



## The Table Church Child Protection Policy

Updated February 2018

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### General Purpose Statement

The Table Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of The Table Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

### Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms “**child**” or “**children**” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “**worker**” includes both paid and unpaid persons who work or volunteer with children. The term “**volunteer**” means anyone involved in children’s programming who is not on-staff at The Table Church. The term “**staff**” means anyone employed by The Table Church.

### I. Selection of Workers

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

#### a) Three Month Rule

No person will be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with The Table Church for a minimum of three (3) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children. Individuals can be exempt from this rule with permission from the Executive Pastor.

#### b) Personal Interview

A face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

#### c) Criminal Background Check

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position), “workers” and “volunteers” as defined above.

**A. Background check authorization:** Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children.

**B. Disqualifying Offense:** A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by The Table Kids Director in consultation with the Executive Leadership Team on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children.

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The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at The Table Church.

### II. Two Child Policy

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than two students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless said minor is a “teenage worker” as noted in Section V. Teenage Worker.

### III. Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

**A. Definitions:** For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

**B. Response to Child Abuse Allegations:** Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at this The Table Church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the Lead Pastor for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at The Table Church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedures shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.

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2. The worker or church member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. He or she should be instructed to have no contact with the victim or with witnesses.
3. All allegations of abuse should be reported to the civil authorities, and the organization will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. The organization will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. The insurance company will be notified, and the organization will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. The organization will designate a spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of the organization should refrain from speaking to the media.
6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it. This should be for the purpose of providing pastoral support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

### **IV. Open Door Policy**

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

### **V. Teenage Workers**

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 14 and have parent/guardian authorization
- Must be screened as specified above.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

### **VI. Sick Child Policy**

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at The Table Church. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours;
- Green or yellow runny nose;
- Eye or skin infections; and/or

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- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease.

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

### **VII. Medications Policy**

It is the policy of The Table Church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home.

Exceptions to administering medications may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with The Table Church to develop a plan of action.

### **VIII. Discipline**

The Table Church will not administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with Lead Pastor if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

### **IX. Restroom Use**

Children five years of age and younger should use a classroom bathroom if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort a child and buddy to the closest bathroom. They should always go in a group, workers never taking a child to the bathroom alone.

- a) If the bathroom contains multiple stalls: The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that a bathroom stall is empty, and then allow the child inside. The workers should then remain inside the bathroom but outside the bathroom stall door and escort the children back to the classroom when finished. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom stall door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.
- b) If the bathroom is a single room: The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that a bathroom is empty, and then allow the child inside. The workers or worker/child pair should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom when finished. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

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For children over the age of five, children can use the closest bathroom without the accompaniment of a worker. The worker should monitor the clock and make sure the child comes back within five minutes. If the child does not return, one worker can go check on the child and follow procedures laid out previously.

For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child in a single room bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

### **X. Room Permissions**

Other than the children in the room, only volunteers and staff with background checks will be allowed into the classroom. This includes parents. The Mothers Room is exempt.

### **XI. Accidental Injuries to Children**

In the event that a child is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

- a) For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
- b) For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
- c) Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed. An incident report should be completed for any all incidents that result in minor injuries (scrapes, bruises, small cuts) and major injuries that require treatment beyond first aid.

### **XII. Check-in**

To ensure the safety and security of children, every child fifth grade and younger must be checked in by a parent or guardian. Parents should notify children's workers of any allergies at check-in.

For safety and security purposes, only the person that drops off a child (or person designated by the parent) will be allowed to pick the child up. Any person designated by the drop-off person to pick up a child must (1) have the tag with a tag that matches the child's tag AND (2) be at least 14 years of age. If parents lose their ID tag, they will be required to show your Driver's License in its place.

The TableKIDS director is able to exempt a parish from this in consultation with the Executive Pastor.

### **XIII. Training**

The Table Church will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training, classes, events, or CPR/First Aid Certification on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.



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### **Addendum - Virtual Classrooms**

TableKIDS may operate through a virtual classroom when meeting in-person is not possible. By implementing the practices below, The Table Church seeks to provide a safe and secure virtual environment that protects staff, volunteers (workers), and children.

Having personal interactions in virtual spaces allows adults to model appropriate behavior online, and it forms valuable connections with children. The practices below apply specifically to virtual classrooms at The Table Church. TableKIDS workers should exercise caution when interacting with children from The Table Church on other online platforms and are encouraged to avoid interacting with minors on social media or online spaces. The Table Church is not responsible for any interactions between TableKIDS workers and children that take place on platforms outside of our scheduled virtual classrooms. TableKIDS workers should be aware that their behavior online reflects The Table Church.

#### **Presence of Adults**

Virtual spaces are to be treated similar to in-person spaces where authorized unrelated adults are online when children are present. Ideally, two unrelated adults are online and leading the classroom experience, however if only one adult is available to lead the classroom, the Director of TableKIDS can authorize digital learning for that day.

TableKIDS workers should be appropriately clothed and are encouraged to teach from their living room, office, or other space besides a bedroom. All conversation must be within “public” view. When utilizing Zoom, this means that two or more children must be in the waiting room prior to beginning the classroom experience. Parents are encouraged to place children in areas with open doors and not leave children unattended.

TableKIDS workers will individually approve attendees to move from the waiting room to the virtual classroom. Anyone who has not enrolled in TableKIDS is not authorized to join the virtual classroom.

Virtual classrooms are protected by the waiting room feature, however, should an individual who is 1) not a parent or 2) not enrolled in TableKIDS join the video call, through their own device, or through a child’s device, the assigned TableKIDS worker must end the call immediately.

#### **Recording Calls:**

All interaction between children and Table Church staff and workers on video calls will be recorded and saved. Since DC is a one-party-consent state, The Table Church staff or workers will record all online classes and save the recordings indefinitely.

#### **Child/Family Online Etiquette:**

1. Parents should rename their account to their child’s name.



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2. Parents will turn on their child's video access providing parental consent
3. Children should demonstrate proper sitting and listening skills to the best of their ability. (i.e., not walk around with a device while on a video)
4. Children should be fully clothed.
5. Children should be in an open space when on a video online call (i.e., not in a bedroom with doors closed)
6. Children may not send private messages to other children and/or TableKIDS workers online.