

'Safe Church Policies for Working with Children

Neighborhood Alliance Church

Neighborhood Alliance Church desires to provide a safe, loving environment where children are protected and shepherded well. The following guidelines and procedures are in place to assist in providing a safe, loving environment.

For the purpose of this document:

1. A “child” is anyone who is under the age of eleven or has not completed the 5th grade.
2. A “worker” is any adult or student who has been asked to lead or participate in a children’s ministry activity at Neighborhood Alliance Church.
3. A ministry coordinator refers to the person(s) Neighborhood Alliance Church has appointed to lead the children’s ministry.

Worker Qualifications

Character Qualifications:

1. **Available** to invest in the lives of children.
2. **Responsive** to God’s work in you; to growing as a person; to needs of others; to authority.
3. **Faithful**, growing in your relationship with God; committed to working as a team.

Ministry Commitment:

1. Care for children through consistent relationships (inside & outside church).
2. Be willing to meet as a ministry team when requested.
3. Serve the ministry by using your spiritual gifts.
4. Be accountable to the children’s ministry team & to church leadership.

Required Screening:

1. **Complete a background check.** For workers under the age of 25, checks must be updated every two years. For workers over the age of 25, checks must be updated every 5 years. NAC will keep it on file for the duration of the worker’s involvement with children’s ministry.
2. **Read & be familiar with NAC’s Policies For Adults Working With Children and sign the Volunteer Worker Questionnaire** (at the back of this packet) every two years. This must be submitted to and kept on file at NAC.
3. **Complete the MinistrySafe online training every two years.** For workers 15 years and older, this training is very helpful & informative—and is also required by our insurance. You’ll receive a link or on-site opportunity for you to complete the training when you return the questionnaire at the back of this packet.

4. Attend NAC for at least 6 months prior to taking a volunteer position.

Workers who are volunteering for a one-time or short-term (one week or less) ministry opportunity may be exempted from the 6-month attendance requirement when these requirements are met:

- 1) Background check
- 2) Two references are called, including one outside NAC's membership.

References should be checked by either the ministry area leader or a staff person they designate and be completed before the volunteer is approved to serve.

Interaction with Children Policy

"We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us."—1 Thessalonians 2:8

Neighborhood highly values interaction between adults and children as a biblical model of making disciples through significant, Jesus-centered relationships. The spirit of NAC's policy on interaction with children is to encourage life-changing relationships that are above reproach, with the intent of disciple making, not just being a "grown-up buddy." The purpose of these policies is to minimize risks and put both the leader and the child in a safe environment.

1. All children's ministry events are to function with an "open door" policy. This means parents, staff, elders and church members have a right to observe any children's ministry activity.
2. Ratios for supervision are as follows: Babies 0-12 months (1:2), Toddlers 12-24 months (1:3), 2-4 years old (1:4), 4 year olds-5th grade (1:5) with no less than 2 unrelated adults to start.
3. There should be a minimum of two unrelated workers in any room during a ministry activity. At least one of the workers must be 21 years of age or older. Deviation from the two-worker rule is only permitted with specific approval from the ministry coordinator (after attempts have been made to find a suitable adult). In this case, the worker must keep an accurate record of who attended the event and submit it to the ministry coordinator within 48 hours after the event.
4. Should it become necessary for only one adult to be in a room with a child, the room must include windows so that the in-room activity is in plain view. If the room does not contain windows that provide a clear view of the room, the door must remain open at all times.
5. Nursery workers should only allow scheduled workers and parents of children in the room. Only release children to their parents, guardian or authorized persons. Diaper changes

should always take place where another nursery worker can easily observe. Follow all posted guidelines in the room.

6. Males and females (both children and workers) must have separate access to bathroom facilities. A worker should not be allowed into a restroom alone with a child. But a child must receive supervision and care in accordance with their age and required need and be accounted for at all times while bathing and toileting. So if a child needs help, a second person should accompany them or be within visual range. If a situation exists where only one individual is available, they should stand in the open doorway of the stall or send someone to inform the child's parent.
7. No worker should offer a child a ride in their car, nor be in a situation where they would be alone with them unless the child/youth's parent and/or appropriate church leader has been notified and granted permission.
8. If an activity requires children to be outside, the weather must permit it. Do not allow children to leave the building (unless they are with their parents) if there is active lightning and/or heavy rain.
9. There should never be an occasion when physical touch or raising your voice is appropriate for discipline. The only time you should use your hands on a child is to keep him/her from harm or harming someone else. Discipline should include instruction, correction and encouragement. Please be sure to pray with the child and then redirect them to a different area.

Technology & Social Media Policy

1. Use of personal devices during ministry times should be limited. Children will not be allowed to use personal devices during ministry activities except when given permission by those leading the activity for relevant or essential purposes. Likewise, adult volunteers should limit their personal device use to only what is necessary during ministry times. We ask that parents and adult volunteers honor this to make the most of our opportunities to connect with each other and with God.
2. It is never acceptable to view, listen to, play and/or share digital media that is pornographic, vulgar, violent or otherwise inappropriate during ministry activities. Children should only watch videos if it's for an activity planned by workers and approved by a parent/guardian of each child watching.
3. When we're together, children and workers will be asked to NOT use earphones or headphones with their personal devices so as to not isolate or exclude others.
4. Adults should not post media of children on personal social media without knowledge and direct permission from a parent or guardian, and from the child as well if they are age 8+. Adults should not post media of children on NAC social media or the NAC web site unless parents have opted-in for us to share content on NAC's online presence. This can be an annual opt-in, in writing.

Guidelines for Reporting

1. **WHEN TO REPORT:** If there is any doubt as to whether or not to report an incident or suspicion, it should be reported. Florida Statutes states that anyone who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect is required to report that abuse or neglect. Any person participating “in good faith” in the making of a report shall be immune from any liability and the reporter’s name shall not be released to anyone other than Florida Protection Services employees or the state attorney without written consent of the person reporting. The only exception to reporting is privileged communication between clergy and counselee or attorney/client. For reasons of liability and integrity, the report should be made within 48 hours of any instance of child abuse.
2. **HOW TO REPORT:** Anyone observing any indicators or symptoms of abuse of a child should report it to their immediate supervisor. The report should be documented in writing, and a copy kept in a permanent, secure file. If anonymity is strongly desired, have a third party witness the report for later confirmation, if that should become necessary.

After determining an incident has occurred, or there is reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, the supervisor or church elder shall submit the report to:

1. Florida Protection Services at 1-800-962-2873
2. The Southeastern District office of The Christian and Missionary Alliance
3. The church’s insurance company as deemed appropriate.
4. The church’s attorney as deemed appropriate.

For the sake of the victim(s) and the alleged perpetrator, until formal charges are brought, all allegations, reports to the authorities, and any ongoing investigations should be held in the strictest confidence.

3. **HOW TO RESPOND TO THE MEDIA:** A brief policy statement should be prepared indicating the church has adopted policies and guidelines in an attempt to protect all young children and youth, stating that there is concern over the allegations and the church has taken internal action and has notified the appropriate agencies and will be cooperating with them. Advice from the church’s attorney should be sought before making comments to the media. A designated individual should handle all media inquires. Individuals should be instructed that **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES** should any other staff or volunteer respond to the media. No additional information is to be volunteered.

Church Discipline

If found that child abuse has taken place by a worker, paid or volunteer, of an Alliance church, the church will practice discipline according to Matthew 18:15-17. When discipline becomes necessary under the authority of the District, the District will follow the procedures under “Uniform Policy on Discipline and Appeal” as found in the Manual of The Christian and Missionary Alliance. The church should ask the Child Protection Agency if it could assist in helping the hurting family. The church should attempt to maintain frequent communication and supportive relationships with the victim and their family, including help in receiving counseling if appropriate. The church should also attempt to maintain frequent communication and supportive relationships with those suspected or guilty of child abuse as long as these persons exhibit a willingness to listen, change, and look to Christ for help.