



CLBC Cares

Clear Lake Baptist Church's Child Protection Policy

Effective October 4th 2009

Updated August 16th 2009

Children are a precious gift from God entrusted to us, and their care and protection is a top priority. The Bible contains several instructions to protect and provide for those that cannot protect themselves. The trusting faith of a child is praised in Scripture, and Clear Lake Baptist Church endeavors to provide an environment where child-like faith and innocence are preserved.

*Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them."
Mark 10:14, 16*

Jesus said, "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea." Matthew 18:5-6

Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. Isaiah 1:17

Clear Lake Baptist Church's goal is to provide a safe environment for the physical, emotional and spiritual well being of all children and youth participating in church programs. We are committed to informing workers and enforcing this policy to ensure that all children and youth are safe and well protected from physical and sexual abuse while attending scheduled activities.

The primary purpose of this policy is to reduce the risk of harm to children and youth. By implementing sound child protection procedures, a secondary purpose of this policy is to reduce the risk of false accusations against paid church staff and volunteers, who work with, supervise, provide care to, or interact with children and youth.

STATEMENT OF COVENANT

As a Christian community of faith committed to ministry to and with children, we pledge to conduct all our activities and ministries in such a way that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all children and youth entrusted to us. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and screening of workers. We will be responsible in overseeing our events and in training our workers so that they are equipped to minister to children in Jesus' name. We will report and respond to all suspected incidents of abuse as is required by Texas state law and our moral conscience, and we will be prepared to minister to the families of both the abused and the perpetrator.

MINISTRY STANDARDS

We adopt the following **minimum** standards for our ministries with children and youth. In the following standards, "child" refers to any person less than 18 years of age. Exceptions to these standards shall be approved by the Pastor and the minister of the relevant division. Changes to this policy shall be approved by the Servant Leadership Team.

Selection and Screening Processes

1. All volunteers who work with children must first be active members of CLBC for six months. During this six-month period, applicants who have been otherwise fully screened and are part of a volunteer training program may be permitted to assist with children if working under the complete supervision of two fully screened workers. Paid ministry staff and paid childcare workers may be exempt from the six-month membership requirement as long as additional screening is complete prior to working with children, such as reference checks or in-depth interviews.
2. All volunteers and paid childcare workers must complete and sign an application for ministry. All persons who work with children must acknowledge in writing that they understand CLBC's policies pertaining to the protection of children and that they agree to abide by them.
3. All workers shall be interviewed by the appropriate staff or lay leader prior to working with children.
4. All workers shall complete a background check permission form and have a criminal background check performed. The criminal background check shall be repeated for each worker at least every five years. No one who is deemed unsafe shall be allowed to work with children.
5. All applications and background check reports shall be kept as part of an applicant's confidential personnel file. The personnel files shall be kept in a locked file on the church premise.
6. All workers shall be visually identified whenever supervising children.

Supervisory Requirements

1. Two-adult rule: CLBC shall make reasonable effort to ensure a minimum of two adult workers are in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during a church activity. If this is not feasible, there shall be a roving teacher who moves amid the classrooms during the program period. At no time should an adult be alone with a child in an enclosed area or a room with no visibility.
2. No person under 16 shall be considered as one of the two adults. At least one person considered as one of the two adults shall be 18 or older.
3. An identification system shall be maintained for all church activities for preschoolers so that the adults who drop off a small child are the same adults who pick the child up.
4. Each room with a children's activity shall have a window in the door or the door shall be left open throughout the duration of the church activity.
5. Parents or guardians are responsible (a) for the safety of their children before and after a scheduled event and (b) to ensure that at least one worker is present before leaving the child.
6. Workers shall be trained at least once per year to recognize the signs of abuse.
7. CLBC ministry staff and lay leaders shall ensure ongoing supervision of all workers through regular, unannounced visits into classes and other program sites.
8. Prior to any activity away from the church, a child's parent or legal guardian is required to sign an annual "Release of Claims" written permission form in order for the child to participate.

Reporting and Responding to Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect

1. Any CLBC children's worker who has cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect shall report that belief according to the following procedure:
 - a) The worker shall report the situation immediately to the Pastor or a member of the church staff
 - b) The worker shall immediately report the situation, preferably in cooperation with the Pastor or staff member, to one of the following:
 - Houston Police Department non-emergency number (713-884-3131), or 911 if appropriate, or
 - Texas Child Protective Services Child Abuse hotline (1-800-252-5400, press 4 for a case worker).
 - c) The Pastor, or his agent, shall notify the parents of the child (unless the parent is the person responsible for the abuse or neglect), appropriate legal counsel, and CLBC's insurance agent.
2. A church worker or staff accused of child abuse or neglect shall be suspended from all church-related duties involving children while the law enforcement agencies complete the investigation. This removal from duty should occur in such a way that an innocent person is not immediately deemed guilty.