

# Reporting Guidelines

If an individual makes an allegation, please follow these guidelines:

1. React calmly. You need to be a source of stability for the individual, his or her family, and others involved in the situation.
2. Reassure the child or youth. The individual needs to know that he or she was right to inform you about the situation. Take all allegations seriously. The Ministry Leader or a Pastor(s) must follow up on all allegations.
3. Treat the accused with dignity and support. The accused worker will be temporarily relieved of his or her duties by the Ministry Leader or a Pastor(s) until the investigation is complete and further appropriate action is taken pending the outcome of the investigation.
4. Report the suspected abuse to the Ministry Leader or a Pastor(s).
5. Document all your efforts in handling the incident. Complete an *Incident Reporting Form*<sup>12</sup> immediately. Collect in writing all relevant information concerning the allegation. This form should be returned to the Ministry Leader or a Pastor(s).
6. Avoid interrogation. Leave the in-depth investigation and questioning to the proper secular authorities.
7. Upon receipt of an allegation of abuse, a Pastor(s) will contact the parent or caregiver of the child or youth unless otherwise instructed by the secular authorities.
8. Confidentiality is very important. Information regarding the accusation should be shared only with the Ministry Leader and/or a Pastor(s). Be careful to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all persons involved.
9. To fulfill any New Hampshire state reporting obligations<sup>13</sup> concerning the alleged child abuse, a Pastor(s) will notify the Department of Health and Human Services.
10. Upon learning of the allegations of abuse, a Pastor(s) will promptly contact legal counsel and the insurance carrier.
11. Do not contact the media. Only the church's designated spokesperson will speak on behalf of

Merrimack Valley Baptist Church to the media (print, TV, radio, or internet) using the text of a prepared public statement approved by a Pastor(s). All members, workers, etc. are asked to refer all questions to the designated spokesperson. Do not reveal any names or any information of those involved in the incident.

<sup>12</sup> Please contact the church office or Ministry Leader to obtain an *Incident Reporting Form*.

<sup>13</sup> Please see Title XII Public Safety and Welfare Chapter 169-C Child Protection Act at <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/xii/169-c/169-c-mrg.htm>.

*Merrimack Valley Baptist Church takes great joy in zealously and fervently serving our Lord and Savior through the Children and Teens' Ministries. We recognize that every church employee and volunteer plays a vital role in fostering the spiritual development of individuals and families in our community. We take seriously the stewardship responsibility to provide a safe environment for those who participate in the Children and Teens' Ministries. Holding firm to our commitment to excellence, this Protection Policy is to be used in the Children and Teens' Ministries to strive for safety and well-being of children and youth in our care.*



**CHILDREN  
&  
YOUTH**  
protection  
policy\*



Let the little children  
come to Me, and do not  
forbid them; for of such  
is the kingdom of God.

**Mark 10:14**



**MERRIMACK VALLEY  
BAPTIST CHURCH**  
Version 4.0 May 2019



## Screening Workers

1. All adults desiring to minister to children<sup>1</sup> and youth<sup>2</sup> in Children and Teens' Ministries must meet all of the following qualifications to become a certified adult worker:<sup>3</sup>
  - a. Be an attendee in good standing<sup>4</sup> at Merrimack Valley Baptist Church for at least 6 months.
  - b. Be 18 years of age or older.
  - c. Complete a *Children and Youth Volunteer Worker Application*<sup>5</sup> provided by Merrimack Valley Baptist Church.<sup>6</sup>
  - d. Submit to an interview by a Pastor(s).
  - e. Submit to an annual background check by authorities or background check service.<sup>6</sup> A person who has been previously convicted of abuse or mistreatment of children or youth will be disqualified from working with children and youth in Children's Ministries at Merrimack Valley Baptist Church.
  - f. Participate in annual training on child protection policies and procedures.
2. All teens (ages 13–17) desiring to minister to children<sup>1</sup> in Children's Ministries must meet the qualifications in 1a, 1c, 1d, and 1f above to become a certified teen worker.<sup>3</sup> Teen workers involved in working with children are to be supervised by a certified adult worker.

*I have taught you in the way of wisdom;  
I have led you in right paths.*

PROVERBS 4:11

## Procedures

1. A *Child Information Form*<sup>7</sup> providing information on each child<sup>1</sup> and a *Teen Information Form*<sup>7</sup> providing information on each youth<sup>2</sup> who will be participating in the ministry, is to be completed annually by a parent or caregiver. Parents or caregivers should notify the Ministry Leader or worker if there are any changes. A check in/out process will be followed for children and youth.
2. A child or youth should not be left in an individual's care behind closed doors or in an isolated or private location. The Ministry Leader and/or a Pastor(s) will attempt to evaluate every activity in order to determine the level of risk<sup>8</sup> for sexual misconduct situations to occur. When the risk level is high (i.e., overnight activities, bringing children to the bathroom, etc.), every effort should be made to increase supervision and accountability for the activity and/or program. When appropriate, the Ministry Leader and/or a Pastor(s) may insist that two certified adult workers be present at all times during the activity.
3. Children and youth should not be left alone to wander the halls or go into areas of the church and school unsupervised. Parents assume responsibility when children and youth are released from the ministry or event.
4. Leaders,<sup>9</sup> teachers, or workers<sup>10</sup> may not date or be romantically involved with child<sup>1</sup> or youth<sup>2</sup> participants.
5. In the event an allegation of abuse of a child or youth is made, it must be reported immediately to the Ministry Leader or a Pastor(s).<sup>11</sup>
6. Parents or caregivers of children and youth who are participating in a particular MVBC event who are chaperoning should adhere to



the *Children and Youth Protection Policy*.

7. Permission slips will be utilized for all off-site activities.

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Children are ages 0–12 (infants through grade 6).
  - <sup>2</sup> Youth are ages 13–17 (grades 7–12).
  - <sup>3</sup> Under certain circumstances, the requirements in this section may be waived by a Pastor(s). It is recommended that the volunteer complete an application and background check regardless of the waiver of any of the requirements. It is also recommended that a Pastor(s) obtain a pastoral reference about the individual from his/her previous church. An exception form will be completed and retained in a secure location.
  - <sup>4</sup> Not under church discipline and have an active working relationship with a Pastor(s).
  - <sup>5</sup> Please contact the Church Office or Ministry Leader to obtain an application.
  - <sup>6</sup> All applications and background information obtained on workers are confidential and will be properly stored and retained in a secure location. This can include the FBI, local police, state police, etc.
  - <sup>7</sup> Please contact the Church Office or Ministry Leader for a *Child Information Form* and/or *Teen Information Form*.
  - <sup>8</sup> Risk factors that would call for increased supervision include:
    - a. The opportunity for isolation of children, youth, and/or workers during an activity.
    - b. A decrease in accountability.
    - c. The imbalance of power, authority, influence, and control among children, youth, and/or workers.
  - <sup>9</sup> "Leaders" includes Ministry Leaders, Directors, Leaders, and Teachers.
  - <sup>10</sup> "Workers" include chaperones and teen workers.
  - <sup>11</sup> See Reporting Guidelines.

\* Some of this policy does not apply to South Merrimack Christian Academy activities. Please contact the SMCA Office at 603-880-6832 for a copy of their Child Protection Policy.