

New Covenant Community Church

Child Protection Policy

General Purpose Statement

New Covenant Community Church (NCCC) 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 NCCC 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 in the age group of newborn to 6th grade. The term “worker” includes both paid and unpaid persons who work with children. The term “volunteer” means anyone involved with child care in: nursery, Sunday School, evening meetings, or any other scheduled church activities. The term “minor(s) who are assisting an adult as a helper” refers to minors in 7th grade or greater who assist volunteers but are never the primary person in control.

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. Six Month Rule

No person will be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with children until they have been a regular attendee with NCCC for at least six months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children. Exceptions to this rule may be allowed only after pastoral review.

B. Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous NCCC affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the NCCC. This application may be waived after pastoral review if the volunteer has been a member of NCCC for several years. Written applications will not be required for minors who are assisting adults as a helper.

C. Personal Interview

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

D. Reference Checks

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature (if possible) and should not be family references. Current volunteers may be exempted from reference checks after pastoral review if they have been members at NCCC for more than ten years. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at NCCC. Reference checks will not be required for minors who are assisting adults as a helper.

E. Criminal Background Check

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and "volunteers" as defined above. Volunteers may be exempted from background checks after pastoral review if they have been members at NCCC for more than ten years or are serving as Elders or Trustees. Background checks will not be required for minors who are assisting adults as a helper.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church to perform the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, they will be unable to work with children.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Pastors and / or Elders (with insight from the trustees as needed) 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. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

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

Two Helper Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two adult workers (one teacher and one helper) will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some Sunday School classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session along with one or more minors who are assisting the adult teacher.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

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.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under their care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at this NCCC becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to a Pastor and / or an Elder 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 NCCC or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The worker or church member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from child care pending an investigation. Pastor and / or Elder review will determine if they will additionally be instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. They will 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.

Check-in/Check-out Procedure

For children in the nursery: parents / guardians must drop off and pick up their children. They must notify the workers if a different parent / guardian is picking up their child.

For children in the Sunday School younger grade (four years old / Pre-K through 2nd grade): parents / guardians must pick up their children after service. They must notify the workers if a different parent / guardian is picking up their child. Parents may sign a waiver to have their Sunday School children free released with no pick up.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at NCCC. 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 24 hours;
- Green or yellow runny nose;
- Eye or skin infections; and/or
- 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 pick up the child for the remainder of the service.

Medications Policy

It is the policy of NCCC not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are notified of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy 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 Nursery or Sunday School coordinators (as applicable) to develop a plan of action.



Discipline Policy

It is the policy of NCCC not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There will be no spanking, shaking, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with the Nursery or Sunday School coordinators (as applicable) if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

NCCC will provide briefings on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers.

