
Child & Youth Abuse Prevention Program

North Platte Berean
Church

Adopted 03.06.2012
Revised 02.26.2018

CHILD AND YOUTH ABUSE PREVENTION PROGRAM FOR NORTH PLATTE BEREAN CHURCH

Introduction

To help protect children, **NPBC** has adopted the following Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Program. It is important that all **NPBC** paid staff and volunteers understand and implement these guidelines to help prevent abuse against children. The following includes the Purpose and Definitions for these guidelines, the outlines of Protection and Prevention, and an Acknowledgement to be signed by those people working with children.

Purpose

These procedures are designed to reduce the risk of child abuse in order to:

1. Provide a safe and secure environment for children, youth, adults, partners, volunteers, guests, and paid staff.
2. Assist **NPBC** in evaluating a person's suitability to supervise, oversee, and/or exert control over the activities of children and youth.
3. Satisfy the concerns of parents and staff members with a screening process for paid staff and volunteers.
4. Provide a system to respond to alleged victims of abuse and their families, as well as the alleged perpetrator.
5. Reduce the possibility of false accusations of abuse made against volunteers and paid staff.

Definitions

The following terms are used herein and are defined as follows:

1. *Paid Staff*: Any pastor, minister, preacher, cleric, or employee who is considered to be a regular employee with compensation, or a worker receiving an honorarium.
2. *Children/Youth/Minor*: Any person who has not reached his/her 18th birthday.
3. *Adult*: Any person who has reached his/her 18th birthday.
4. *Volunteer*: Any unpaid person engaged in or involved in activities or who is entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors or adults.

5. *Sexual Abuse*: The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any minor or adult to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct or rape, and in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of minor or adult, or incest with a minor or adult, or as defined by federal and state law (including, but not limited to, the Nebraska Child Protection Act). This includes and is not limited to unwelcome sexual remarks, jokes, advances, leering, whistling, or sexual gestures; sexual touching, fondling, molestation, assault, or other intimate physical contact; compelling another person to engage in a sexual act by threats or fear or undue influence; and providing or displaying pornographic materials to another person.
6. *Child Emotional Abuse*: Verbal or nonverbal conduct including mental exploitation, degrading communication, or humiliating or threatening conduct that may or may not include bullying or as defined by state law.

Protection and Prevention

Volunteer and Employee Screening Procedures

The following screening procedures are to be used with paid staff (including pastoral staff) and volunteers who are entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors. All information collected should be maintained in confidence.

1. *Employment Application and Volunteer Application*: Any paid staff and volunteers who will work with a minor must complete the Employment Application and/or the Volunteer Application. The release statement attached to the Application must be signed by the individual completing the Application to apply for and qualify for service.

Our Employment Application includes questions regarding:

- Current and previous residence addresses.
- Current and previous employment, including addresses, dates, duties, titles, and reasons for leaving.
- Names and addresses of schools attended and degree(s) earned.
- References from previous employers and organizations that serve children.
- Pending criminal charges (where not prohibited by state law).
- Criminal history information.

Our Volunteer Application includes questions regarding:

- Current address.
- Volunteer experience.
- Criminal history information.
- Personal references.

1. Applications include a statement, which the applicant should acknowledge in writing, certifying that statements provided in the application are true and complete, and any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of the applicant or for dismissal if he or she is employed. This statement authorizes **NPBC** to contact any individual or organization listed in the application.
2. A paid staff member or designated volunteer should review all statements made in the application, paying specific attention to any gaps in time and irregular employment patterns or unexplained absence, and pursue these gaps with employers listed in a subsequent interview.
3. Conduct interviews with qualified applicants.

If detrimental information is uncovered but the applicant remains desirable, the interviewer will discuss this information with the applicant. In the event the applicant is ultimately hired or accepted as a volunteer, the interviewer will document the reasons for overriding the prior information.

4. Make reasonable efforts to contact each of the volunteer applicant's references and ask for any information that might help determine the applicant's suitability for the position. Keep notes regarding each contact and each effort to contact each reference and keep notes regarding any information obtained.
5. Make reasonable efforts to contact all listed references and employers for paid staff and inquire as to the reason the applicant left the former employment and ask for any information that might help determine the applicant's suitability for the position. Keep notes regarding each contact and each effort to contact each reference and keep notes regarding any information obtained.
6. *Criminal Background Check*: **NPBC** will conduct a criminal background check on all paid staff and volunteers who are entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors. All criminal background checks will be updated periodically.
7. *Three Month and Partnership Rule*: All volunteers in leadership positions will be required to have been at **NPBC** for at least three months, must be a partner (or pursuing partnership with **NPBC**), and signed an acknowledgement that they have read, understood, and agreed to abide by this policy. Ministry leads in each area will determine leadership positions.

Confidentiality

Information obtained through the screening, application, reference check, interview, and criminal background check will be kept in confidence, unless otherwise required by law. All information discovered or obtained through the above-referenced means will be kept in a secure location and access to it will be restricted to the fullest extent possible. These materials will be archived.

A designated individual will enter all screening checks and only the leads of respective ministries and the lead pastor will access this information unless there is a concern raised by the background check. In this event, the lead pastor **may** include the elder board in the decision of how to proceed with an individual in this context.

Supervision Procedures

Unless an extenuating situation exists, **NPBC**:

1. Will have adequate number of screened and trained paid staff or volunteers present at events involving minors. Supervision will increase in proportion to the risk of the activity.
2. Will monitor facilities during activities involving children.
3. Will release children under the age of 5 only to a parent or guardian.
4. Will obtain written parental permission, including a signed medical treatment form and emergency contacts, before taking minors on trips and will provide general information regarding the trip.
5. Unless emergency conditions dictate, paid staff or volunteers shall not be alone in a vehicle with a single minor.
6. Will require that young children be accompanied by volunteer(s) to the restroom. Whenever possible, the volunteer will be the same sex as the minor and will assist only as needed.
7. Will encourage minors to use a "buddy system" whenever minors go on trips off of **NPBC** property.
8. Will screen all paid staff and volunteers and approve those individuals in advance for any overnight activities.

Behavioral Guidelines for Religious Organization Paid Staff and Volunteers

All volunteers and paid staff will observe the following guidelines:

1. Do not provide alcoholic beverages, tobacco, drugs, contraband, or anything that is prohibited by law to minors.
2. To the extent possible, **NPBC** events that are co-educational will have both male and female leaders (staff and/or volunteer).
3. At least two leaders (staff and/or volunteer) will be in the room when minors are present. Doors will be left fully open if one leader needs to leave the room temporarily and/or during arrival to the class or event before both adults are present. Speaking to a minor or minors one-

on-one should be done in public settings where paid staff or volunteers are in sight of other people.

4. Diaper changing shall only be done by adult leaders (staff or volunteer) with a current background check and shall be done in such a way that the changing is visible to other leaders in the room.
5. Avoid all inappropriate touching with minors. All touching shall be based on the needs of the individual being touched, not on the needs of the volunteer or paid staff. In the event a minor initiates physical contact and/or inappropriate touching, it is appropriate to inform the minor that such touching is inappropriate.
6. Never engage in physical discipline of a minor. Volunteers and paid staff shall not abuse minors in any way, including but not limited to physical abuse, verbal/mental abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse of any kind.
7. If you recognize an inappropriate relationship developing between a minor and adult, maintain clear professional boundaries and refer the minor to another individual with supervisory authority.
8. Paid staff and volunteers will avoid meeting with minors in isolated environments.
9. Any paid staff or volunteer who observes abuse of a minor will take appropriate steps to immediately intervene and provide assistance. Report any inappropriate conduct to the proper authorities and officials of **NPBC** for handling.

Disqualification

No person may be entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or may directly oversee and/or exert control or oversight over minors who has been convicted of the offenses outlined below, been on a probated sentence or received deferred adjudication for any offense outlined below, or has presently pending any criminal charges for any offense outlined below until a determination of guilt or innocence has been made, including any person who is presently on deferred adjudication. The following offenses disqualify a person from care, supervision, control, or oversight of minors:

1. Any offense against minors as defined by state law.
2. A misdemeanor or felony offense as defined by state law that is classified as sexual assault, indecency with a minor or adult, assault of a minor or adult, injury to a minor or adult, abandoning or endangering a minor, sexual performance with a minor or adult, possession or promoting child pornography, enticing a minor, bigamy, incest, drug-related offenses, abuse or neglect of a child, contributing to the delinquency of a child, or family violence.
3. A prior criminal history of an offense against minors.

Response to Abuse

NPBC will respond promptly to investigate any accusation of abuse. All accusations of abuse will be taken seriously. It is important to be appropriately respectful to the needs and feelings of those who allege abuse and those who have been accused of abuse.

When an allegation is made involving abuse, the person reporting the complaint is to be told about the guidelines and the procedures to be followed. The Lead Pastor or an appointed person will begin investigating the allegations and may use the assistance of legal counsel or other consultants. If the Lead Pastor is the individual accused of sexual abuse, then the lay chairman of the Board of Elders will conduct the investigation. The investigation will be conducted as follows:

1. Report the incident to appropriate authorities in accordance with the state mandatory reporting laws. **Nebraska Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline: 1-800-652-1999**
2. Report the matter to **NPBC's** insurance carrier.
3. Cooperate with authorities and the insurance carrier.
4. **NPBC** may suspend (with pay for paid staff) the alleged offender while a confidential investigation is being conducted.
5. An official of **NPBC** (and legal counsel or other consultants) will then meet with the elder board of **NPBC** and present a report on their investigation, which will include findings and recommendations of actions.
6. An official of **NPBC** will meet with the alleged perpetrator and notify him/her of the results of the investigation and recommendations for actions.
7. An official of **NPBC** will meet with the alleged victim, along with his/her parents or guardians, and notify them of the results of the investigation and recommendations for actions.
8. During the investigation, an official of **NPBC** shall maintain contact with the alleged victim and his/her parents or legal guardian, and inform them of the actions taken and assist them in their process of healing.
9. An official of **NPBC** (and legal counsel or other consultants) may meet with the alleged perpetrator, the alleged victim, and any others with knowledge of relevant facts.
10. Communicate with criminal and civil legal counsel of **NPBC**.
11. Communicate with those affected by the ministry of the alleged perpetrator.
12. Potentially hire a consultant or assign a spokesperson to respond to media or prepare a statement for the media if the need shall arise, subject to the approval of **NPBC's** attorney.

Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Program Acknowledgment

These guidelines have been designed to guide and assist you when working with minors. The information establishes general practices and guidelines and should not be construed in any way as a contract of employment or continued employment. **NPBC** reserves the right to make changes in the content or application of this program and to implement those changes with or without notice.

The terms defined herein are defined for the purposes of the program and do not suppose or establish a legal relationship. These terms are not defined for the purposes of creating a legal relationship with the **NPBC** or any related or associated entity and instead are to be used with this document.

I have received a copy of the **NPBC** 's Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Program. I have read and understand the Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Program for North Platte Berean Church and agree that I will adhere to that Program.

Print Name

Signature

Date