



# Child Protection Policy and Ministry Guidelines

Implemented September 2023

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## GENERAL PURPOSE STATEMENT

Salt Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for those participating in our ministry activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of Salt Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations. To fulfill these commitments as fully as possible, our leadership team has adopted the following procedures to be used when selecting ministry volunteers and employees.

## 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 who work with children. The term “volunteer” means anyone involved in helping with ministry activities involving children.

## VOLUNTEER SCREENING PROCEDURES

All persons who desire to work with children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

### a.) The “Known at Salt Church” Rule

No person will be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with children until he/she has been involved with Salt Church and known by someone in a leadership position. This time of interaction with the applicant and our church family allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children. Individual ministries may add to this policy.

### b.) Application

Prior to consideration, all candidates seeking a volunteer position with children will complete and return an initial application. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, reference information, as well as a disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. It will also include written permission to conduct a background check and a liability release. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at Salt Church.

### c.) Reference Checks

If the individual appears to be an appropriate candidate for the ministry position, and has yet not been a member in good standing, then we will check at least two of the applicants’ references and confirm the information provided on their application. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at Salt Church.

#### **d.) Personal Interview**

A face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

#### **e.) Criminal Background Check**

A criminal background check is required for all volunteers and employees. Before a background check is run, prospective volunteers and employees will be asked to sign an authorization allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, he/she will be unable to work with children. Background checks will be conducted on workers every two years, following their initial background check. The background check results will be maintained in confidence on file at Salt Church.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the appropriate leadership 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.

### **MINISTRY GUIDELINES**

The following guidelines are strongly advised to adequately protect our children, staff, and volunteers:

#### **a.) Two Adult Rule**

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adults will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. In cases where only one adult is able to be in attendance, meetings should take place in a public area.

#### **b.) Open Door Policy**

Classroom and office doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

#### **c.) Teenage Workers**

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

- Must be screened by someone in leadership.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

#### **d.) No Overnights**

There will be no overnights with staff or leaders unless it is a church specific event such as a retreat, lock-in, or other ministry event. Small group sleepovers are not considered a church specific event.

#### **e.) Nudity**

Staff members or volunteers should never be nude in the presence of children in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes during weekend or overnight retreat, at an activity, etc.) it is encouraged to have all students change in the bathroom or in another private way.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

Workers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children:

- One adult may transport student(s) for ministry purposes (to/from Salt Church, to/from a public restaurant, etc.). In all other instances we maintain the goal that, when unable to be in public, a minimum of two unrelated adults will be in attendance at all times.
- All one-on-one transportation should be with members of the same sex.
- Children should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided.
- No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving, unless in an emergency.
- No drivers under age 20 may be allowed to drive students in a church related event.
- Anyone driving a Salt Church rented vehicle, must follow the rental company's policies.

### **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

It is the policy of Salt Church not to administer corporal punishment such as spanking, hitting, grabbing, shaking or other physical discipline of children. Volunteers should consult with a Salt Kids staff member, coach, or other ministry leader if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues. Disciplinary problems should be reported to a parent or guardian. For further information on discipline procedures and suggestions in our children's ministry, please see the "Salt Kids Roles and Expectations Handbook."

### **RESTROOM GUIDELINES**

Since nursery children require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all workers will observe the following policies:

1. Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.
2. Children should not be left unattended on changing tables.
3. Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
4. Only female volunteers will be allowed to change diapers

An adult should never be alone with a child. One adult may take a group of children to the restroom if a Salt Church staff member is available to assist them. The workers should remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the volunteer should call the child's name to check on them. If a child requires assistance, the volunteer should be sure the bathroom door is propped open, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.

Children over the age of five may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. (However, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based on their individual capabilities.)

For the protection of all, nursery 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.

## CHECK-IN/CHECK-OUT PROCEDURE

For children below 4th grade, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. Families will check in their children at the designated kiosks. There they will print matching tags for the child and parent that include their name, parent contact number, any food allergies, and a matching code. To pick up a child, the adult must have a matching tag if the teacher doesn't know them. Only adults or siblings 16 years or older should pick kids up from Salt Kids classes. In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to present a matching tag, they will be directed to the Salt Kids check-in desk for further assistance.

## SICKNESS POLICY

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children and workers at Salt Church. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding to place children under our care. We abide by the recommendations of the ***American Academy of Pediatrics*** who recommends that a child should not leave home when any of the following symptoms exist:

- Fever \*
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Croup, wet, dry, or barky cough
- Sore throat
- Any unexplained rash
- Lice
- Any communicable diseases
- Any skin infections
- Pink eye
- Green or yellow discharge from nose
- Any symptoms of childhood diseases (scarlet fever, measles, mumps rubella, chicken pox or whooping cough or any other communicable disease not listed here)

\*Children should be free from fever for 24 hours, without the assistance of medication, before participating in any activities or being placed in a Salt Kids classroom.

Children will not be accepted into our programs if any of the above symptoms are present. They will be separated from the other children and a parent or guardian will be contacted to request that their child be picked up for the day.

## MEDICATIONS POLICY

It is the policy of Salt Church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medicine to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by self, parent, or guardian.

Exceptions to this policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions. Parents or guardians of such children should address their situation with a ministry leader or coordinator to develop a plan of action. Exceptions will not be granted for diaper/ointment medication.

Another exception to this policy may be granted for retreats or overnight church specific events in which the parent or guardian may not be present to administer medications. Medications may be given by the appointed staff member or volunteer nurse for that event. The medication must be in the original packaging, including over the counter medication. A medication information sheet must be filled out and signed by the parent or guardian.

## ACCIDENTAL INJURIES

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following guidelines will be observed:

- Staff or volunteers who become aware of an injury to a worker or participant will take steps to ensure that proper medical attention is given to the injured person and provide continued monitoring for the remainder of the event.
- Persons who receive an injury that is minor should be given First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as needed. The individual's parents should be notified of the injury when they pick up their child.
- Any injury requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid should be given immediate attention. The individual's parent/guardian will be contacted immediately in addition to the ministry leader or coordinator. If warranted by the injury, emergency medical personnel should be called.
- Once the individual has received the appropriate medical attention, a *Notice of Injury* form will be completed for children, youth, or any other participating individual.

## PHYSICAL CONTACT

Salt Church is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, Salt Church has implemented a physical contact policy that promotes a positive, nurturing environment, while protecting children. The following guidelines are to be followed by anyone working with children in our ministry:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff or volunteers are important to children's development and are generally suitable in the church setting.
2. Inappropriate touching or displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching, or displays of affection should be reported to a ministry leader.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
4. Physical contact and affection should only be given in observable places or when in the presence of other children, staff, and volunteers.
5. Do not force physical contact, touch, or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.

## RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

Salt Church has a **zero tolerance policy** for abuse and considers any allegation of abuse or molestation a serious matter. If a staff member becomes privy to a situation involving harm to another person or themselves, it is our policy as a staff to report these things to the proper authority.

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, burning, 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.

In the event that staff or volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors or suspected abuse, it is their responsibility to immediately report their observations to the Ministry Leader, Ministry Director, or any members of the Pastoral Team.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at Salt Church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure guidelines shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. Employees who are the subject of an investigation will be removed from their position, with pay, pending completion of the investigation. Employees who admit to the abuse or molestation will be terminated consistent with the established employment practices of this ministry. Volunteer subjects of any investigation will be removed from their positions pending completion of the investigation.
3. All allegations of abuse should be reported to the civil authorities, and the church will comply with the state’s requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. Salt Church will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. The insurance company will be notified, and Salt Church will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.

5. Salt Church 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 Salt Church 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 or youth.

## **TRAINING**

Salt Church will provide training on this child protection policy to all new workers and additional training for existing workers on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

## **VIOLATION OF POLICY OR GUIDELINES**

Workers must promptly notify their ministry leader, coordinator or supervisor when they or others violate the guidelines mandated by this policy. Ministry leaders and supervisors who become aware of a violation of the guidelines set by this policy are required to take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance with them. In the process of ensuring compliance with this policy, it may become necessary to remove workers from their positions.

## **ANNUAL REVIEW**

Each year Salt Church will conduct a review of our employees and volunteer lists to ensure they are still suited for their current position. Should the review indicate that any employees or volunteers have become unsuitable to work with children, they will be removed from their position.

## **REVISION OF POLICY AND GUIDELINES**

The leadership of Salt Church will regularly review this policy and the guidelines established within it. If necessary, the policies and procedures will be modified. When changes are made, ministry leaders will communicate them to all employees and volunteers affected by the policy changes.