

HBC Policies and Guidelines for Working with Minors

Screening and Training:

Screening and Training can be done in any order, but all components are required to become an approved worker. HBC will conduct a background check for workers aged 16 or older every three consecutive calendar years.

Screening and training include:

- Complete online or in person training for abuse prevention and response
- Reviewing and understanding this document
- Completing an application for “Volunteers Working with Minors”, providing references which may be checked, and signing a background check release
- Completing and clearing a background check through Protect My Ministry/Ministry Mobilizer

Responding To & Reporting Suspected Abuse & Suspicious Behaviors

All leaders and volunteers are expected to report any suspicious, careless, or problematic behavior of adults and leaders immediately to the Supervising Staff Member, Lead Pastor, or Administrative Pastor. This includes suspected physical abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect. Concerns may be discussed in person but should be submitted in an email to at least two of the above-mentioned leaders (See contact list below). Leaders should trust their instinct if something doesn't look quite right. Overreacting is better than under reacting. The supervisor will decide how to proceed or will consult with church staff members about how to respond. Concerns about suspected or actual child abuse or the behaviors of leaders and volunteers should be shared only with the program supervisor and those directly involved in the reporting process (e.g., church staff members, child protective services, see CPS reporting page at the end) and not with anyone else. Leaders are not to investigate or take photos for evidence. Abuse is not just adult to minor; abuse can occur between strong minor and a weak minor. If a minor shares information, an adult should not promise to keep it a secret in case the information proves harmful for others/themselves or involves criminal activity.

If a report of abuse has been made against a volunteer/childcare worker or an arrest has been made, they will be immediately removed from serving at Hernando Baptist Church until the allegations have been disproven or verified. If the allegations are disproven, the volunteer/childcare worker will meet with their supervising staff member about returning to serve.

Supervision of Minors

Volunteers are responsible for the supervision of minors during ministry activities, including observing the environment and equipment for unsafe situations, removing minors from potentially dangerous conditions, and reporting problems immediately. Ministry staff should make sure that anyone who has not been successfully screened does not have unsupervised access to minors. Supervision of minors will be guided by the two adult rule described in the next section.

Parents are responsible for their minors up until the time the activity is scheduled to begin and after the activity's scheduled ending time. When minors arrive to any church ministry or program, they are expected to remain in that program until the program ends and supervision is transferred back to parents. Volunteers/staff are not responsible for minors who do not show up to a ministry activity, even if their parents believe they are at the activity.

The Two Adult Rule

The purpose of the Two Adult Rule is to make sure the actions of any one leader are known to at least one other leader and to encourage leaders to support each other in ministry.

The Two Adult Rule states that there must always be two adults present when supervising one or more minors. This rule is designed for the safety of minors as well as adults and is required across all ministry areas with few exceptions (see guidelines for these cases below). Planning ahead will help avoid the potential of being alone with one or more minors. Compliance to the two adult rule includes the following:

- There must always be two approved adult volunteers present when supervising one or more minors
- The adults should be in sight of each other at all times.

Exceptions to the Two Adult Rule

Guidelines for exceptions to the Two Adult Rule (outlined below) follow this same idea—that even when only one adult is present, the actions of that leader are known and visible to others. This is accomplished by being visible and in public locations, as well as communicating with other ministry staff. Occasionally, leaders will find themselves without another adult present due to unforeseen circumstances or they are teaching a class alone. In this case, the door to the room must remain open, and the adult volunteer should be visible at all times.

Youth Serving as Leaders

We encourage older children to serve as leaders for children in younger grades. A youth leader, age 14/9th grade or older, may count as an adult under the Two Adult Rule.

Children's Check In and Check Out Procedures (Children's Ministry)

Parents/Guardians are responsible for their child until their child is checked into and once their child is checked out of a church ministry program. Programs serving children from preschool through 5th grade should have check in and out procedures which require the parent to sign in when they bring the child to the program and sign out when they pick up the child at the end of the program. This means that parents are expected to escort their child to the check in area and that children in preschool through 5th grade should not be released from a program or activity without parents coming to pick them up. Siblings are not allowed to pick up children for their parents. If a child wanders away from the program, an adult leader should immediately alert the Ministry Director who will contact the parents.

Children's Restroom Procedures

Childcare workers should not enter single restrooms with a child. Children using the restrooms shared between classrooms should be the same gender. Childcare workers may assist children under 4 in the restroom, however children 4 years old and older should be able to potty by themselves without any assistance. It is understood that having an adult taking children to the restroom may leave one adult alone in the room with multiple children for a short period of time in which case the classroom door should remain open.

Discipline

The number one rule in ministry with minors is that **Each of us is a Child of God** and should be treated with the kind of respect, love, and support that is expected by the commandment in Scripture to love one another. Clear rules, expectations, and consistent messages about behavior are the key to effective discipline procedures. Occasionally, minors have trouble following the rules or display disruptive behavior. In these cases, the following steps will be taken:

1. The teacher or leader will talk with the minor and state clearly what the problem behavior is and what they should do instead. For a younger minor, the leader will attempt to redirect them to another activity.
2. If the minor continues to exhibit problem behavior, the teacher/leader will give a warning to them and have the program or ministry area leader talk individually with them.
3. Upon the third warning, the minor will be removed from the activity, and a parent will be contacted. Unless otherwise discussed with a parent, the minor will be welcomed back at the next ministry activity.
4. Behavior deemed out of control will result in immediate removal of the minor from the ministry activity and personal family contact by the Ministry Staff.
5. The minor may be suspended from ministry activities for an amount of time determined by the Ministry Supervisor.
6. The minor and family will be treated with respect and love, and they will be welcomed back to ministry activities after the suspension period provided, they are ready to respect the rules of the ministry.

Physical Contact

Respect, safety, and appropriate boundaries are the guiding principles for physical contact between ministry leaders and minors. The guidelines below are intended to avoid contact that is or may appear threatening or inappropriate. Love and affection are part of church life and ministry. There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with minors. Many of these inappropriate behaviors are used by child molesters to groom minors and their parents for later molestation. Others may be considered to be sexual abuse. Please review this list of examples of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors:

<u>Appropriate Behaviors</u>	<u>Inappropriate Behaviors</u>
Brief Hugs or side hugs	Any form of unwanted affection
Pats on the shoulder or back	Kisses & Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
Handshakes	Holding children over 3 on your lap or piggyback rides
High-fives & fist bumps	Tickling minors
Verbal Praise	Wrestling with minors
Arm around shoulders	Any types of massage received or given by a minor
Holding hands of small children while walking or praying	Touching bottoms, chest, or genital areas other than for diapering or toileting of children under 4 years old.
Sitting beside small children	Occupying a bed with a minor
Kneeling or bending down for hugs/eye contact with small children	Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development

Communication Outside of Usual Ministry Functions:

All communication to preschool and children should be through the parents. Leaders of children may call children in their program if the leader first talks to the parent and gets verbal permission. Leaders of children should not directly contact children through instant messaging, social networking sites, text messaging, or other forms of electronic communication except phone calls.

Leaders of students are encouraged to use text messaging, email, or social media to contact students for ministry related purposes only so that conversations are documented. Phone calls are also acceptable for ministry purposes but should be brief.

Emergencies and Injuries

Ministry staff and volunteers should be prepared to protect minors in the case of emergencies. Volunteers should have the following phone numbers programmed into their cellphones. Note that 911 calls by cell phones are often not as direct as dialing the local emergency authorities.

Emergency: 911

Hernando Police & Fire (non-emergency): 662-429-9096

Desoto County Sheriff (non-emergency): 662-469-8500

Church Office: 662-429-6361

Church Address: 11 E Center St. Hernando, MS 38632

Medical Supplies

A number of basic medical supplies are located in the preschool kitchen, Children's Minister's office, student room, church office workroom, and the main kitchen. An Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is located on the wall across from the HBK preschool office on the bottom floor of the education building and can be used for adults and children. The AED in the church office and the main kitchen are for use on adults only. For medical problems that require more serious attention call 911 or local emergency phone number.

Threats of Violence Against Others or to Harm Self

Leaders may receive information that a minor or other person has thoughts or desires to harm themselves or others. This information should be taken seriously and should be reported **immediately** to the Supervising Staff member or a Pastor. If the minor seems to have the imminent intent to do harm, a leader or volunteer should stay with the minor and call 911.

Criminal or Potentially Dangerous Activity

A leader should call 911 or local emergency number immediately in cases of suspected criminal or dangerous activities on the church campus or near ministry activities.

Earthquake, Tornado, or Other Disaster

See Procedures posted in classrooms.

Contact List:

David Williamson	Lead Pastor	David@hernandobaptist.org
Ron Leonard	Pastor of Discipleship & Administration	Ron@hernandobaptist.org
Justin Hollensworth	Pastor of Worship & Media	Justin@hernandobaptist.org
Larry Dickerson	Student Pastor	Larry@hernandobaptist.org
Liz Alexander	Interim Minister to Preschool & Children	Liz@hernandobaptist.org
Jen Brea	Nursery Coordinator	Nursery@hernandobaptist.org
Erin Thomason	Weekday Education Director	HBK@hernandobaptist.org

Mississippi Abuse/Neglect Explanations and Expectations

In accordance with Section 43-21-105 of the Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated, "Abused Child means a child whose parent, guardian or custodian or any person responsible for his care or support, whether legally obligated to do so or not, has caused or allowed to be caused upon said child sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, emotional abuse, mental injury, non-accidental physical injury, or other maltreatment. Provided, however that physical discipline, including spanking, performed on a child by a parent, guardian or custodian in a reasonable manner shall not be deemed abuse under this section."

Any person who knows or has reason to suspect abuse or neglect of a child by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person(s) responsible for the child's care, is required by law to make a report to the Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services. See Section 43-21-105 and Section 43-21-353 of the Mississippi Code for more information.

Be prepared to provide (as known):

- Victim's name, address or location, school information, approximate age, race, and sex.
- Description of the situation and marks or bruises that may be present.
- Person responsible for victim's care, alleged perpetrator name(s), and witnesses to the situation.
- Other relevant information that would expedite an investigation such as manufacturing of drugs in the home, possession of weapons, domestic violence, etc.

Call local law enforcement agency or 911 if the situation is a life-threatening emergency.

A situation where a child is at immediate risk of abuse/neglect that could result in death or serious harm is considered an emergency. If you have any doubt about your referral being an emergency, please call Mississippi Centralized Intake instead of using the online referral system.

Call Mississippi Centralized Intake at 1-800-222-8000 (Nationwide) or (601) 432-4570 if:

- You prefer to submit the report verbally.
- The situation you are reporting is an emergency.
- The suspected abuse/neglect you are reporting occurred outside the state of Mississippi, and you do not know how to contact the state where it occurred.

Indicators of Abuse

Emotional or verbal abuse is anything said or done that is hurtful or threatening to a child and is the most difficult form of maltreatment to identify. Examples include:

- Name calling (“You’re stupid”)
- Belittling (“I wish you were never born”)
- Destroying child’s possessions or pets
- Threatens to harm child or people they care about (“I’m going to choke you” or “I’ll break your arm”)
- Locking a child in a closet or box
- Rejecting a child
- Isolating a child

Sexual abuse is any inappropriate touching by a friend, family member, anyone having ongoing contact with the child, and/or a stranger. Examples include:

- Touching a child’s genital area
- Any type of penetration of a child
- Allowing a child to view or participate in pornography
- Prostitution, selling your child for money, drugs, etc.
- Forcing a child to perform oral sex acts
- Masturbating in front of a child
- Having sex in front of a child

Physical abuse is any type of contact that results in bodily harm, such as bruising, abrasions, broken bones, internal injuries, burning, missing teeth, and skeletal injuries. Examples include:

- Hitting or slapping a child with an extension cord, hands, belts, fists, broom handles, brushes, etc.
- Putting child into hot water
- Cutting the child with a knife or any other sharp object
- Shaking or twisting arms or legs or yanking a child by the arm
- Putting tape over a child’s mouth
- Tying a child up with rope or cord
- Throwing a child across a room or down the stairs

Neglect means not meeting the basic needs of the child and is the most common form of maltreatment:

- **Medical** – not giving a child life-sustaining medicines, over-medicating, or not obtaining special treatment devices deemed necessary by a physician
- **Supervision** – leaving child/children unattended or leaving child/children in the care of other children too young to protect them (depending upon the maturity of the child)
- **Clothing and Hygiene** – dressing children inadequately for weather or persistent skin disorders resulting from improper hygiene
- **Nutrition** – lack of sufficient quantity or quality of food, letting a child consistently complain of hunger, or allowing the child to rummage for food
- **Shelter** – having structurally unsafe housing, inadequate heating, or unsanitary housing conditions

For more information or to file a report, please use this website:

<https://www.mdcps.ms.gov/report-child-abuse-neglect/>