

# **Wellspring Church**

## **Child Protection and Abuse Response Policy**

### Introduction

Each child is a special gift from God. We acknowledge the high value that Jesus placed on children during his earthly ministry. We seek to make all our church activities and facilities safe, especially for children. It is our responsibility as adults to do all we can to protect children.

Sadly, child abuse is prevalent; and is hurting children, families, and societies everywhere.

### Child abuse prevention within our church community

We must be prepared in both knowledge and practice to prevent all types of child abuse and neglect, and to strengthen families. This policy applies to all church ministries.

We commit to:

1. Make our church facility safe for children:
  - a. Place windows in all doors where children or youth ministry is conducted (i.e. Sunday School rooms, pastor's office).
  - b. First aid kits will be available throughout the church building.
  
2. Provide safe and adequate supervision to children:
  - a. Follow a "two-adult rule," especially at overnight activities involving children and when activities are being conducted in homes or other private locations.
  - b. A youth (18 years or younger) should never teach/care for children alone without a supervising adult available.
  - c. A parent must always be notified ahead of time and give consent for their child to be transported away from church facilities.
  - d. No physical discipline (hitting, slapping) may be used. When a child misbehaves, an adult may use redirection and/or verbal means to guide the child's behavior. If this does not work, the child shall be taken to his/her parent for further action.
  
3. Attend to related personnel issues:
  - a. A background check, including child abuse and sex offender registries and criminal history, will be conducted on all church staff, including the pastor and custodians, before hiring. A background check will also be run on all S.S. teachers, youth leaders, and nursery workers. These background checks must be conducted in all the states the individual has lived in the previous 20 years.
  - b. Individuals must have regular involvement in the church for at least six months before being allowed to be a teacher or leader of children or youth.

4. Deal appropriately with offenders and allegations of abuse:

- a. When a child discloses abuse or child abuse is suspected, Child Protective Services (1 800 4ACHILD) or the police (911) will be notified at once. If there is uncertainty as to whether a situation requires reporting, it will be referred to the Pastor. When notification of abuse is made, the Pastor will be informed at once. The alleged offender will be removed immediately from all responsibilities involving contact with children until the conclusion of the investigation. All parents whose children may have come into contact with the alleged offender will be notified within 48 hours that allegations have been made and reported to the authorities.
- b. When child abuse allegations have been made, pastoral care will be offered to all involved, by the pastor and/or appropriate referrals will be made.
- c. Any individual who is known to have been convicted of a child sexual offense must not be allowed any unsupervised contact with children, and may not be involved in children's or youth ministry (formal or informal)