) The right to be informed of the agency's decision and the basis for that decision.

4. Worker's Rights If a Report of Child Abuse is Confirmed

Should a report of abuse be confirmed following an investigation, the worker would have certain rights. These include:

- a. The right to request and receive information about the finding (not including information about the person(s) who reported the alleged abuse or neglect).
- b. The right to disagree with the finding and to request a formal hearing by a State Department hearing officer.
- c. The right to be represented by a lawyer.

NOTE: Adults who work with children and adolescent youth should understand that sexual relationships, physical abuse, and emotional abuse with minors can lead to a felony conviction and imprisonment. Church workers should also understand that Grace Fellowship's insurance policy may not provide them with a legal defense of a sexual, physical, or emotional misconduct charge, or pay any portion of a jury verdict assessed against them because of such conduct.

## 5. Records Maintained by the State

If the agency finds that there is sufficient evidence of child abuse, neglect or sexual abuse to confirm, a report will be submitted to the appropriate law enforcement officials, the record will be kept by the state agency, and information concerning the victim and alleged perpetrator will be entered into the Child Abuse/Neglect Central Registry. A person who is placed on the registry as an abuser or neglecter is barred from employment, residence or volunteering in child care facilities, and the information may be given to other governmental agencies who have a need to know.

If the report is unfounded, the record will be kept for two years and then destroyed. No information will be entered into the Central Registry or be shared with any other governmental agencies.

## 6. Grace Fellowship's Public Statement

Under no circumstances is anyone affiliated with Grace Fellowship permitted to make a public statement other than the appointed spokesperson.

The basic content of the "public statement" will be as follows: "An allegation was received by the Social Services Department. They (Social Services) are investigating the allegations, and we are cooperating. There is no additional information I can share until the Social Services Department completes its investigation."

## 7. Follow-up Care

Grace Fellowship recognizes the potential trauma and stress that victims and their families suffer when an abusive situation is suspected. Therefore, Grace Fellowship will offer to provide up to four counseling sessions each for the victim and his or her family members. Additional counseling may be approved by the Elder Board in consultation with the counselor.

Also, should the alleged perpetrator be a Grace Fellowship staff member or volunteer, a minimum of four counseling sessions will be provided during the investigation, or after if it is determined the charges were unfounded and the staff or volunteer returns to work. However, should guilt be established, no further counseling will be provided for the perpetrator without approval by the Elder Board.

## C. Supervision of Children or Youth

Even though a comprehensive hiring and screening process is used and reasonable care has been taken in selecting part-time and volunteer workers, maintaining proper supervision of youth and children is also necessary. Should proper supervision not occur, Grace Fellowship may be liable on the basis of "Negligent Supervision" should abuse occur. Negligent supervision refers to a failure to exercise reasonable care in the supervision of church workers and church activities.

Programs that involve children and youth must always have adequate supervisory personnel. See the specific ministry guidelines for further explanation. Events that do not have adequate supervising adults should be canceled. When questions arise, contact the Pastoral Staff.

## D. Worker Selection

### 1. Six Week Rule

Following six weeks of regular attendance/involvement with Grace Fellowship, volunteer workers may begin serving in children's or youth ministry, providing they complete the steps listed in the Child/Youth Protection Policy.

### 2. Employment Forms

Once an applicant has been identified for employment/service, the following form must be obtained:

#### a. Application For Children/Youth Ministry

The application is to be completed by all potential paid and volunteer workers. This form is to be filed in the Church office. A cover letter will accompany the application.

### 3. Reference Checks

As a precautionary measure and not because Grace Fellowship suspects anyone of wrong-doing, all paid staff members and volunteers working with children and youth will undergo reference checks for the purpose of obtaining information regarding past experiences with and suitability for children's/youth ministry.

### 4. Background Checks

If reference checks are unclear or questionable, background checks may be deemed necessary. Background checks conducted may include: (1) a nationwide criminal background check by the Kansas Bureau of Investigation and/or Missouri Highway Patrol, and (2) an examination of the Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry from the applicant's current or previous state of residency. Release forms are required by these and other agencies. Additionally, a copy will be made of the applicant's driver's license and social Security card to confirm identity.

Reports from the Missouri Highway Patrol for nationwide criminal background checks take approximately two to three weeks, and results of background checks from the Missouri Division of Family Services or Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services may take a month or more. **Should it be necessary to start the applicant (paid or volunteer) prior to the results of background checks being received, the applicant will be staffed on a "conditional" basis. Applicants will be informed that their continued employment/service is contingent upon the receipt of good results from background checks.** Good results of background checks will be communicated by a Successful Completion of Background Checks.



5. Compensated Workers

Paid employees shall be defined as all paid staff, without exception, including maintenance/custodial personnel and pastors. Compensated workers include hourly, salaried, part-time or full-time. Further definition of an employee would be anyone who works with or in the Nursery, Sunday School, Children's Church, Pre-School, or any other ministry with children and/or with any youth ministries.

The completed application is to be forwarded to the Pastoral Staff for processing. Following review of this form, they will schedule an interview with the applicant, and references will also be checked.

6. Volunteer Workers

A volunteer, anyone working with minors more than five times in the fiscal year (January 1 to December 31), shall be defined as any person who is working with the Office Staff, Nursery, Sunday School, Children's Church, Youth Programs, or any other children's/youth ministries.

The completed application is to be forwarded to the Pastoral Staff for processing. Following receipt of these forms, references and background will be checked and if necessary an interview will be scheduled with the Pastoral Staff. A record of contact with a reference or church will be kept.

A conscientious effort should be made to ensure volunteer workers do not serve with minors by themselves; they should be teamed with another approved volunteer or staff person. Any exceptions are indicated in the specific ministry guidelines.

7. Substitute Volunteer or Worker

A Substitute Volunteer or Worker is one who is serving prior to any screening or interview. As substitutes are utilized, a record should be maintained of their times of service. Following five times of service on paid staff or in any ministry area working with children or youth, the worker selection process will be utilized. If possible, prior to the first time of service (or as soon as possible), the substitute worker or volunteer should complete the Application for Children/Youth Ministry Workers Form.

E. Worker Training

It is Grace Fellowship's policy that all staff and volunteers receive appropriate Child Protection Training. Periodic training sessions will be conducted for workers in Children's Church and Sunday School, Nursery, Youth Sunday School, and any other children's and youth ministries. However, when new staff or volunteers are added during the year, a review of the policies will be conducted at that time. A confirmation of training session attendance will be required by completing and signing the Application for Children/Youth Workers Form.

## F. Disclaimer

All information and policies stated in this document are subject to revision as the laws of Kansas and Missouri change and Grace Fellowship's response to these changes is developed.

Minors who work with children must be adequately supervised and must have been given instructions on the Nursery Guidelines and the Sunday School/Children's Church Guidelines from the Grace Fellowship's Child/Youth Protection Policy by the ministry leaders. The adult leaders/ministry leaders who work with them are responsible for oversight of their work with children, ensuring that the youth know and practice the guidelines mentioned.

# GRACE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

## NURSERY GUIDELINES

- Ministry requires a minimum of two adults in a nursery room regardless of how few children there are.
- Teacher/Student Ratios: We will try to maintain the following ratios. However, at all times there will be a minimum of two adults in a room.

0-12 months – 1:2-3  
13-23 months – 1:3-5

If the room exceeds this limit, it may have to be closed or the help of additional parents enlisted to meet staffing needs.

- A security system is in place in the nursery area to record and track parents and children. This requires identification to help protect children. It will be explained further by supervisory workers in the nursery.
- A greeter and another adult must accompany a child to the restroom or the door is to remain open.
- The caregiver is to alert the Nursery Coordinator on duty of any behavioral or physical abnormality (i.e. illness, injury, biting, excess aggression or other deviation from normal behavior). The Nursery Coordinator will then handle the situation with the parent.
- Each Nursery is staffed with two volunteers during each service. Husband and wife teams may be assigned together in the same room.
- Wellness Policy: Children should not be admitted into class with any of the following symptoms and/or illness: Fever within last 24 hours, questionable rashes, excessive coughing, diarrhea, impetigo, active chicken pox, measles/mumps, pinkeye. Any child on antibiotics should have been on the drug for at least 24 hours before coming to a children's activity. Workers will not administer any medication. Workers should find substitutes to serve in their place when they too have similar symptoms.
- Workers need to seek help from other adults (i.e. classes, worship service) when short-staffing occurs. Workers need to be aware of ratios and be ready to ask parents (other than guests/newcomers) to stay and fill staffing shortages.

# GRACE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION GUIDELINES

## SUNDAY SCHOOL/CHILDREN'S CHURCH GUIDELINES

- It is our goal to have two teachers/helpers in each classroom.
- Steps for short-staffed class:
  - 1) Utilize on-call help
  - 2) Combine two classes, if practical, to meet staffing needs. Post a notice for parents telling them where to pick up their children.
  - 3) Ask parents to stay to meet staffing needs before additional children are admitted to the classroom. Teacher will assume supervisory responsibility and inform parent of pertinent policies (i.e., bathroom policy).
  - 4) Cancel the class or program when adequate staffing is not present. Programs or classes with continual staffing deficiencies will be evaluated.
- Childcare areas, classrooms, and teaching areas should never be locked while in use. Lights should remain on.
- Wellness Policy: Children should not be admitted into class with any of the following symptoms and/or illness: fever within last 24 hours, questionable rashes, excessive coughing, diarrhea, impetigo, active chicken pox, measles/mumps, pinkeye. Any child on antibiotics should have been on the drug for at least 24 hours before coming to a children's activity. Workers will not administer any medication.
- Windows are provided in each classroom door for observation.
- Teachers must keep a weekly attendance chart.
- Children beyond pre-school age take care of their own bathroom needs. Usually, entire preschool and kindergarten classes, or at least several children are sent in a group to the bathroom. The outer bathroom door remains open. If a child is new, a teacher and helper will accompany the child to the bathroom, but remain outside the main door to walk the child back to the room. If only one adult worker is available to escort a child to the restroom, she/he must remain outside the restroom door, and in view of another adult worker.

Workers need to ask parents to take their child to the restroom before class activity begins.

- During transition time between classes, it is policy for two teachers to remain in the classroom until the new teachers or parents arrive. First grade and above age children are dismissed on their own to find their parents. Teachers/workers may also walk remaining students to the worship area to locate parents.
- Proper display of affection: Touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. Be aware of and sensitive to differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds,

individual personalities, and special needs. The following guidelines are to be promoted for pure, genuine, and positive displays of God's love.

Hugs: One-arm hugs or hand-to-arm hugs are positive contact. Avoid initiating full contact, body-to-body hugs or kisses.

Lap sitting: Appropriate sitting on laps may occur with children 5 and younger. Discourage lap sitting with school-age children. Rather, encourage them to sit next to you.

Casual Touch: Gentle contact during activities may be on children's heads, shoulders, arms, and hands.

# GRACE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

## YOUTH MINISTRY GUIDELINES

Except as otherwise noted, the following guidelines shall apply to all paid and volunteer youth workers, including full-time staff, part-time staff, regular volunteer staff, and adults who only occasionally accompany youth on trips and other special activities.

- Although contacts and ministry relationships with members of the opposite sex are healthy and inevitable, workers shall concentrate their ministries primarily on youth of the same sex as the worker.
- All meetings involving a worker and an individual youth of the same or opposite sex shall occur in a public place where other people are present. Examples of public places include the church facility, school, restaurant, or sporting event.
- No worker shall meet in private with an individual youth of the same or opposite sex unless parental consent has first been obtained. Parental consent will be obtained by using the parental Consent Form for One-on-One Activities or by the parent/guardian providing verbal consent to two people (i.e. worker and church secretary).
- When providing rides to youth of the same or opposite sex, youth workers should have a third person in the car whenever possible. Although situations often require the driver to be alone in a car with a student (i.e. picking up the first student or dropping off the last student), this should be the exception rather than the norm.
- As a general rule, youth workers shall not be alone in a private residence with an individual youth of the same or opposite sex. If the situation becomes unavoidable (i.e. a student is the first to arrive or last to be picked up), the adult shall wait with the student outside or in the foyer in sight of the front glass doors.
- On trips that involve an overnight stay, no worker shall spend the night in a room alone with an individual youth of the same or opposite sex.
- Although physical affection can have an appropriate place in ministry, workers shall use discretion as to the frequency and type of physical affection they provide to youth of the same or opposite sex. Specifically, workers should typically refrain from giving a student an intimate back massage or an intimate front-to-front hug. Workers should also avoid having students sit on their laps.
- Leader/student ratio of 1:12 maximum will be observed.

# Statement of Faith

## **WE BELIEVE:**

1. The Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired Word of God, without error in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men and the Divine and final authority for Christian faith and life.
2. In one God, Creator of all things, infinitely perfect and eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
3. That Jesus Christ is true God and true man, having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He died on the cross, a sacrifice for our sins according to the Scriptures. Further, He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where at the right hand of the Majesty on High, He now is our High Priest and Advocate.
4. That the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and during this age to convict men, regenerate the believing sinner, indwell, guide, instruct, and empower the believer for godly living and service.
5. That man was created in the image of God but fell into sin and is therefore lost and only through regeneration by the Holy Spirit can salvation and spiritual life be obtained.
6. That the shed blood of Jesus Christ and His resurrection provide the only ground for justification and salvation for all who believe, and only such as receive Jesus Christ are born of the Holy Spirit and thus become children of God.
7. That water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances to be observed by the Church during the present age. They are, however, not to be regarded as a means of salvation.
8. That the true Church is composed of all such persons who through saving faith in Jesus Christ have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and are united together in the Body of Christ of which He is the Head.
9. That only those who are thus members of the true Church shall be eligible for membership in the local church.
10. That Jesus Christ is the Lord and Head of the Church and that every local church has the right under Christ to decide and govern its own affairs.
11. In the personal and premillennial and imminent coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and that this "Blessed Hope" has a vital bearing on the personal life and service of the believer.
12. In the bodily resurrection of the dead; of the believer to everlasting blessedness and joy with the Lord; of the unbeliever to judgment and everlasting conscious punishment.