

Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse

A primary focus of Praise Assembly is the health and well being of our children. Since their safety here is a major consideration, our church has implemented a screening process for all workers in positions listed below to protect the children from emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. This system is in place also for the protection of our workers and church from false allegations. The screening process includes filling out an application, a verbal interview, and a personal background check. Should there ever be an allegation of abuse, a thorough investigation would be performed.

Our goal is to provide a safe environment for our children and youth as they learn about God and enjoy activities.

Mutual Accountability -- A Church Obligation

Praise Assembly desires to promote accountability among its church workers. We believe that actual instances of abuse or molestation may be avoided with a caring and sensitive implementation of the following policy. Since questionable or inappropriate behavior often precedes acts of child abuse and molestation, church workers will be trained to identify inappropriate behavior with children and youth. Workers will also be encouraged to warn each other when questionable behavior is displayed. Questionable behaviors should be reported to the proper individuals as identified in the following Policy.

Selecting Workers

Application Form

All persons in the following categories will complete an application form:

Staff (Ministerial and Secretarial):
Elected Leadership (If contact with children)
Ministry Directors of Youth/Children
Sunday School Coordinator
Volunteer Workers and Helpers in Youth/Children Activities-
(Which would include, but not limited to the following)
Teachers of children and Youth Sponsors
Royal Ranger Leaders and Helpers
Girl's Ministries Leaders and Helpers
Youth Helpers 18 and over
Vacation Bible School Teachers and Helpers
Children's Church Workers, Nursery Workers and Helpers
Volunteers on overnight stays
Parents desiring to attend an overnight event with their children

Youth workers under 18 will go through the same application process, except that an interview will be conducted with the applicant and his/her parent/guardian in lieu of references being contacted.

Application Procedures

Initially:

A Process Action Team is to be appointed to insure application forms are filled out by all persons currently in any position mentioned above. This Process Action Team is to review all the returned forms, and at its' discretion, conduct interviews, send requests for references, or make phone calls to listed references. It should place emphasis on those persons noted to be in higher risk positions and on those persons who have been active for less than two years. Reference requests will be accompanied by a return envelope, marked "confidential" and will be opened only by the Process Action Team.

If the application form requested for submission is not received within one month a second request will be issued, to be received within two weeks. If the application is still not received, a personal contact will be made with one additional week allowed for the applicant to turn in the application. If the form is not provided within

one week of this contact, the person will be asked to resign from service. Approval or denial is to be determined as indicated below.

Subsequently:

The Church Board will appoint an ongoing Process Action Team to send out application forms to all persons who indicate an interest in serving in any position mentioned above. The Process Action Team is to review all the returned forms, conduct interviews and send requests for references. (Instead of sending requests, it may make and document phone calls to references.) Reference requests will be accompanied by a return envelope, marked "confidential," to be opened only by the Process Action Team.

The Process Action Team will consist of an Ordained Pastoral staff member, church board secretary, serving a term concurrent with his Board membership, and one person appointed from the church membership, serving a one-year renewable term. The Senior Pastor will have ongoing responsibility to serve as Chairman of the Process Action Team. The Process Action Team will meet as needed, as called by the Chairman.

Approval/Denial.

The Process Action Team must unanimously agree to approve an applicant for service. The Process Action Team will prepare and send a letter to approved applicants, thanking them for submitting the application, their commitment to children, and their service to the church. A list of ALL approved applicants, in whatever capacity they wish to serve, will be forwarded to the applicable Ministry Director for further approvals as needed. All application forms and responses of references will be kept in a confidential locked file. In no case, may a person begin service until approved by the Process Action Team.

The Ordained Pastoral Staff member will meet with each person who has not been approved, and explain the reason. He may offer the counseling services of the Church, if appropriate. At his discretion, the Senior Pastor may delegate this responsibility to another appropriate Staff member.

Confidentiality:

All proceedings must be kept in the strictest confidential trust of those involved. Returned forms, documentation of phone calls and interviews, and all other such confidential material will be kept in a securely locked area.

Supervising Activity

Team Approach

Any church activity should be supervised by at least two persons. In situations where the team approach is not possible, back rooms are not to be used (such as in the nursery on Sunday and Wednesday nights). Also blinds are to be left open at all times, doors must be left unlocked, and a supervisor/usher should walk around the premises to increase awareness of the importance of child/worker safety.

Parental Permission

Youth workers and helpers should obtain the consent of the child's parent or guardian before meeting alone with the child/youth or spending time with the child/youth in an unsupervised situation. Workers shall notify an appropriate church leader of private meetings in advance. Youth/children should have parental permission for involvement in special church activities.

Suspicious Behavior

All workers will agree not to engage in any behavior that would intentionally harm a child emotionally or physically. All workers will agree not to engage in any behavior that would involve sex or sexuality with any child; that would include any dating relationships as well as inappropriate touching (i.e. backrubs, full body hugs,

allowing older children to sit on lap, kissing, etc.), intimate sexual contact, sexual gestures, sexual/lewd jokes and statements, exhibitionism, and actions or speech designated to encourage sexual experimentation. Workers will agree not to discuss sexual issues or sexuality with any child under the legal age without written permission from parents or legal guardian.

Suggested Procedure for Discussing Suspicious Behavior:

Minor Concern: Volunteer worker seeing behavior pulls the one in error aside and caringly confronts.

Moderate Concern: Volunteer worker observing behavior will immediately report to supervisor in charge. Worker should intervene before attempting to locate supervisor if child is being threatened.

Major Concern: Worker seeing behavior immediately intervenes for protection of child, and reports to supervisor. Senior Pastor is immediately informed also.

Suspicious behavior will bring prompt warnings. Multiple minor concerns and single moderate concerns will lead to the individual's behavior being monitored. Major concerns will be submitted in writing to the Process Action Team, and will lead to the immediate suspension pending investigation.

Training

All workers should be trained regarding child abuse. The training should be the responsibility of the Process Action Team, and may be combined with other training. Workers should understand that sexual relationships with minors can lead to a criminal conviction and imprisonment. The initial training should be done as soon as a schedule can be arranged. Subsequent ongoing training should be provided on an annual basis. Makeup training should be provided by video or by a designated person.

Provide Adequate Personnel

Supervision should be maintained before and after all events until children are in custody of a parent or legal guardian.

Nursery

Procedures must be implemented and enforced in the church nursery to clearly identify the child and the child's parent/guardian. The child shall only be released to parent/guardian or a person approved by the parent/guardian. The Process Action Team should work with the nursery to develop such procedures.

Six Month Rule

All volunteer children/youth workers must be members of Praise Assembly and must have attended services a minimum of six months before they can be approved to serve. *The only exception to this requirement is granted to parents wishing to attend an overnight event which their child(ren) will be attending.*

PARENTAL REQUIREMENTS

Parents wishing to attend an overnight event with their child(ren) must attend a full session of the Child Abuse Prevention Class. They must also be interviewed by the Process Action Team and complete all pertinent forms, applications, and releases relative to obtaining background information. No parent shall be allowed to attend an overnight event without first having met all necessary requirements.

Reporting Procedures

Rationale

Child sexual abuse thrives when it goes unnoticed or unreported. An effective reporting procedure enhances the effort to protect children. As a church body, we have a moral obligation to fulfill in protecting our children.

Discrete and confidential reporting of suspected abuse is critical to abuse prevention. All volunteer workers have a moral obligation to report suspected child abuse. Reporting reflects caring and is not an act of disloyalty. Persons who report actual or suspected abuse in good faith are protected by law from liability.

Making A Report

Workers should report to their supervisor when a child displays the following indicators or when possible abusive or unhealthy activities are suspected. Although these indicators do not prove abuse, they are warning signs of possible problems.

POSSIBLE INDICATORS AND SYMPTOMS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

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” 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

Note: Not all abuse is adult on child but may also be child on child.

Any allegations of abuse must be documented in writing (form attached) and immediately reported to the senior pastor and the church board.

Praise Assembly will provide periodic training of workers and staff regarding reporting procedures. Training sessions will present the church policy on reporting and the rationale behind it. Workers will have an opportunity to voice concerns and ask questions. They will be instructed regarding their obligations to report a possible incident, and the necessity to provide feedback to one another concerning questionable behavior honestly and discretely, without creating an atmosphere of fear or suspicion.

Response Procedures

Since no practical prevention strategy can be 100 percent effective, it is possible for an accusation of child abuse to occur in any church. Praise Assembly will follow this strategy in responding to abuse allegations.

Response Plan

The Process Action Team will maintain up-to-date, confidential, secure, but accessible records of workers applications, references, and screening forms.

The Church Board will designate a specific spokesperson for our church. This person, as a church representative, will respond to the media, and the congregation regarding the matter in a discrete, informed, and diplomatic way.

Praise Assembly will comply with the state of Delaware reporting requirements and give full cooperation to civil authorities under the guidance of our church attorney. We reserve the right to have our attorney present while answering any investigative questions from law enforcement or social service agencies.

We will work closely with our insurance company and denomination to obtain information about specific guidelines and procedures that they endorse.

This document comprises our church's position regarding child abuse. This document may be released if an allegation of abuse occurs. This will allow us to emphasize our awareness of the problem of child abuse, our concern for victims, and the extensive steps we have taken to provide a safe environment for children and youth.

Praise Assembly will take all allegations seriously. We will make every effort to maintain privacy and confidentiality. We will provide adequate care for the well being of victims.

If An Allegation Occurs

In the case of an actual allegation, Praise Assembly will take the following steps:

1. Document all our efforts at handling the actual allegation.
2. Report the alleged incident immediately to our church insurance company, attorney, law enforcement officials, and denominational officials.
3. Contact DE Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) Hotline (800-292-9582) if appropriate:
4. Notify the parents
5. Secure the safety of the child or youth member before confronting the accused.
6. Take the allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. We will extend pastoral resources as needed. Our first priority is the care and safety of the victims.
7. Treat the accused with dignity and support. Care must be taken to avoid publicity of the offense and the name of the offender. If the accused is a church worker, that person will be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is completed. If the person is a paid employee, the church board shall make a determination to either maintain or suspend his or her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.
8. Use the text of a prepared public statement to respond to the press and to convey news to the congregation. We will be careful to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.

Minimum Required Standards for Involvement in Children/Teen Ministry

1. Individual wanting to sit in and observe classroom activities – **No Action Required**
2. Individual wanting to attend (observe) a day event – **No Action Required**
3. Individual wanting to attend (observe) an overnight event – **Approved Worker/Not Member**
4. Individual wanting to help (be actively involved) at an **(One)** overnight event. Keeping in mind that it takes a lot of hands to run these special events make them successful. – **Approved Worker/Not Member**
5. Full time leadership (Spiritual guidance - Teaching and Instructing in class room) – **Member/Approved Worker**
6. Guest speaker in classroom (Merit instruction or may be spiritual guidance) – **No Action Required (Approval of Ministry department head should be secured)**
7. Part time helper (may teach) - **Member/Approved Worker**
8. Part time helper (no teaching, but provide extra set of eyes for supervision) - **Member/Approved Worker**
9. Under 18 helpers – **Approved Worker**
10. Helpers who begin serving as minors and who then turn 18, are required to become a member of the church in order to continue serving but may be given a grace period to become members. – **At Discretion of Board**

A schedule of Workers Classes covering the entire calendar year are listed on our website (www.praisede.org) as well as promoted in our bulletin. Individuals should refer to this schedule and make plans to attend. This includes sessions for new workers and refresher classes for current workers.

Classes for new workers are scheduled once each quarter. These take place on Sunday nights at 5:30 pm. It is up to the individual to make sure they attend a class in time to be cleared for any event in which they would desire to participate.

Refresher classes will be scheduled in January and will take place after the AM service and last 15-20 minutes.

All classes will take place in the Chapel or classrooms near the Chapel.

Child Abuse Prevention Goal of Praise Assembly

A primary focus of Praise Assembly is the health and well being of our children. Since their safety is a major consideration, our church has implemented a screening process for all workers (voluntary or compensated) to protect the children from emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. This system is in place also for the protection of our workers and church from false allegations. The screening process includes filling out an application, an informal interview, and a personal background check. Should there ever be an allegation of abuse, a thorough investigation would be performed.

Our goal is to provide a safe environment for our children and youth as they learn about God and enjoy their activities

Today's Date: _____

Praise Assembly

Application For Children's Ministry Worker (Minors)

This application is to be completed by all applicants for any position (volunteer or compensated) involving the supervision or custody of minors. This is not an employment application form. Persons seeking a position in the church as a paid employee will be required to complete an employment application in addition to this screening form. It is being used to help the church provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities.

Personal

Name _____
Last First Middle

Date of Birth _____

Are you a Christian? _____ When Saved? _____ Baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4)? _____

Baptized in Water? _____

Present Address: _____

Home Phone: (____) _____ Cell Phone: (____) _____ Texting: Yes No

Email: _____

Leaving any of the following questions unanswered would indicate that you prefer to discuss them with a designated counselor. Answering yes or leaving any of the questions unanswered may not automatically disqualify an applicant.

Have you ever been charged and/or convicted of a criminal offense? Yes _____ No _____

(If yes, please explain ~ attach a separate page, if necessary)

Have you ever been charged and/or convicted of child abuse or a crime involving actual or attempted sexual molestation of a minor? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, please explain the disposition. _____

Have you ever been a victim of sexual molestation while a minor? Yes _____ No _____

Have you ever been a victim of physical abuse while a minor? Yes _____ No _____

Church History and Prior Ministry Experience

Name of church of which you attend: _____

How long and how often: _____

List all previous/current church work involving children (list each organization's name and address, type of work performed, and dates). _____

List all previous/current non-church work involving children (list each organization's name and address, type of work performed, and dates). _____

List any gifts, callings, training, education, or other factors that have prepared you for work with children: _____

Personal References (not former employers or relatives) One must be current Pastor or Youth pastor

Name: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Telephone: _____

Ministry Preference and Availability

Please indicate the type of work with children you prefer _____

Age Preference: ☐ Where Needed ☐ Nursery ☐ Preschool ☐ Grades K-6
☐ Jr. High ☐ High School

Please indicate the date you would be available to begin _____

What is the minimum length of commitment you can make? _____

Applicant's Statement

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any reference or churches listed in the application to give you any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for children's or youth work. In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application by Praise Assembly, I hereby release any individual, church, youth 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. 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.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the Bylaws and policies of Praise Assembly, 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 THE CONTENTS THEREOF AND I SIGN THIS RELEASE OF MY OWN FREE ACT.** This is a legally binding agreement that I have read and understand.

Applicant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Children/Youth Ministries Interview Checklist

Praise Assembly

Applicant's Name _____

Interviewer's Name _____

Interview Date _____ Place _____ Time _____

☐ 1. Application completed by applicant

Interview Procedure

☐ Introduce yourself

☐ Review information on application

☐ Ask to see their driver's license to verify name (this is required of us). If they have a P.O. Box , get the street address where they live.

☐ Check living situation: Spouse, roommate (same sex, relative), we are called to live lives of purity before the Lord. People living in a situation that would have the appearance of evil or includes sex outside of marriage are violating God's laws of purity. They cannot minister to the children while in this situation, because we believe the Bible says this is a sin. While we love and accept the person, we reject the notion that this is acceptable. _____

☐ If yes to any of these screening questions, (criminal or traffic charges, abuse of child) gently ask details. Be sensitive and polite, striving to minister acceptance to the person. _____

If yes to the question of being a victim of abuse, gently ask for details by covering the following questions (be sure to include a summary of candidates responses):

1) Briefly describe the incident(s) of abuse (either sexual, emotional, or physical) including age at onset, relation of perpetrator to victim, duration of abuse & briefly what happened. _____

2) How have you coped with the abuse? _____

3) Have you forgiven the person? And describe the process or steps of forgiveness _____

4) Have you been regularly tempted to abuse anyone in the last 2 years? _____

5) Describe your healing process. _____

Church Activity

☐ Must have attended at least 6 months.

☐ To be a teacher, applicant must be a church member,

☐ If a record of church hopping exists, ask for details/

“Why did you leave the previous church?”(Listen for any unresolved problems with authority or bitterness and attempt to minister to the need. Do you suspect the same pattern will repeat itself if not challenged? If they were hurt, what healing needs to happen?) _____

Spiritual Background

- ☐ “Tell me how you came to know Jesus as your personal Savior?”
Listen for clues of true salvation. Double-check “religious” words, grand sweeping or inherited salvations (“I’ve just known God my whole life” or “My mother was a Baptist”) _____
-
- ☐ Since water baptism is a command, we strongly recommend all works to be obedient and follow through with being baptized. If they need the information, ask them to speak with church staff. ____
-
- ☐ “Tell me about your experience of being baptized in the Holy Spirit?” (Ideally, all teachers should be baptized in the Holy Spirit, or be seeking). _____
-
- ☐ Personal References will be checked. Make sure there is a phone number. If they don’t know it, ask them to call the church office the next working day and give us the number.
- ☐ Applicant needs to sign and a date the application.
- ☐ Interviewer’s notes:
- Note preference for age assignment
- Note any special conditions to assignment
- ☐ Close in prayer
- ☐ Picture taken

To Complete Interview: If you feel good about the interview, tell them they will be called within the next three days with their assignment. If they do not get a call, they are free to call us. If you have a concern about them being in Children’s and/or Youth Ministries, tell them that you will give the application to the appropriate person and we will contact them. If you know for sure that they should not be serving right now, close the door. If you need help, ask for it. Do not delay or prolong the situation. If unsure ask.

After Applicant is Dismissed,

- ☐ Write any additional notes on this sheet or application that you feel the Children’s and /or Youth staff should know about the applicant.
- ☐ Give this sheet, application, and authorization form to designated person.

Interviewer’s Signature _____
