

# Child Protection Policy



**The For the City Network  
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# Table of Contents

**Child Protection Guidelines.....1-5**

**Standards of Conduct.....6**

## **The For the City Network**

*Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.  
Colossians 3:23-24*

The following guidelines have been established to reflect our commitment to provide protective care for all children ages newborn through seventeen years attending programs at the church or any church sponsored events.

### **Texas Child Protection Definitions and Laws**

#### **A. Child abuse or neglect as defined by the Texas Family Code:**

**Child abuse** is defined as acts or omissions which cause or permit:

- mental or emotional injury to a child.
- physical injury or threat of physical injury to a child.
- failure to make reasonable efforts to prevent action by another person that results in physical injury to a child.
- sexual contact with a child.
- failure to make reasonable efforts to prevent sexual contact with or in the presence of a child.

**Neglect** includes:

- leaving a child in a situation where he/she would be exposed to a risk of harm.
- requiring the child to use judgment or take actions beyond his/her level of maturity, physical condition or mental abilities.
- failure to obtain medical care for a child.
- failure to provide a child with food, clothing or shelter necessary to sustain life or health.

#### **Sexual misconduct**

Sexual misconduct with a child includes crimes such as indecent exposure, indecency with a child and sexual molestation. It also includes conduct that may not violate a penal statute but is sexually oriented, as in sexual harassment and sexual suggestion. If this conduct is committed by workers in the church, either employed or volunteer, claims can be made against both the church and the individual.

#### **Every Person's Duty to report**

The Texas Family Code **requires** that any person who learns of, or believes that a child's health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect **must report that belief immediately**. Call the **Abuse Hotline** at **1-800-252-5400** or, in the event of imminent danger to the child, call **911**.

#### **Immunity**

A person making a report, or assisting in the investigation of a report of child abuse, is immune from both civil and criminal liability that might be incurred. This means that a person who reports child abuse and is later sued can defend themselves on the basis that their actions were protected by this immunity statute and the reporter will not be liable for damages relating to the reporting.



## **B. Selection and Screening Process:**

The term 'People' addresses both paid church employees and any one who volunteers to work with children in a church activity.

### **Classification of workers**

There are two categories of workers referencing their levels of responsibility and risk.

**Primary workers:** Include all church employees and those volunteers who are in roles with greater responsibility or risk. All Primary workers must be at least eighteen (18) years of age.

**Secondary workers:** Persons who interact with children as The For the City Network teachers, volunteers who see children only in group settings on church premises, and those who interact with children in the presence of a primary worker. This category may also include parents who help supervise activities. All workers under the age of eighteen (18) are classified as secondary workers.

### **Application to work with children**

All applicants must complete an 'Application to Work With Children'. If the applicant is under the age of eighteen (18), a parent must give written permission for them to work with our children.

Applications should be submitted to The For the City Network office accompanied by a photocopy of a valid pictured identification that includes date of birth (i.e., Texas drivers license).

The organization will keep all application information confidential. If the organization learns of incorrect or misleading information on an application that might cause potential danger to children, that worker will be relieved of any duties with children.

### **Criminal background check (NATIONAL)**

Completing the 'Application to Work With Children' authorizes the church to conduct criminal background checks and sexual abuse registry checks required for both "all employees" and "those volunteers who work with children". No one will be allowed to work with our children who has been convicted of any crime involving misconduct with a child.

Background checks are kept confidential. The church administrator will supervise the criminal background checking process, notifying the appropriate staff member of the results.

### **Reference Checks**

Reference checks of persons inside and outside the congregation of The For the City Network who knows the applicant, and preferably who know how the applicant works with children and youth.



## **C. Maintaining a Safe Environment**

### **Identification of workers**

People working with children must be photographed with copies of those photographs kept in their personnel file.

### **Name badges**

People working with children are required to wear a name badge at all times when they are supervising children. Badges are provided by the church.

### **Two-adult rule**

***At no time can an adult be in a room ... or an enclosed area alone with a child.***

There must be at least two approved workers in attendance any time children are participating in a church activity. At least one of these must be a primary worker. These two adults cannot be related to one another in any way (i.e., spouse, mother, father, sister, brother).

Some The For the City Network classes may have one adult in attendance as the teacher while the class is in session. In these instances, doors to the classrooms **must** remain open.

### **Restroom Assistance**

Only female volunteers or employees may take a child into the restroom. In addition, diaper changing stations must be in public areas of the classroom.

### **Vehicle safety**

If an employee or volunteer worker is driving youth in a The For the City Network vehicle, the worker must be 25 years of age, have a valid driver's license, be listed on church's automobile insurance or complete an Application for Qualified Driver Status, and adhere to all traffic laws and speed limits. The worker must wear his or her seat belt and require the youth to do the same. If a worker is driving youth in a personal vehicle, the worker must complete an Application for Qualified Driver Status, have a valid driver's license, drive the speed limit or below it, adhere to all traffic laws and carry a minimum of \$100,000 in personal auto liability insurance. The worker must also wear his or her seat belt and require the youth to do the same. In any instance, all workers must drive cautiously and safely when youth are in the automobile. The use of a hand held cell phone or other hand held communication device (including texting) is prohibited by any driver while driving any vehicle that is transporting youth.





## **D. Supervisory Requirements**

### **for all people working with children at The For the City Network**

The organization will provide adequate supervisory control of people working with children who are participating in The For the City Network programs, including daily childcare programs.

#### **Safety of children**

All children's workers share the responsibility to promote the emotional and physical safety of the participants. If an unsafe condition exists, they should immediately take precautions to protect the children. Nothing contained in any other church procedure relieves children's workers from this responsibility.

#### **Preschool identification system**

The organization maintains a child identification system to be sure that the adults who drop off a small child are the same adults who pick the child up. The staff person in charge of the area will supervise the system to identify persons authorized to pick up and take responsibility for preschool children leaving a church activity.

#### **Observation of children**

The For the City Network activities for children will be scheduled in areas visible from adjoining areas. Visibility should be maintained by leaving blinds open and, wherever possible, the door to the room left open. Exceptions may be made by when noise reduction is necessary for children's naps. Two approved workers must remain in the room at all times.

Windows are installed in the doors of all rooms typically occupied by children and into the doors of all offices in the church.

***At no time can an adult meet alone with a child in any room  
where the door is closed ... or in an area where they cannot be seen.***

#### **Children's pickup**

If a child younger than six (6) is not picked up by their parent or guardian on time, they will be kept by their teachers in the children's area until the parent or guardian is located.

Children six years old and older are not permitted to leave the area of a completed The For the City Network activity without supervision unless otherwise requested by the parent or guardian.

Children under the age of thirteen (13) are not allowed to leave The For the City Network property without parental permission, either unattended or in a group.



## **E. Reporting and Responding to Alleged Child Abuse or Neglect**

### **Reporting policy**

It is the policy of the church to report any incident of child abuse or neglect toward any child in the church.

- ☐ Do not treat any suspicion as frivolous
- ☐ Notify your supervisor immediately. Commence the investigation right away.
- ☐ The staff member in charge should suspend the accused person from the performance of duties involving children until the official investigation has been completed
- ☐ Cooperate fully with law enforcement officials.
- ☐ The pastor or his agent will inform victim and victim's family of the steps that are being taken, and continue to keep them advised of the status of the investigation.
- ☐ If child abuse is confirmed, ask the victim and the victim's family what action they would like to take in the matter and fully cooperate to address their requests within bounds of a legal and prudent response. (The For the City Network legal counsel should assist in this determination.)
- ☐ In an instance where child abuse is confirmed, the church will immediately dismiss the worker from their position. Termination will be considered appropriate in the circumstances.
- ☐ In instances where evidence is inconclusive, the church should take action with the advice of law enforcement officials depending on the strength of the evidence available and after consideration of the victim and the victim's family's requests.
- ☐ The Director will notify the appropriate legal counsel.
- ☐ The Business Administrator will notify the organization's insurance agent.
- ☐ The Director will determine the amount of information he believes is appropriate to relate to the volunteers and participants. Consultation with legal counsel is advised.

### **Confidentiality**

All reports of child abuse or neglect shall be held in absolute confidence. No person shall communicate any information concerning the alleged event to any person except as necessary to cooperate with any official investigation. Any breach of this confidentiality by an employee of The For the City Network shall be cause for immediate dismissal.

The Director, in consultation with the official conducting the investigation, may authorize limited additional disclosure if necessary to protect other children from harm in the near future, particularly where the person responsible for the abuse cannot be identified, but in no case shall the identity of the victim or the accused person be disclosed except as required by law.

**Standards of Conduct  
Child Protection  
Employees and Volunteers**

- No employee or volunteer shall engage in any act of child abuse.
- No employee or volunteer shall touch, interact with, or otherwise communicate with a child in any way that is intended to be sexually stimulating, emotionally demeaning, or exploitive.
- Common expressions of affection and affirmation (including hugs and pats on the back) or physical care (including diaper changes and first aid) are appropriate in this and any other community of caring Christians. Care must be taken, however, that physical expressions of affection are not excessive or imposed on another individual.
- Employees and volunteers who work with children are tasked with guarding the physical and emotional safety of those in their care and with being alert for signs of each child's well being.
- No employee or volunteer shall use corporal punishment on a child during any program or activity conducted by The For the City Network.
- To the maximum extent practicable, there shall be visual access into each room in which activities with children are being conducted.
- To the maximum extent practicable, employees and volunteers who work with children shall work in pairs, with two or more adults present with children at all activities. In classroom activities with children, when only one adult is present, there shall be an open door to the classroom and/or supervision utilized for monitoring classroom through window access.
- Each provisional volunteer who works with children shall work under the supervision of an employee or a volunteer at all times.
- If an unaccompanied employee or volunteer meets with a single child to conduct a private discussion, that meeting shall be held at The For the City Network when the church is open for scheduled group activities or shall be held at a public place. In no case shall an unaccompanied employee or volunteer meet with a single child at The For the City Network unless there is at least one other employee or volunteer in the building who is aware that the private meeting is being held and the location of that meeting, although the identity of that child may remain confidential.
- With respect to any organization-sponsored activity for which The For the City Network arranges transportation, one employee or volunteer may transport children as long as there are two or more children in the vehicle. Children will be picked up and dropped off as a group at The For the City Network or at other designated, central locations. Exceptions to this clause may be made in the case of a medical or family emergency, or with written permission of a parent or guardian and with written acknowledgement of responsibility by an employee or volunteer.

(Privately arranged transportation is not addressed by this clause.)

