

# Recommended Elements of your Church's Child\* Protection Policy

*Dallas Baptist Association churches should have child protection policies that congregations consistently practice to protect children and families from abuse. The following 10 elements are fundamental to an effective policy for churches of all sizes. Though we recommend that your church's policy contain these elements, churches should develop their own policies that appropriately reflect their unique circumstances. We advise that an attorney review each church's child protection policy.*

*\*A "child" for the purposes of a church child protection policy means individuals aged birth through 17 years of age or adults with developmental disabilities who require caretakers.*

[Church Name] desires to provide a safe environment for families. The following policies represent the practices of our congregation to care for children or adults with developmental disabilities.

1. **We minimize one-adult/one-child situations.**
  - a. At least two, preferably non-related, adults will be present with a child or children at church activities in which children are separated from their parents, caretakers, or guardians. If a children's meeting space has a door, it will remain open or have a window so that others can easily observe the group.
  - b. A non-guardian adult accompanying a child to the restroom will wait outside the restroom door.
  - c. Children will use the restroom individually, not in groups.
  - d. When church activities require transportation, only drivers pre-approved by the church may transport children. At least two, preferably unrelated, adults must accompany children during transportation required by a church activity.
  - e. If a circumstance occurs in which one adult is with one child (for example, during spiritual advising), both the child and adult should be in full view of other people at all times.
2. **We do not tolerate abuse, exploitation or harassment** in any form (physical, emotional or sexual). We do not spank, hit, grab, shove, pull, or twist. Additionally, we avoid behaviors that can lead to abuse such as:
  - a. Tickling.
  - b. Swinging children by their arms or legs.
  - c. Carrying children who are older than 2 years of age.
  - d. Wrestling.
  - e. Sitting on laps (for children older than 2 years of age).
  - f. Touching a child anywhere on his or her body that would typically be covered by a swimsuit (unless diapering). This includes frontal hugs. Side hugs are recommended.
  - g. Being verbally insulting or directing sarcastic remarks to a child.
  - h. Hazing.
3. **We do not discipline a child by** corporal punishment, withholding food, yelling, or isolation.
4. **We do not give gifts or give "special" attention** to one child in isolation from other children and adults.
5. **We do not communicate via social media with individual children unrelated to us.** Group conversations via social media require that at least two unrelated adults are members of the group and can monitor the conversation at any time.
6. A potential children's volunteer may not serve until he or she has been an active member of our congregation **for at least 6 months.**
7. **We conduct confidential background checks, personal interviews, and check references** for each person interested in serving children in our congregation.
8. A potential children's ministry volunteer (whether a regular, substitute, or occasional volunteer), will **complete orientation training** prior to serving in the children's ministry. This orientation will include:
  - a. How to comply with your church's child protection policy.
  - b. Child guidance that is age-appropriate.
  - c. How to prevent, recognize, report, and respond to child abuse or neglect.
9. Our church's child protection policy will be **reviewed and signed annually** by church leaders serving children in our congregation.
10. **We report suspected child abuse or neglect.** Church ministers as well as all adults in the state of Texas are required to report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect. No "clergy privilege" exists.
11. **Any church member** not fully committed to complying with our church's policies may not serve, teach, or otherwise engage with children in our congregation.