



Child Protection Policy

General Purpose Statement

Bergen Park Church 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 Bergen Park Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and adult/teen volunteers from false accusations.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “worker” includes both paid and unpaid persons (staff and volunteers) who work with children.

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 minors until she/he has been involved with Bergen Park Church for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

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 Bergen Park Church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file in the Bergen Park Church children’s directors’ office.

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. In some cases, the children’s director may reach out to the references provided.

d) Criminal Background Check

A national criminal background check is required for all employees of Bergen Park Church and all individuals who apply to work with children. Before the background check is complete, workers will receive an email from the children’s director indicating the necessary steps to be completed online. If an individual declines to complete the background check, s/he will be unable to work with children. Background checks will be repeated every two years for all volunteers.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the children's director and executive pastor 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 Bergen Park Church children's directors' office.

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated workers (adult or youth workers) will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. In the event that only one adult teacher is in the classroom, the doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three children with the worker. Youth workers should not be alone with child(ren) under any circumstances. There should be no circumstance in which a child and adult are alone or where there is only one adult in a room with children with a closed door.

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 our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at Bergen Park Church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the children's director or executive pastor for further action, including reporting to authorities as is mandated by state law. This includes suspected abuse or neglect beyond the walls of Bergen Park Church, including that which may occur at home, in school, or other locations. As of April 2023, the process would be to 1) call 911 in the case of an emergency or 2) call 844-CO-4-KIDS for all other concerns of child abuse or neglect.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at Bergen Park Church or during one of 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 pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the

premises during the investigation. He or she should 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. As of April 2023, the process to be followed will be:
 - a. Report the incident to 911 in the case of an emergency situation.
 - b. Report any witnessed incidents to Jefferson County Sheriff's Department immediately.
 - c. Report any and all other concerns of child abuse and neglect to 844-CO-4-KIDS.
4. The insurance company of Bergen Park Church 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, including staff members and children's workers.
6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it with either the lead pastor, executive pastor, or children's director. 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 or youth.

Open Door Policy

All classroom doors at Bergen Park Church are equipped with a door window. In the event that future buildings/classrooms do not have a door window, any classroom door without a window should remain open. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room, unless in the event of a lockdown drill.

Youth Workers (ages 12-17)

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 12.
- Must be screened as specified in the "Selection of Workers" subheading.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and should not be left alone with children.

Check-in/Check-out Procedure

For children below sixth grade, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be signed in by a parent or guardian, who will receive a guardian receipt for the child which has a matching code and symbol to the child's name badge. The parent or guardian must present the guardian receipt in order to sign out the child from our care. In the event that the parent or guardian is unable to

present the guardian receipt, the children's director or check-in worker will be contacted. This worker will be responsible for releasing the child to the care of a parent or guardian after discussing the surrounding circumstances with the parent or guardian. In the event that a conflict arises, the safety team will be called to help de-escalate the situation and reach a calm solution.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at Bergen Park Church. 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 48 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 request that the child be picked up for the day.

Medications Policy

It is the policy of Bergen Park Church not to administer either prescription or nonprescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. 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 children's director to develop a plan of action.

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of Bergen Park Church not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. We believe that all children are created by God and will treat them with the respect and care they deserve when working through disciplinary actions. Workers should consult with the children's director if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues during the program, and all disciplinary actions (such as short-term removal from class, sitting in a different area of the classroom, or verbal warnings) should be communicated with the parent or guardian upon check-out.

Restroom Guidelines

Children five years of age and younger should use a classroom bathroom if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort a group of no fewer than three children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom stall doors and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child requires assistance, the worker should prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

For children over the age of five, at least one adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female should take girls. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom

is empty, and then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should prop open the door and call the child's name. If the child does not respond, the worker should ask another worker to assist.

For the protection of all, workers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide first aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned, in addition to the children's director. In some situations, the safety team will be consulted for next steps. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional. All incident reports should be turned into the children's director at the completion of the program.

Training

Bergen Park Church will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events. All workers will receive an update training every twelve months, at minimum.