

# **Hood River Church of the Nazarene Children/Teen & Worker Protection Policy**

## **Objective of Protection Policy**

The protection and safety of our children and teens as well as our Children's Ministry workers are a high priority at Hood River Church of the Nazarene (HRCN). We are keenly aware that parents entrust their children to us and our desire is to meet or exceed their expectations of quality care. We also want to protect the workers entrusted with that care by providing sound procedures.

The following policies and procedures as outlined are designed in order to give families the assurance that they are receiving the best care possible. These policies are also for the protection of all volunteers and paid workers at Hood River Church of the Nazarene. If a crisis should occur, these policies will help protect the victim, the accused, as well as the church's reputation.

I ask that you, as a volunteer at HRCN, read the following pages carefully. We expect that you will embrace and follow the given guidelines while remembering what a blessing it is to serve our Lord through his children. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask our pastors.

Joel & Mindy Alsworth  
Co-Pastor  
Hood River Church of the Nazarene

# Building Security

## a. General Supervision

Children/Youth remain the responsibility of their parents during activities where there is no programming specifically designed for them. Children/Youth should remain in areas of the church where adult supervision is available.

All classrooms shall have a window with a clear view of the classroom or the door shall remain open.

## b. Check In/Check Out Procedures

### Elementary Children

For the safety of all children, we will encourage parents of elementary school age children to escort their child safely to and from class. Children 4<sup>th</sup> grade and older may be released without a parent's presence at the teacher's/supervisor's discretion, but younger children will be released directly to the care of a parent or authorized person.

### Preschool and Nursery Children

It is mandatory that all preschool children be signed in and out by an approved adult. In order for the preschool child to participate in the class or activity, the approved adult must agree to sign the child in and out.

When we have a visitor, the parent or legal guardian must complete the visitor information form and sign their child in on the appropriate sign-in sheet.

## c. Staff/Volunteer Identification

Badges will be issued to Hood River Church of the Nazarene staff and approved volunteers. Only those adults with the badges are to be present in the classrooms. Parents may drop off their children inside the classroom, but must leave their child or take their child with them if they are not able to settle after 10 minutes.

# Classroom Safety

## a. Teacher/Child Ratios

HRCN has a goal of maintaining the following ratios of ministry workers to children whenever feasible. These ratios are goals. The church recognizes that in some

circumstances achieving these ratios may not be feasible, for example when as an unexpected number of children attend an event. We also recognize that an additional teacher may be needed for those children with special needs.

<i>Worker to Child Ratios</i> (See Two Adult Rule)		
Actual Age	Workers	Children
0-12 months	1	2
12-36 months	1	5
3 and 4 year olds	1	6
Kindergarten	1	7
1 <sup>st</sup> – 6 <sup>th</sup> grade	1	10

**b. Two Adult Rule**

This rule has been established for the protection of everyone, volunteers and staff, of any age. The rule simply states that an adult should not be alone with a minor. If a worker finds himself/herself left alone with a child/youth, he/she should notify a supervisor immediately to correct the situation. At least two adults should be in the area with the children/youth at all times.

If a child/youth arrives before other members of the teaching team arrive, prop the door open between your classroom and an adjoining classroom that has a worker in it.

In the event there is only one adult present and no additional volunteer can be secured, the classroom door will remain slightly open or there will be a window allowing anyone passing to look in without interrupting the teaching process. If/when a door is closed it should never be locked.

**c. Physical Contact**

Physical contact with children/youth should be age and developmentally appropriate. Be aware and sensitive to differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, individual personalities, and special needs. The following guidelines are to be promoted for pure, genuine, and positive displays of God’s love.

Proper displays of affection:

**Hugs** – One-arm, side hugs and hand-to-arm hugs are positive contact. Avoid initiating full contact, body-to-body hugs.

**Lap Sitting** – Appropriate sitting on laps may occur with children 3 years and younger. Discourage lap sitting with school-age children/youth. Rather, encourage them to sit next to you.

**Casual Touch** – GENTLE contact during activities may be on children's/youth's heads, shoulders, arms and hands. Physical discipline should never be used on children/youth.

**Back Rubs** – Anyone working with children should refrain from giving back rubs.

**Behavior** – Flirtatious behavior at any level between adult and children/youth is inappropriate and will not be tolerated.

Anything that makes you (or the other person) feel uncomfortable is inappropriate. Any touching that is used to express power or control over another person is inappropriate, such as grabbing a person's arm or wrist, punching, slapping, or poking a finger into a person's chest to make a point.

#### **d. Classroom Discipline**

A child's dignity should be carefully considered during discipline. Gentleness, respect, and understanding must guide all actions and words.

To avoid basic discipline problems:

- Maintain the correct teacher-child ratio.
- Be sure the activities that you provide are age appropriate.
- Plan, Prepare, and Be Ready To Teach.
- Never be late. (The first one in the room is usually in charge!)
- Use a quiet speaking voice.
- Avoid "clutter build-up" in the room (too many scattered toys frustrate and over-excite).
- Be fair and consistent with all children.
- Be sure to focus on positive actions.

Classroom Rule Suggestions:

- One voice at a time talking.
- Quiet hands get answered first.
- Use good manners.
- Keep your hands and feet to yourself.
- Respect each other.
- Be friendly.

If after all these suggestions have been applied and you are faced with a need to discipline a child in the classroom, we suggest the following steps for Remedial Classroom Discipline:

1. Try to deal with the problem individually.
2. Explain to the child why the behavior is unacceptable.
3. Redirect the child to positive action.
4. Explain the consequences of continued bad behavior and choices as well as the definition and results of the correct behavior.
5. Offer choices that are acceptable to both you and the child.

6. Call the Program Director or Pastor for assistance.
7. Confidentially discuss the problem with the parent or guardian when they pick up their child. If the problem involves extreme behaviors of the child (i.e. willful disobedience, aggressiveness, etc.), the parent or guardian needs to be involved immediately instead of waiting until the end of the class.

Appropriate Discipline within the Ministry setting:

- Praising the specific behavior you want to see (i.e. “good listening”, “Thank you for waiting.”)
- A firm gentle voice addressing and redirecting the behavior (i.e. “you are running; walk please”)
- Confidential parental discussions when necessary.
- Age appropriate “time outs” or withdrawal from activity. One minute of “time out” for each year of the child’s age.

Inappropriate discipline within a ministry setting:

- Corporal (physical) punishment of any kind.
- Any words or tone that would cause a child to think he or she is the “problem” rather than a specific behavior being addressed (e.g., yelling at the child)
- Any words that could cause feelings of condemnation or shame.
- Pulling or pushing the child in a forceful manner.

Grievance Process

Any parent (or guardian) who has a concern about one or more of the Children’s Ministries volunteers should make their concern known to the Director of Children’s Ministries or one of the Pastors immediately. Ministry leadership will determine the appropriate actions necessary to correct the problem.

**e. Child Abuse**

All citizens have responsibility to prevent child abuse and protect children. Mandatory reporters such as clergy, school officials, physicians, and licensed professional counselors are required by law to report child abuse.

1. A verbal report should be made immediately upon observation, but not before the child’s safety and comfort are secured and the suspected abuser is safely away from the children. All reports of suspected child abuse should be directed **ONLY** to the Senior Pastor(s), except in the case of a mandatory reporter (i.e. school teacher), who will report to the Senior Pastor(s) and the state (Child Protective Services).
2. If necessary, the Senior Pastor may request a written report of suspected child abuse by the person reporting the suspected child abuse.
3. To preserve confidentiality, it is important to discuss the incident only with the persons listed above. Do not discuss with anyone else.

## **Reporting Responsibilities of Church Leadership**

The following are the steps and procedures for which the church leadership is responsible once notified of a suspected incident of child abuse:

- Take all allegations seriously.
- The Senior Pastor(s) will contact the church's insurance company (preferably within 24 hours of learning of the allegation).
- The insurance company will assign legal counsel.
- The Senior Pastor(s) will make contact with the attorney assigned to us.
- The Senior Pastor(s) will contact denominational leadership (District Superintendent).
- Do not give information to anyone (including police) without consulting with our attorney.
- The Senior Pastor(s) will prepare a public statement with input from our attorney to answer the press and to convey the news to the congregation upon advice of our legal counsel.
- The Senior Pastor(s) will be the spokesperson for all communications with the public, police, and the congregation.

Keep record of dates the above information was completed.

## **Recruitment and Selection of Paid Staff and Volunteers**

The nature of Children's Ministries requires a large number of volunteers and we as a church must ensure that our children are safeguarded at all times. HRCN views the safety of our children as a top priority and therefore will accept only those volunteers that view it both a privilege and a blessing to work with our children.

### **a. Adult Workers**

All persons wanting to serve as a volunteer or paid caregiver within the Children's Ministries Department of HRCN must complete this process:

1. The candidate must complete the HRCN Family Ministries Application Form
2. A criminal background check must be done on all adults working with children and the results must show no prior convictions, violent conduct or incidents involving, but not exclusive to, minors. As a result of the background check, the Pastors reserve the right to assess the appropriateness of each volunteer candidate to work with children. Preferably, the candidate will have been a regular attendee of HRCN for at least 6 months.

or

The candidate will be a transfer member in good standing from another church within the Nazarene denomination.

B. Youth Workers

While teens and younger people will on occasion be allowed to assist adults in the supervision of our children, they will do so only with prior approval of the Director of Children's Ministries or the Pastoral Staff.

There will be no background check of those Teens under 18 years of age

A file on each applicant shall be kept in a central and secure location and viewed only by the Pastors.