

Naperville
Covenant
Church



PROTECTION GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES For Children & Youth

Updated September 2021



NAPERVILLE EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH

CHURCH PROTECTION GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of Mark records that when people brought little children to Jesus, he took them in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

It is our desire to bring children to Jesus, too.

Because we recognize that we are a reflection of God's love to those in our care, we take seriously our responsibility to them. These guidelines are set forth to provide a safe and nurturing environment in which we can bring our children and youth to the Savior.

We view ourselves as partners with parents, seeking to provide quality care and instruction in our children and youth ministries. All of our guidelines are designed to protect and promote growth in God for each child and adult involved.

Everyone who teaches, cares for or helps children and youth under the sponsorship of Naperville Evangelical Covenant Church, whether as a volunteer or an employee, must follow these guidelines and procedures.

AWARENESS

Definition: Illinois state law defines an "abused child" as "a person under age 18 who is being harmed by a parent, family member, boyfriend or girlfriend of the parent, or any person responsible for the child's welfare... Harm to the child may be physical or emotional injury (or serious risk of injury), excessive punishment, sexual offenses, or child torture".

The law defines a "neglected child" as "any child whose parent or person responsible for the child's welfare does not provide necessary support, education as required by law, medical or other care for the well-being of the child, or such necessities as adequate food, clothing, and shelter".

SCREENING PROCEDURES

1. All volunteers will be required to fill out an application form, which will be kept in a personnel file.
2. All volunteers will have a background check.
3. All volunteers will be approved by the ministry head.

The discovery that any prospective or existing staff member or volunteer has been charged with or convicted of sexual or physical abuse or neglect of a child shall be grounds for termination of assignment.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1. Each new volunteer applicant must successfully complete a volunteer training that will include a review of these church protection guidelines and procedures before he/she is allowed to work with children and youth.
2. Volunteers may be asked to attend further training sessions and conferences to better equip them for their tasks and ministry.

SUPERVISION GUIDELINES

Proper Displays of Affection

Touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives. Physical contact with children and youth should be age and developmentally appropriate. Volunteers and NaperCov staff must 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 side hugs or hand-to-arm hugs are positive contact. Avoid initiation of full contact, body-to-body hugs or kisses.
- **Lap Sitting** - Appropriate sittings 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 heads, shoulders, arms and hands. Physical discipline should never be used on children or youth.
- **Back Rubs** - Back rubs should not be given or received.

Discipline Policy

All interaction regarding discipline needs to carefully consider a child or youth's dignity. Respect and understanding must guide all actions in regards to instruction, training, and correction. In case of discipline problems, please follow a pre-described plan. No spanking, physical restraints or swearing may be used for discipline. When behavior is not acceptable, have a 'time-out' period (one minute per age of child is acceptable). If discipline problems persist despite multiple efforts to correct them, parents need to be notified and will be asked to remove the student.

Standards for Staff, Volunteers, Children & Youth

We believe that a Christian must strive to live a life in which Christ is Lord of all thoughts, actions and words. In addition, we believe that certain activities, though not specifically prohibited in Scripture, are detrimental to our individual and corporate lives and the witness of NaperCov in our community.

We assume that all who teach, care for, or help with children and youth at NaperCov will use good judgment and common sense. The following guidelines should be adhered to during NaperCov-sponsored activities and programs:

- No alcoholic beverages are permitted.
- No tobacco products are allowed.
- No drugs unless leaders are notified and they are prescribed by a physician.
- No fireworks, firearms or other potentially dangerous weapons (i.e. knives, slingshots, etc.).
- No physical violence.
- No other behavior or conduct that is detrimental to our individual and corporate lives and the witness of NaperCov in our community.

Architectural Guidelines

- At least one external door and the bathroom doors in nursery through preschool classrooms will be a half door.
- All doors, with the exception of hallway restroom doors, will have windows or side windows.
- Sight lines through the windows shall remain unobstructed at all times.
- Bathrooms used by children will have small toilets so that children can use them with little assistance.
- Nursery changing tables must be in full view at all times.

Child Security Guidelines

- Children are never to be dropped off in a classroom without the teachers present. Generally, supervision will be provided 10 minutes before a program starts.
- All volunteers working with children will wear a nametag.

Bathroom Guidelines

- Children under the age of 12 who are assisting in the nursery should refrain from changing diapers.
- Classrooms for younger ages (2's through 4's) have bathrooms located in the rooms.
- If a younger child needs assistance in the bathroom, an adult may enter to assist observing the following guidelines:
 - No one under the age of 19 should help children in the bathrooms.
 - The top half of the bathroom door must be left open at all times.
- When using a hallway bathroom, an adult should escort the child to the hallway bathroom and screen the bathroom to make sure that everything is in order. The volunteer should then remain outside the bathroom door and wait for the child there, and then escort the child back to the classroom. The volunteer should open the bathroom door and call the child's name if the child is taking longer than seems necessary.
- A volunteer should never be alone with a child in an unsupervised bathroom and never go into a bathroom stall with a child and shut the door.
- Children are taken to the bathroom only upon the request of the child or if the child shows obvious signs of needing to go.
- Both the volunteer and the child must wash their hands thoroughly after toileting.

Special Events

- All trips and outings will require a minimum of two approved adult leaders (“two-deep leadership”). Staffing guidelines must be followed as listed below.
- Off-campus activities must be pre-approved by the Pastor of Student Ministries or Pastor of Children & Family Ministries.
- Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child or youth participating in off-campus activities.
- Official events for children and youth will be announced in the youth or church newsletter or email and/or in the church bulletin.
- In addition, unofficial spontaneous youth gatherings or events may take place from time to time where a staff member or counselor may be present (i.e. after school, after an official event, etc.). Youth will be asked to contact and obtain permission from parents in this event.
- When an activity involves the transportation of children and youth, all drivers must be at least 21 years of age, have a valid driver’s license and current automobile insurance. The number of persons in the car must not exceed the number of seatbelts.

Overnight Guidelines

- All overnight activities must be pre-approved by the Staff.
- There will be no overnight activities for children younger than third grade unless it is specifically a parent/child outing.
- All overnight activities must have a ratio of one volunteer for every ten children or youth. Any activity involving both boys and girls must have at least one male and female adult leader.

Special Concerns for Youth Ministry

- Transportation: Unless permission from a parent is received, Youth leaders should not transport students alone. When driving students home, youth leaders should never be alone with a student unless permission from a parent is received.
- Post-Event: Youth leaders should not leave students alone at the church waiting for transportation. If only one student remains, two leaders should remain if possible.
- One-on-One Sessions: One-on-one appointments outside of the church building should only take place in public places. Appointments in the building should take place in rooms with windows where both parties can be seen or with the door open.

- Dating: At no time shall anyone working with youth pursue a dating relationship with a student. Staff should always be sensitive to students with “crushes”.
- Open Door Policy: At no time should anyone working with youth have a one-on-one meeting behind closed doors.

CLASSROOM SUPERVISION GUIDELINES

General Guidelines

- Two-deep leadership is very important. Teachers should work in teams so that at least two teachers are in the room at all times.
- The Pastor of Children & Family Ministries and her/his assistants shall make regular visits to the classrooms to ensure that classrooms are properly supervised.
- All volunteers in one room should not be from the same family. Families may work together when other volunteers are present.
- The following are staffing guidelines. A minimum of two adults is understood regardless of the number of children present:
 - Nursery - One adult per 3 children
 - 2's & 3's/Pre-School/Primary - One adult per 8 children
 - Junior/Senior High - One adult per 15 youth.
- If a class is unexpectedly short-staffed, the following steps should be taken:
 - Trained volunteers who may be available will be asked to fill unexpected staffing needs.
 - Two classes may be combined, if practical, to meet staffing requirements.
 - If the above two options are not available, a parent will be asked to stay to meet the staffing guidelines before additional children will be admitted to the classroom. The teacher will assume supervisory responsibility and inform the parent of pertinent guidelines and procedures.
 - Programs without adequate staffing will not commence.
- When babysitting is required for a church-sponsored event not defined as children's or youth ministry (i.e. congregational meetings, dinners), two-deep leadership is required as well as adherence to the staffing guidelines set forth above.

Nursery Guidelines

- Two volunteers should be in the room ten (10) minutes before each church event that requires nursery supervision.

- At least two volunteers should take care of the children at all times.
- The child security and bathroom guidelines set forth above are to be followed.
- When a parent comes to the door with their child:
 - Attach a name tag to the child's clothing and diaper bag.
 - Using masking tape, label the child's bottle and lid with the child's name.
 - Parents of children in the nursery will be required to sign in the children they are dropping off for care that day. Parents will be asked to share a cell phone number where they can be reached if necessary. Sign in sheets should be placed outside the nursery so that the parent does not have to enter into the nursery.
- Children who have colds, runny noses, or who appear visibly ill should not be permitted in the nursery. This is for the physical wellness of the other children. Should a child become ill while in the nursery, isolate the child from the other children as much as possible and contact the parents.
- Volunteers who are ill should not be permitted in the nursery.
- Volunteers should not accept any child whose parents or guardian will not remain within the physical confines of the church. This is to ensure the volunteers can immediately contact the child's parent(s) or guardian in the event of an emergency.
- Parents are asked to pick up their child within ten minutes of the class ending so that the teachers may remain on schedule.
- The lower half of the door from the hallway to the nursery is to be locked once the nursery volunteers come. No one other than nursery volunteers, nursing mothers and babies should be allowed in the nursery area.
- Should any injuries occur, an accident form must be completed, with one copy given to the parents and the other copy to the church office.
- Disposable gloves are to be used at all times when changing a child's diaper. If a cloth diaper is used or the child's personal clothing is soiled, place the articles of clothing in a plastic bag and return it to the child's diaper bag.
- Volunteers will wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after diapering a child.
- Two volunteers will remain in the nursery until each child has been picked up by their parent(s) or the person responsible for the child.

2 & 3's/Preschool Guidelines

- Two teachers should be in the classroom at least ten (10) minutes before each class period.
- At least two teachers should take care of the children at all times.
- The discipline, child security, and bathroom guidelines set forth above are to be followed.
- When a parent comes to the door with their child:
 - Attach a name tag to the child's clothing and any bags they may have.
 - If a child has a water bottle, use masking tape to label it with their name.
 - Parents of children in the Preschool Room will be required to sign in the children they are dropping off for care that day. Parents will be asked to share a cell phone number where they can be reached if necessary. Sign in sheets should be placed outside the Preschool Room so that the parent does not have to enter into the room.
- Children who have colds, runny noses, or who appear visibly ill should not be permitted in the Preschool Room. This is for the physical wellness of the other children. Should a child become ill while in the Preschool Room, isolate the child from the other children as much as possible and contact the parents.
- Volunteers who are ill should not be permitted in the Preschool Room.
- Volunteers should not accept any child whose parents or guardian will not remain within the physical confines of the church. This is to ensure the volunteers can immediately contact the child's parent(s) or guardian in the event of an emergency.
- Parents are asked to pick up their child within ten minutes of the class ending so that the teachers may remain on schedule.
- The lower half of the door from the hallway to the classroom is to be locked once the teachers are present. No one other than teachers and children should be allowed in the classroom area.
- Should any injuries occur, an accident form must be completed, with one copy given to the parents and the other copy to the church office.
- Disposable gloves are to be used at all times when changing a child's diaper. If a cloth diaper is used or the child's personal clothing is soiled, place the articles of clothing in a plastic bag and return it to the child's diaper bag.

- Volunteers will wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after diapering a child.
- Two volunteers will remain in the Preschool Room until each child has been picked up by their parent(s) or the person responsible for the child.

4. Primary, Junior and Senior High School Guidelines

- Two teachers should be in the classroom at least ten (10) minutes before each class period.
- At least two teachers should be in the classroom at all times.
- The discipline, child security and bathroom guidelines set forth above are to be followed.
 - Children who have colds, runny noses, or who appear visibly ill should not be permitted in the classroom. This is for the physical wellness of the other children.
 - Should a child become ill while in the classroom, isolate the child from the other children as much as possible and contact the parents.

Teachers who are ill should not be permitted in the classroom.

RESPONSE TO INDICATIONS OF ABUSE

I. Mandatory Reporters

Illinois state law says that any child-care worker affiliated with a church, other house of worship, or other non-profit (whether in a paid capacity or as a volunteer) is considered a “mandated reporter.” Mandated Reporters must promptly report suspected abuse to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Failure to comply with mandatory reporting requirements constitutes a Class A misdemeanor for a first offense and a Class 4 felony for a second or subsequent violation. The state of Illinois now requires all mandatory reporters to undergo training, if not prior to their children-related service, within three months of first serving. No exceptions exist for occasional or sporadic service.

Illinois Department of Children & Family Services offers a free 60-minute training online at <https://mr.dcfstraining.org/> for mandatory reporters covering the following:

- Better recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect
- Define the types of child abuse and neglect
- Determine what professions/individuals are mandated to report
- Know your role as a Mandated Reporter
- Understand your legal obligations as a Mandated Reporter
- Know when and how to report abuse and/or neglect to the Hotline
- Identify the steps and tools to use when making a child abuse report
- Identify which groups of children may be at a higher risk of being abused or neglected
- Understand the process that occurs after a hotline call is made

2. Confidentiality.

Confidentiality and anonymity of reporters is the LAW. DCFS cannot disclose the name of a reporter without an order from a judge. This will usually happen only if juvenile or criminal court proceedings are initiated against the parent or perpetrator. Should you choose to consult with staff or other ministry volunteers, confidentiality is expected within our church.

3. Responding to the Child.

When the child first comes to you, be sure to take the child's word seriously. Don't deny the problem, but stay calm and listen to the child. Give emotional support, reminding the child that he/she is not at fault and that the child was right in telling you about the problem. Do not promise the child you will not tell anyone.

4. Reporting.

Anyone in Illinois may report suspected abuse through the following hotline number: 800-25-ABUSE (800-252-2873). You may also report online at <https://dcfsonlinereporting.dcf.illinois.gov/> .