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Disclaimer:

Recognizing that no structured system of guidelines and policies is infallible, Chisholm Baptist Church sets forth this program as a means to help make all members aware and attentive to the care and safety of those children entrusted to our care. These policies are a desired standard we seek to attain to.

The purpose of this program is to help make our church a safer place. It will help us to:

- * Safeguard the children and youth of our church from sexual molestation and other forms of abuse.
- * Protect church staff and volunteer ministers from potential allegations of abuse.
- * Limit the extent of our church's legal risk and liability due to abuse.

1. Why Have a Program?

a) The Problem is Real

Numerous cases of molestation and abuse in modern-day society give evidence of the increasing problem facing churches today. Seeking to ignore or avoid the issue is not the answer. Our intent is to take an active approach to reduce the risk of such an event occurring at our church.

b) It Can Happen to Our Church

Churches can inevitably provide an inviting environment for molesters due to the presence of children and youth, and a mindset that encourages people to become involved in ministry. No church is immune from the potential for abuse. Therefore, we must acknowledge the risk and take prudent steps toward prevention of such cases.

c) Potential Impact

A single incident of child molestation can devastate a family, divide a congregation, and terrorize a town. Outrage, bewilderment, anger and blame, questions about others who may have also been abused – the mission and Kingdom work of the church can become lost when pain and hurting such as this occurs. We must be a part of the thousands of other congregations that are taking positive steps to make their churches a safer place for children and youth.

2. Understanding Child Sexual Abuse

a) What is Child Sexual Abuse?

Child sexual abuse can involve acts of touching or non-touching. Touching aspects include fondling or actual sexual acts. Non-touching abuse can include acts such as verbal comments, pornographic photos or videos, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, or allowing children to witness sexual activity.

Texas Law states that sexual abuse can include a number of acts or omissions regarding actions involving a child, or failure to take action to protect a child. See Appendix A for an expanded definition according to Texas Family Code 261.001.

b) The Effects of Child Sexual Abuse

Consequences of child sexual abuse can plague victims into adulthood. Outcome studies of adult survivors of child sexual abuse suggest the following effects: sexual dysfunction, eating disorders, substance abuse, promiscuity, disassociation from emotions, and possible perpetration of sexual abuse on others.

c) The Profile of a Child Molester

Some assume that molesters are “strangers wearing trench coats” or “dirty old men.” Such stereotypes are not only inaccurate, but they dangerously contribute to a false sense of security. No one profile fits the various perpetrators of abuse. Focusing on any one profile can result in overlooking a real molester who could well be an active adult or teen in the church. Consider:

- * Over 80% of the time, the abuser is someone known to the victim.
- * Most abuse takes place within the context of an ongoing relationship.
- * The offender is most often between the ages of 20 and 30 years.
- * 20% of sex offenders begin their activity before the age of 18.
- * Child abusers often are married and have children.

d) Symptoms of Molestation

Physical signs may include:

- * Lacerations and bruises
- * Nightmares
- * Irritation, pain, or injury to the genital area
- * Difficulty with urination
- * Discomfort when sitting
- * Torn or bloody underclothing
- * Venereal disease

Behavioral signs may include:

- * Anxiety when approaching church or nursery area
- * Nervous or hostile behavior toward adults
- * Sexual self-consciousness
- * “Acting out” of sexual behavior
- * Withdrawal from church activities and friends

Verbal signs may include the following statements:

- * “I don’t like [a particular church worker]”
- * “[A church worker] does things to me when we’re alone”
- * “I don’t like to be alone with [a church worker]”
- * “[A church worker] fooled around with me”

3. The Church’s Legal Vulnerability

a) Why Churches are Susceptible

Churches have unique features that can make them susceptible to incidents of child molestation. Trust among members, lack of screening of those working and serving with young people, opportunity for unsupervised close personal contact with children, access to children and youth, and the need many churches have to get adequate help for children's and youth programs can all contribute to this vulnerability.

b) The Legal Environment

The number of lawsuits brought against churches as a result of child sexual abuse has risen substantially over the last decade. No one knows the full extent of this growing trend since many out-of-court settlements occur. Churches engaged in litigation can suffer devastating financial and spiritual consequences. Most lawsuits allege that the church was legally accountable either on the basis of negligent hiring or negligent supervision. While churches are not responsible for every injury or event that occurs on their premises or in the course of their activities, they generally are responsible only for those injuries that result from their negligence.

4. Background Check Policy

Our desire and intent is that everyone who serves with children or youth on a regular basis will complete the background check process. Realizing that the nature of the church environment may necessitate enlistment of persons to support ministry needs with limited advance notice, we must also ensure that our abuse prevention program can accommodate this need while also maximizing protection to children and youth. With this in mind, we will utilize the following policies:

- a) Persons in all paid staff positions (ministerial, custodial, secretarial, etc.) will complete a background check as part of the selection and hiring process. The application for employment for paid workers will contain a release for checking background, including but not limited to a criminal background check.
- b) Background checks will be required for church members who serve with children/youth on a regular basis, defined as once a quarter or more.
- c) Background checks will also be required for non-church members, as well as persons who have been members for less than 6 months, who will serve with children/youth on any basis. (This is intended to accommodate service needs in ministry-intensive programs, such as Vacation Bible School, Awana, or Youth events.)
- d) Church members who have been members for more than 6-months, and who serve with children/youth on less than a regular basis (less than once a quarter) do not have to complete a background check, provided they are not permitted to be in situations that would have them alone or isolated with children/youth. (This is intended to accommodate enlistment of additional ministry workers on short notice to help meet unanticipated needs.)
- e) Everyone serving in any ministry who might have opportunity to be in a small-group setting with children/youth, or be alone or isolated with children/youth, must complete a background check prior to serving in such a role.
- f) Updated criminal background checks will be conducted each year for those continuing to serve in children/youth ministry areas. These checks will be conducted using a systematic random selection process.
- g) The CBC Confidential Background Check Form (Appendix B) containing the authorization for a criminal records and background check must be completed by applicants for positions as noted above. Background checks will not be performed without completion of this authorization; however, persons will not be permitted to work/serve in positions involving children/ youth without completion of the form

authorizing the check, and completion of the actual check itself. (See item d above for the lone possible exception to this.)

- h) The content of the background check will be maintained as confidential, known only to the senior level pastoral staff who will be involved in the decision of whether or not to involve the individual as a ministry worker with children/youth.
- i) Any conviction for a sexual offense involving a minor will disqualify an applicant, as will convictions of incest, rape, assaults involving minors, murder, kidnapping, pornography, sodomy, or the physical abuse of a minor. Other criminal convictions will warrant a case-by-case review to investigate and understand the nature, circumstances, and occurrence in time.
- j) For cases where the applicant was charged with child abuse, molestation, or other serious crime - but was not convicted - further investigation will be warranted, such as seeking discussion and further information with the legal officials where the charges were brought.

5. Supervising Church Ministry Workers

To help ensure adequate supervision of paid workers, staff, and volunteer ministers with regard to protection of children and youth, our church will adhere to the following policy and procedure guidelines.

- a) Each group, class, or activity containing children or youth is to have at least two workers who have completed the background and screening process. Youth volunteer workers must serve with an adult who has completed the background check process.
- b) Church staff, workers, and volunteer ministers are **not** to go out alone with a child/youth, or spend time with the child/youth in an unsupervised situation.
- c) Children and youth should have written parental permission for involvement in church sponsored programs or activities that will occur off premises.
- d) Any inappropriate conduct or relationships related to these guidelines between a overseer of children/youth and a member of the youth group or a child is to be confronted immediately and investigated. Prompt warnings are to be issued when appropriate, and the situation monitored very closely. The overseer's services are to be terminated immediately for continued violation of such warnings, or for a single violation of sufficient gravity. (Note: Any criminal violations are to be reported immediately. See Section 6, Reporting Procedures.)
- e) Potential criminal sanctions are to be discussed with youth and children's workers/volunteer ministers during training. Such persons must understand that the law views such misconduct very seriously and that inappropriate conduct with minors can lead to felony convictions and imprisonment, as well as substantial damage awards from civil suits.
- f) Doors on all classrooms and offices are to have windows provided to allow viewing of activity in the room from outside the room. Church staff should make random rounds of rooms to observe activities.
- g) Programs that involve children and youth should always include adequate supervisory personnel. Supervision should also be maintained before and after the event until all children are in the custody of their parents or legal guardians.

- h) Special attention must be given to overnight activities that involve children and youth. Therefore, all chaperons, sponsors, and/or overseers are to be cleared in advance with the proper church leaders, to include the Background Check in Section 4.
- i) Procedures are to be used that clearly identify children and their parent(s) or guardian(s). Children should only be released to a properly identified and preauthorized adult or youth-aged sibling.

6. Reporting Procedures for Church Ministry Workers

Following a reporting procedure is a critical component in a sexual abuse prevention program. Child sexual abuse thrives when it goes unnoticed or unreported. Often, an abusive situation continues because of someone's failure to report it. All church workers need to know what constitutes an occasion for reporting, the reporting channels they should use, and their obligations to make the report.

a) Reporting Obligations

- i) A person who has cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person must "immediately" report this to authorities. "Immediately" is generally accepted as being within 48 hours.
- ii) The law makes **no exceptions** for who is required to report, including an individual whose personal communication may otherwise be privileged, such as clergy.
- iii) The identify of a person making a report to law enforcement authorities is confidential and may only be disclosed to a law enforcement officer for the purposes of conducting a criminal investigation of the report or by the Judge under certain circumstances.
- iv) Under Texas law, the person making the report is to identify, if known, the name and address of the child; the name and address of the person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the child; and any other pertinent information concerning the alleged or suspected abuse or neglect.
- v) Texas law also requires that the report be made to any local or state law enforcement agency or the agency designated by the court to be responsible for the protection of children. (For Rockwall County, this is the Texas Child Protective Services (CPS) office in Rockwall.)

b) Church Reporting Procedure

Violations of the church policies and procedures discussed in this program are to be reported to the Senior Pastor within 48 hours. Reporting within this timeframe is also required to a legal authority as noted in item a. v. above. Possible indicators and symptoms of child sexual abuse displayed by a child must also be reported, as these may be warning signs of possible problems. If the allegation involves the Senior Pastor, then reporting should be to the Chairman of the Deacon Body, as well as the required legal authorities.

7. Responding to Allegations of Abuse

a) Preparation of a Response Plan

Realistically, no practical prevention strategy is 100 percent effective. To help avoid improper reactions, the following guidelines provide a plan for responding to sexual abuse allegations:

- i) All allegations need to be taken seriously.
- ii) Situations must be handled forthrightly with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality.
- iii) Immediate contact is to be established by church leadership with the insurance carrier and church legal counsel (.....).
- iv) Full cooperation is to be given to civil authorities under the guidance of (point of contact person) our attorney.
- v) Adequate care is to be shown for the well-being of victims.
- vi) The victim is not to be held responsible in any way.

b) Response Plan

- i) Adequate records of applications, references, screening forms, and similar type items are to be up-to-date and accessible.
- ii) The Senior Pastor will be the specific spokesman for the church. The pastor must be able to talk with the media and congregation regarding the matter in a discrete, informed, and diplomatic way.
- iii) A written position statement is to be prepared to help define and review thoughts and pertinent facts that are appropriate and need to be shared. This statement is to be used as the basis for public discussion of the issue. The prepared statement should make reference to our policies and procedures established to help safeguard children and youth. While this is a time for careful consideration in what is to be said, it is not a time for silence or "no comment" statements.
- iv) When confronted with allegations of abuse, don't engage in denial, minimization, or blame. Stick with the facts, and the pre-prepared statements.
- v) Always have our attorney present while answering any investigative questions from the police or social service agencies.
- vi) Don't be accusatory. Avoid spelling out the details of an accusation in a public interview.
- vii) Work closely with the insurance carrier.

c) If an Allegation Occurs

- i) Document all efforts involving handling of the situation.
- ii) Report the incident immediately to the insurance carrier and attorney. Do not try to handle the situation without professional outside assistance.

- iii) Contact the proper legal authorities following the guidance of the insurance carrier and attorney. Do not attempt an in-depth investigation. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with the case.
- iv) Notify the parents.
- v) Do not confront the accused until the safety of the child or youth member is secured.
- vi) Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. The care and safety of the victim is the first priority.
- vii) Treat the accused with dignity and support. If the accused is a church worker, that person should be temporarily relieved of his/her duties until the investigation is completed. If the person is a paid employee, a decision and arrangements will be made to either maintain or suspend their pay until the allegations have been cleared or are substantiated.
- viii) Use the text of the prepared public statement to answer the press and to convey news to the congregation. Be careful to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.

8. Ministry Worker and Volunteer Training

a) Training Expectations

All workers, staff, and volunteers are to complete periodic training regarding sexual abuse and reporting procedures. This is especially important at the beginning of a new program schedule, or when new persons begin working in a ministry or program. Those going through the training should have opportunities to voice their concerns and ask questions.

The church does not want to create an atmosphere of fear or suspicion, but proper training can help workers/volunteers see how reporting and personal reminders can be done honestly and discreetly without generating undue suspicion or anxiety.

b) Training Process

In order to be effective, our training process must be intentional, systematic, and sustained. Intentional instruction will seek to provide a clear sense of what we are trying to achieve. Systematic instruction will seek to target the entire congregation. Sustained instruction will seek to ensure that education is ongoing, as workers and leaders change often in church life. Training will occur at several levels:

- i) Leadership – Ministry leadership will complete the most extensive training to help ensure understanding of the seriousness, potential liabilities, and importance of consistent control measures to safeguard children and youth.
- ii) Families – Family units are the most critical and necessary place for prevention education to occur. Our educational efforts will make information and training available to parents, other adult family members, and youth-aged children on a periodic basis, including information to help create an understanding of why our church has implemented a prevention program.
- iii) Church Workers – Regular training for those involved with children and youth will be provided to help ensure adequate offering of training to allow participation by all who serve in this area. Periodic training will also be provided to help maintain focus and awareness on the importance of protecting children and youth.

Worker training (for paid staff as well as volunteers) will include the following:

- * The definition of child abuse.
 - * Sexual and physical abuse symptoms.
 - * What constitutes inappropriate conduct?
 - * Church policies that govern working with children or youth.
 - * The civil and criminal consequences of misconduct.
 - * Reporting procedures for observed or suspected misconduct.
 - * The rationale behind screening procedures.
- iv) The Congregation – Educational methods will include steps to help make congregational members aware of the problem of sexual abuse in our society, and why our church has developed a sexual abuse prevention plan.

9. Policies Related To Camp Activities

a) Camp Policy Supersedes Church Policy

As it is the responsibility of every camp in the state of Texas to conform to the requirements of the Department of State Health Services guidelines governing child/sexual abuse, the student director will ensure that every adult attending camp meets the necessary requirements to act as a sponsor/counselor in accordance with these published requirements.

b) State Requirements

The state of Texas, under the control of the Department of State Health Services requires that:

- i) Every adult sponsor receives certification in child abuse prevention prior to attending any camp. This course can be downloaded by directors directly from camp websites (such as Mt. Lebanon) and provided to all participating adults prior to camp attendance.
- ii) Every adult worker at the camp must have undergone a thorough background check prior to being accepted for service in any camp. Individual adults acting as sponsors must also have received a background check prior to attending any camp. This check may be conducted under the auspices of the individual churches.
- iii) Churches must present certifications for all adults acting as counselors/sponsors at the time of their arrival at the camp. Certification attests that each sponsor/counselor has undergone the training course prescribed by the Department of State Health Services.
- iv) The curriculum provides our churches with a statewide uniform course that complies with the new mandated requirements. Each adult attending camp with children must complete a minimum of one clock-hour of training (total) addressing the following topics:
 - the definitions and effects of sexual abuse and child molestation.

- the typical patterns of behavior and methods of operation of child molesters and sex offenders that put children at risk.
- the warning signs and symptoms associated with sexual abuse or child molestation.
- the recommended procedures by youth camps to address, prevent, and report suspected sexual abuse or child molestation.
- ways adults can avoid putting themselves at risk for an accusation of sexual misconduct.

The test administered at the conclusion of the training must consist of a minimum of 25 questions and address the topics described in the training.

c) Out of State Requirements

For camps outside the State of Texas the student director will coordinate with such camps to determine each state's requirement. Where no requirement exists, the requirements of the Texas Department of State Health Services will serve at a minimum as the standard for all adults serving as sponsors/counselors.

Appendix A**Definition of “Abuse” under Texas Family Code 261.001(1)**

Texas Family Code 261.001(1) states that “Abuse” includes the following acts or omissions by a person:

- (A) Mental or emotional injury to a child that results in an observable and material impairment in the child’s growth, development or psychological functioning;
- (B) causing or permitting the child to be in a situation in which the child sustains a mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment of the child’s growth, development, or psychological functioning;
- (C) physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child, or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the child, including an injury that is at variance with the history or explanation given and excluding an accident or reasonable discipline by a parent, guardian, or managing or possessory conservator that does not expose the child to a substantial harm of risk;
- (D) Failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent an action by another person that results in physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child;
- (E) sexual conduct harmful to a child’s mental, emotional, or physical welfare, including conduct that constitutes the criminal offense of indecency with a child, sexual assault, or aggravated sexual assault; (each defined by the Texas Penal Code)
- (F) Failure to make reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct harmful to a child;
- (G) Compelling or encouraging the child to engage in sexual conduct as defined by the Texas Penal Code 43.01:
- (H) causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing the photographing, filming, or depiction of the child if the person knew or should have known that the resulting photograph, film, or depiction of the child is obscene as defined by Texas Penal Code 43.21, or pornographic;
- (I) the current use by a person or a controlled substance as defined by Chapter 481 of the Texas Health and Safety Code, in a manner or to an extent that the use results in physical, mental, or emotional injury to a child;
- (J) causing, expressly permitting, or encouraging a child to use a controlled substance as defined by Chapter 481, Texas Health and Safety Code; or
- (K) Causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing a sexual performance by a child as defined by Texas Penal Code 43.25.

Appendix B

CONFIDENTIAL BACKGROUND CHECK FORM

This form is to be completed by all persons serving in children's or youth ministry/program areas as defined in the Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Program of Chisholm Baptist Church. An updated form will also be required from time to time in order to comply with our policy of conducting random checks on a periodic basis for those serving in children and youth areas. Identity-sensitive information and results from criminal and other background checks will remain confidential and known only to senior pastoral/staff leadership as they administer this program in order to help protect our children and youth.

Personal Data

Date _____

Name _____
Last First Middle

Identify must be confirmed with a state drivers' license or other government-issued photo identification. (Attach a copy of this ID.)

Driver's Lic. Number: _____ State of Issue: _____ SSN: _____

Present address: _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Home Phone (_____) _____ Work Phone (_____) _____

Have you ever been charged with, indicted for, convicted of, or pleaded guilty to a crime or an action prohibited by the Texas Family Code, or a similar code in any state?

___ No ___ Yes (If Yes, please explain; attach separate page if necessary) _____

Have you ever been known by any other name(s)? (Including maiden name?): ___ No ___ Yes (If Yes, please list all other names) _____

Church History and Prior Ministry Service With Minors

Name of church of which you are a member: _____

Location/Address of church: _____

List (name & address) of other churches you have attended regularly during the past five years:

List all previous church work and non-church work involving babies, preschool, children, and/or youth (list name & address of each church, business, or organization, type of work performed, and dates)

Applicant's Statement & Waiver

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand that Chisholm Baptist Church desires to protect its members and therefore I give my permission for Church leadership to conduct criminal and sex offender background checks on me. I also authorize the Church to obtain additional information as may be warranted from references, employers, churches, or other organizations listed herein. I also authorize any references, churches, businesses, or other organizations listed in this application to give you any information, including opinions, that they may have regarding my character and fitness for working with babies, children, and/or youth.

In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this form by the Church, I hereby release any individual, church, youth or children's organization, charity, employer, reference, or any other person or organization, including record custodians, both collectively and individually, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family, on account of compliance or any attempts to comply, with this authorization, excepting only the communication of knowingly false information. I waive any right that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me in this application unless otherwise noted below.

I agree to be bound by the Bylaws and policies of Chisholm Baptist Church, and to refrain from unscriptural conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church.

I further state that **I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE FOREGOING RELEASE AND KNOW THE CONTENTS THEREOF AND I SIGN THIS RELEASE AS MY OWN FREE ACT.** This is a legally binding agreement which I have read and understand.

Applicant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name Signed Above: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____