



## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY September 6, 2023

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### POLICY

The purpose of New Life Community Church (here in referred to as NLCC) has always been to fulfill our hope of reproducing Authentic Christianity and in doing so providing a place where people can be **saved** from divine judgment, **belong** to a church family, **grow** in Christ-likeness, and **give** back to God our time, talents, and treasure by giving to people. It is with this purpose in mind that we offer Children and Youth ministries at New Life and thus offer a place where all of NLCC's purposes can be met in one facet or another.

The purpose for implementing policies and procedures for persons who work with children, youth, and adults at New Life Community Church is not only to protect the children, youth, and adults from abuse, but also to protect any person from being unjustly accused of abuse.

The people of NLCC believe, in accordance with our Christian principles, that it is in the best interest of the church and its participants to adopt and implement policies, procedures, screening tools, and training to assist us in protecting the physical, mental and emotional well-being of the children, youth, and adults who participate in NLCC's sponsored activities. It is with this mission and purpose in mind that the following policies, procedures and screening tools are used.

### DETAILS

#### Screening and Procedure

Before an individual can begin serving in any children or youth ministry he or she must complete a *Volunteer Application Form*. The information and references submitted will be used by the appropriate ministry coordinator or administrative staff to screen applicants and check references when necessary. Further, the applicant's information will be checked on these websites:

Iowa Courts Online: [www.iowacourts.state.ia.us](http://www.iowacourts.state.ia.us)  
National Sex Offender Public Website: [www.nsopw.gov](http://www.nsopw.gov).

If additional information is required, a more thorough background check will be performed.

Screening is required for all paid staff and volunteer positions involving supervision or custody of children or youth, and includes, but is not limited to:

- Pastors
- Leaders and assistants of children and youth activities including, but not limited to AWANA, VBS, and Youth Group
- Infant and Toddler childcare providers
- Sunday School teachers, regular substitutes and assistants both adults and youth
- Drivers/chaperones of extended programs for the youth group (overnight, daylong, weekend or longer).

In addition, a thorough background check will be performed on all

- Pastors
- Paid staff
- Adults chaperoning overnight events
- Renew Ministry volunteers involved in counseling youth

Each subsequent year, individuals are rechecked through [www.nsopw.gov](http://www.nsopw.gov) by NLCC administrative staff. When a youth volunteer turns 18 they will be required to complete the Adult Volunteer Application Form to replace their Youth Volunteer Application Form.

1. Ministry involvement requires completion of the appropriate screening form(s).

- Adult Volunteer Application Form
- Youth Volunteer Application Form
- Volunteer Driver Application Form

2. Prior-Record Rule

Persons who have been investigated with a founded report or convicted of either child sexual or physical abuse/neglect will not provide service in any church-sponsored activity or program for children and youth.

We live in a world where reports are made for severe and minor actions. If one of our volunteers has a founded child abuse created against them while volunteering at NLCC, they will be temporarily suspended from their ministry position and NLCC will conduct an investigation. After the investigation, if they are seen as a non-threat, then a written statement will be placed in their file with their signature and they will be able to continue to serve in their ministry position.

3. New To New Life Community Church Rule

All volunteers working with children and youth ministry must be an active participant in NLCC activities. NLCC will request references from individual(s) who have had direct or immediate knowledge of the prospective volunteer's responsibilities and duties at the churches in which the prospective volunteer has previously participated.

Persons who have been associated with the church for less than six months will not be allowed to apply or participate as a volunteer who works with children. Exceptions to this rule must be approved by the ministry coordinator and a pastor. Parents who attend youth group will also be required to fill out this form. The six month rule does not apply to parents who want to attend youth group, but they should not be asked to be alone with any youth.

4. While the AWANA ministry is led and staffed by members of NLCC, non members can help as adult volunteers given the following conditions:

- A. They have a child relative attending AWANA at NLCC.
- B. They are required to abide by all the same standards of training, references, background checks, and policies required of children's ministry volunteers at NLCC.
- C. They are a member in good standing at a church which believes the gospel of Jesus Christ, and have a statement from a pastor at their church affirming their active membership for at least 6 months.

## 5. Maintenance of Records

All completed screening forms and related materials (letters of reference, interview notes, etc.) will be kept in a confidential locked file in the church building. Access will be given to Pastors, ministry coordinators and necessary administrative staff only.

## Volunteer Training & Supervision

### 1. Training Session

All paid staff and all volunteers working with children and youth will be required to participate in a training designed to inform them of the *CHILD, YOUTH, AND ADULT PROTECTION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES* under which the church operates. The current method for training is to read the Child, Youth, & Adult Protection Policy. Future trainings may be necessary to keep up with changing protocol as deemed necessary by NLCC.

The parents of the children/youth in NLCC's programs will be informed of the *CHILD, YOUTH, AND ADULT PROTECTION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES* under which the church operates with emphasis on the safety and well-being of their children/youth.

### 2. Two-Leader Rule

At least two leaders or one leader and one teen helper should be present during any church activity that involves children and youth. One of these leaders must be at least eighteen (18) years of age or sixteen (16) years of age if approved by the ministry coordinator. The latter would be best if they were at least five years older than those being supervised, and no younger than 6th grade. If two leaders are not able to be present, then the door to the room must be left open.

Helpers under the age of eighteen (18) must have a parent fill out and sign the *Parental Permission Form for Youth Volunteer* (which is the final page of the *Youth Volunteer Application*) in order to be authorized to work with children.

### 3. Church Infant and Toddler Care

The church infant and toddler care areas utilize an identification system for checking in and releasing children:

- D. The child must be dropped off by the parent (or responsible party in charge of the child).
- E. At that time the child is assigned a number which is affixed to their name badge and a correlating number tag is given to the parent. If the child has a diaper bag, a correlating number is affixed to it as well. A paging screen is located in the Auditorium. When the number flashes, the parent of the child with that number should return to the infant or toddler room to assist their child.
- F. When the child is to be picked up, only the holder of the correlating number tag will be able to retrieve the child from the child care area.
- G. The child must be signed in and out with a signature recording drop off and pickup of a child.

#### 4. Touching Guidelines

APPROPRIATE touching of children will include these situations:

- A. A Children's Ministry volunteer holds and cares for an infant.
- B. A Children's Ministry volunteer holds a toddler on their lap or picks them up if the toddler initiates it.
- C. A Children's Ministry volunteer provides a hug or an arm around their back as a comfort to a child that is afraid or sad.
- D. A Child initiates a hug with a Children's Ministry volunteer.
- E. A Children's Ministry volunteer moves a child out of the way of another child that may harm others or gently separates two children that are fighting.

INAPPROPRIATE touching of children will include these situations:

- A. A Children's Ministry volunteer must never touch the private parts of a child.
- B. A Children's Ministry volunteer must not touch the child for disobeying or not listening to instructions.
- C. A Children's Ministry volunteer should not try to physically restrain a child who has escaped from a Children's Ministry room. The volunteer should instead take these steps:
  - 1. Inform the helper that you are following the child.
  - 2. The helper will inform the Check-in Attendant/Commander who will find/call the parent/guardian.
  - 3. Follow the child and stay with them until the parent/guardian arrives, but do not physically restrain them.
  - 4. An exception will be if they are going to be harmed (i.e. walk into the street, etc.).

NOTE: These guidelines will apply to any ministry at New Life where minors (under 18) are under the supervision of a New Life volunteer. Therefore, these guidelines will also apply to adult volunteers working with the youth group.

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#### 5. Restroom Guidelines

For the protection of all involved, workers should not be left alone in a restroom with a child. The worker should never be in a closed restroom stall with a child. Parents are asked to have their child visit the restroom prior to bringing them to child care.

##### A. Restroom Procedures for Toddlers

Parents are expected to take their child to the restroom prior to taking their child to the Toddler Room. If during class time, the child needs to use the restroom, the parent will be paged to assist their child.

##### B. Restroom Procedures for AWANA and Children's Sunday School

Parents are expected to take their child to the restroom prior to taking their child to club/class. Children may use front restrooms with parents' permission/guidance upon arrival or leaving.

If a child in Sparks or any of the Sunday School classes needs to use the restroom during club/class, the helper will ask another helper in the neighboring classroom to join them to take said child to the restroom. The Sunday School helpers should ask the attendant at the Infant & Toddler Room Check In/Out table to assist them. The children/child will be escorted by the two helpers to the restrooms located in the fellowship hall area, the helpers will ensure that the restroom is empty prior to the child entering the restroom, and the helpers will remain in the hallway while the child uses the restroom. If children in T & T need to use the restroom, the same procedure should be followed, but they may also use the restroom located near the kitchen.

#### C. Diapering Procedures for Infants and Toddlers

Parents should be paged to change their child's diaper. Children's Ministry volunteers should not change the child's diaper.

### 6. Release of Children from NLCC Activities

Volunteers should not release children and youth from their ministry rooms until the parent or other authorized individual has arrived to obtain the child. For Infant and Toddler care, please see *Section 3D*.

### 7. Transportation Policy

When transporting a group of children or youth on behalf of NLCC the driver must first have filled out a Volunteer Driver Application Form in addition to the Adult Volunteer Application. The driver must be eighteen (18) years of age and the pending transportation must be planned in advance.

NLCC recommends that the driver never be alone in a vehicle with only one child or youth. If possible have two adults in the vehicle and pick up and drop off children and/or youth in a group to avoid being alone with one child or youth.

### 8. Device Policy

In order to protect our children, youth and adults from seeing inappropriate websites and to minimize distractions, it is the policy of NLCC to not allow phones, tablets, or computer devices in the possession of children up through 6th grade at any of NLCC's children's ministries including, but not limited to Infant & Toddler Care, Age 4-6th Grade Sunday School, Awana, Vacation Bible School, or special services that require childcare.

Youth 7th -12th grade that bring phones, tablets, or computer devices while volunteering at any children's ministries must have them turned off while volunteering.

Youth 7th -12th grade that bring phones, tablets, or computer devices to church sponsored activities such as youth group must have them turned off during such activities. Bibles are provided so devices are not needed for Bible apps.

Ministry leaders or room leads will do their best to ensure this policy is followed, but ultimately it is the parent's responsibility to ensure their children/youth follow this policy. If a child/youth is found using a device they will be asked to turn it off and put it away. If they are found using it again in the same night the ministry leader will keep the device for the rest of the evening and it will be returned to them at the end of the ministry activity. The ministry leader will notify the parent that this action was taken.

Different rules could apply to extended activities such as retreats and the youth would be informed of the policy for that activity. If you need to contact your child during a ministry activity by phone please contact the ministry leader. Their numbers will be given to you at the beginning of the school year or upon request at any time.

## Reporting and Responding to an Allegation

### 1. Reporting Suspicious Behavior

Any inappropriate conduct, behavior, or relationship between a worker and a child or youth participant should be reported to a pastor or ministry coordinator immediately and investigated using the procedure outlined in the *Reporting and Responding to an Allegation* section listed below.

Under Iowa State Law 232.69 Sunday School and Youth Volunteers are 'Permissive Reporters'. They are encouraged to report when they have reasonable cause to believe that abuse has occurred.

### 2. Reporting procedure for suspected abuse of child by parent, guardian, and/or caretaker

- A. A verbal report of *suspected* abuse involving children or youth will be filed immediately with the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) if the suspected abuser is the child's or youth's parent or caretaker beyond church facilities. In case of sexual abuse of a youth against youth, police will be called. If the suspected abuser is church staff or a volunteer, but not the child's or youth's parent or caretaker, a report to DHS (who may instruct NLCC to call police) will be filed through policy 2A.
- B. The police will also be contacted if the child or youth's immediate safety is at risk.
- C. A written report of any suspected abuse will be made within 24 hours of an incident using the *Child, Youth, and Adult Protection Policy Incident Report Form*. Unfounded reports will be filed separately after the investigation process is complete.

### 3. Reporting procedure for allegations of abuse by church staff or volunteer

- A. Any suspected abuse (defined page 5) on church property or at a church-sponsored event should be reported by the adult closest to the situation (e.g., an eye witness, the first adult told by the child or youth, or the child's/youth's parent) to the ministry coordinator or Pastor.
- B. If the ministry coordinator or a pastor is not on site or available by phone, the reporter should fill out the *Child, Youth, and Adult Protection Policy Incident Report Form* and contact the ministry coordinator or pastor as soon as possible. Forms are available in the church admin room and toddler and nursery rooms white binder.
- C. A ministry coordinator or pastor should begin documenting by taking care to record all efforts in handling the situation from the time it was first reported on the *Investigative Checklist Form*.
- D. **When appropriate**, a ministry coordinator or pastor should notify all the pastors, the child's or youth's parent(s) or guardian(s), church attorney and insurance agency.
- E. **When appropriate**, upon updating the pastors (or in the event the pastors are unavailable for two hours) the ministry coordinator should notify the Department of

Human Services or the police. (see *Reporting and Responding to an Allegation* section of this response plan).

- F. The suspected abuser should not be confronted until the safety of the child, youth, or adult is secured.

#### 4. Response Plan

- A. All allegations should be taken seriously.
- B. Pastoral care should be extended to the alleged victim and the family.
- C. Pastoral care should be extended to the suspected abuser and their family.
- D. Care should be taken to avoid prejudging the situation. The suspected abuser shall be afforded full due process in the handling of any complaint. The suspected abuser should be kept apprised of all developments and should be supported and treated with dignity.
- E. The ministry coordinator shall immediately suspend the suspected abuser of his/her responsibilities as they relate to this policy.

#### **Definitions (Abuse definitions taken from “Safe Sanctuaries”)**

1. Physical Abuse: “Abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to any persons. Examples include violent battery with a weapon, burning, shaking, kicking, choking, fracturing bones, and any of a wide variety of non-accidental injuries to a child’s body.”
2. Emotional Abuse: “Abuse in which a person exposes any persons to spoken or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty. Emotional Abuse sends a message of worthlessness, badness, and being not only unloved but undeserving of love and care.”
3. Neglect: “Abuse in which a person endangers any person’s health, safety, or welfare through negligence.”
4. Sexual Abuse: “Abuse in which sexual contact between a child and an adult (or another older and more powerful youth) occurs. The child is never truly capable of consenting to or resisting such contact and/or such sexual acts. Often, the child is physically and psychologically dependent upon the perpetrator of the abuse. Examples of sexual abuse may include fondling, intercourse, incest, and the exploitation of and exposure to child pornography or prostitution.