



## **General Purpose Statement**

**Hickman Community Church (HCC)** seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of HCC from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

## **Definitions**

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “servant” includes both paid and unpaid persons who work with children. The term “guardian” means one who has been given responsibility over a child by the legal parents who is at least 16 years old. A guardian is responsible for the children while on HCC’s campus (Any guardian under the age of 18 who is not a “legal guardian” of the child, in accordance to the State of California, must have the parents fill out a release form).

## **Selection of Children’s Ministries Servants**

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

**a) Membership and Six-Month Rule**

No person will be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with minors until she/he has become a member of HCC and/or has been attending HCC for a minimum of six (6) consecutive months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

**b) Written Application**

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application supplied by HCC. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions, a Christian testimony, and a brief explanation of the gospel. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the church.

**c) Background Check**

A thorough and confidential background check (including identity verification, past addresses, civil and criminal history, etc.) for all employees (regardless of position) and “servants” as defined above, will be performed by a secure third-party online service.

Before a background check is run, prospective servants will affirm HCC’s authority to run the check. If an individual declines to allow the background check, he/she will be unable to work with children.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Elders of HCC on a case-by-case basis in light of all the circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work

with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event. The background check and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the church.

In addition to the initial background check, criminal background checks may be performed on workers on an ongoing basis, randomly or as deemed necessary.

There are no exceptions for substitutes or occasional volunteers—all workers must complete the entire process.

d) **Personal Interview**

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position by the elder over the Children's Ministries.

## **Primary Responsibility**

Each servant's primary responsibility is to ensure the safety of the children under their care. At no time shall a servant neglect their duties outlined in this policy, including the following circumstances:

- Arriving late.
- Leaving early for personal appointments or other HCC duties.

In the event that a servant must relinquish their responsibility for the day, another qualified servant should take their place.

## **Two Adult Rule**

It is our goal that a minimum of two adult servants be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities.

Some youth classes (e.g., 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade) may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow children to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation and then only male to male and female to female.

## **Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse**

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant intimidation, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.

- **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Children's Ministries servants may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at this church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the Children's Ministry Pastor for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at this church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified by the elders.
2. The servant or church member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave, pending an investigation, and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. He or she should be instructed to have no contact with the victim or with witnesses.
3. All allegations of abuse should be reported to the civil authorities, and HCC will comply with the state of California's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. The organization will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. The insurance company will be notified, and HCC will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. HCC will designate a spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of HCC should refrain from speaking to the media.
6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it. This should be for the purpose of providing pastoral support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.
7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth and will undergo church discipline procedures as outlined in HCC bylaws.

## **Open Door Policy**

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should *never* be locked while persons are inside the room.

## **Servants Under the Age of 16**

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for Nursery Workers (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 16 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to servants under 16:

- Must be at least age 10.
- Must be screened and qualified per HCC's Servants for Christ manual and policies.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

## **Check-in/Check-out Procedure**

All children ages 3 to 5<sup>th</sup> grade, must be properly checked in and out of their classes.

- During the *Equipping Hour* classes (9:00am), parents will sign-in their children and then sign them out after class has concluded to release their child.
- During the *Generations of Grace* program (11:00am), teachers will register the attendance of each child using the check-in sheet. Visitors must walk their children out to meet the child's teacher. In order to be dismissed from class, children must be signed-out by their parent, except when a guardian or other adult has been pre-arranged to do so with the child's teacher.

In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to sign-out their child, the Children's Ministry Pastor will be contacted. He will be responsible for releasing the child to the care of a parent or guardian after discussing the surrounding circumstances with the parent or guardian.

## **Sick Child Policy**

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at HCC. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off to any of our children's activities or nursery:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours;
- Green or yellow runny nose;
- Eye or skin infections; and/or
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease.

Children who are observed by our servants to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

## **Medications Policy**

It is the policy of HCC not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the Children's Ministry Pastor to develop a plan of action.

## Discipline Policy

It is the policy of HCC not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Servants should consult with the Children's Ministry Pastor if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

## Restroom Guidelines

*Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the restroom prior to each class.*

Trips to the bathroom must be overseen by at least two adults.

### **For children under the age of 6:**

Servants should escort the entire class to the nearest restroom **prior to class**, adhering to these guidelines:

1. Always go in a group- never take a child to the restroom alone.
2. A member of the security team should check the restroom first to make sure that it is empty, prop the door open, and allow the children inside.
3. Servants should remain in plain sight.
4. If a child requires help with a button, snap, belt, etc., an adult female should assist the child, regardless of the child's gender (unless their parent is present). They should prop open the restroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child.
5. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the servant should call the child's name and wait for them to come out.

If a child needs to use the restroom **during class time**,

1. The servant shall use the walkie talkie to contact the member of the security team to assist the teacher as they both escort the child to the restroom.

### **For children ages 6-10:**

1. At least one adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female should take girls to the restroom, each accompanied by a member of the security team.
2. Contact a member of the security team using the walkie talkie, who will assist the teacher as they both escort the child to the restroom during Sunday morning services.
3. Security should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom is empty, and then allow the children inside.
4. Servants and the security team member should then remain outside the restroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, servants should **never** be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and **never** be in a closed bathroom stall with a child.

## Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, servants will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the servant's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

## **Training**

**Hickman Community Church** will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.