

# Ministry to Minors Policy and Procedure

*Harvest Christian Fellowship*

- 1.1 General Statements: It is the policy of Harvest Christian Fellowship (HCF) to set forth and maintain certain safety standards and requirements related to childcare provided under HCF approved ministries. These policies are meant to ensure safe and reliable ministry while protecting minors from inappropriate behaviors and volunteers.
- 1.2 Three key areas:
  - 1.2.1 Safety screening procedures of any person interested in working with minors at HCF.
  - 1.2.2 Appropriate Check-In / Check Out procedures for minors from crawling nursery age through 11 years old.
  - 1.2.3 Ministry to Minor Guidelines
- 2.0 Screening Process: HCF will screen all individuals who will work with minors in any capacity at Harvest Christian Fellowship. This includes weekend service children & youth ministry volunteers, event babysitters, youth workers, youth event chaperones, and independent contractors working with minors.
  - 2.1.1 Parents who are requested or required to work with minors will not be excluded from this process.
  - 2.1.2 All HCF staff, regardless of the number of hours they work, will be included in the screening process.
  - 2.1.3 The screening process will be reinitiated for any volunteer who has not served with minors for more than 1 year. Additionally, should a volunteer LEAVE the church, and then return to the church and desire ministry with minors, the screening process will be reinitiated from the beginning.
- 2.2 Screening Approval: The following criteria must be followed by two approving pastors or staff while reviewing the candidate's information.
  - 2.2.1 The reviewing pastors/staff shall not grant approval to any person having a prior conviction of child abuse, or on the National Sex Offender Registry. This will constitute an automatic denial. In this scenario, the candidate's name, application and results of the background check will be submitted to the Senior Leadership Team for further action.
  - 2.2.2 The reviewing pastors/staff shall not grant approval to any person with a prior accusation of child abuse, or with a prior conviction of a violent crime; this is sufficient grounds for further review of an application by the Senior Leadership Team. In this scenario, the candidate's name, application and results of the background check will be submitted to the Senior Leadership Team for consideration and final approval.

**Ministry to Minors Policy and Procedure**  
*Harvest Christian Fellowship*

**3.0 Check-In & Checkout for Nursery through Grade-school:**

- 3.1.1 Upon check-in, a unique ID tag must be given to the parent or guardian, and an identical tag with the same unique ID will be affixed onto the child's clothing. Parents may only pick up their child if they have the appropriate tag for the child.
- 3.1.2 No child is ever to be released into the custody of an adult without the corresponding ID tag or without the approval of a pastor or an approved staff member. Should a parent attempt to pick up a child without a corresponding tag, a pastor must be called to approve the release of the child.
- 3.1.3 In the event that an attending pastor or staff or person in charge feels that an unauthorized person wants the child to be released and the child may be in danger, the police will immediately be called into the situation.
- 3.1.4 Parents only (no siblings or friends) may pick up children ages crawling – 3 years unless the parent has given specific written instructions otherwise.
- 3.1.5 Children may not be released from the class but must be held until the appropriate person with the ID tag picks up the child.
- 3.1.6 Children may not check themselves in or out of an activity without a parent present in the foyer. If a child arrives to the check in table without a parent/approved adult, the child must first go and find his/her parent before signing in.
- 3.1.7 Children may not be released into the care of HCF or any classroom before the approved workers are present.
- 3.1.8 Children will never be taken off the church complex without written consent from a parent/guardian.

**3.2 Specific to Nursery & Preschool Ministry:**

- 3.2.1 Age appropriate toys and supplies will be maintained in all childcare rooms. The Preschool Director will review all toys for defects and age appropriateness on an annual basis. Used toys will be cleaned on a regular basis.
- 3.2.2 All childcare rooms will be cleaned and checked for potential hazards on a regular basis.
- 3.2.3 It is appropriate to have two workers present for a diaper change or "potty" assistance, regardless of volunteer sex. Diaper changes should be done in an area where the worker is visible through a window, door, etc.
- 3.2.4 Infants being changed by a worker can only be changed at the changing area found in Classroom A or the Nursery, with one worker observing the other worker.
- 3.2.5 Parents will be encouraged to take their preschool children to the bathroom before class begins.
- 3.2.6 If a child needs to use the restroom during class time, a childcare worker will accompany them to the restroom, prop open the door but wait outside. A parent will be called if a child needs help to use the bathroom.

## Ministry to Minors Policy and Procedure

*Harvest Christian Fellowship*

- 3.2.7 If a specific preschool room is becoming overcrowded on a weekly basis, a few children of regular attendees who could more easily make a transition to an older room earlier will be chosen and moved up. Before moving children, the parent will be spoken with to gain approval for the move and to advise them to begin dropping off their child at the different location.

### **4.0 Ministry to Minors Guidelines:** The following guidelines will be followed at all times regardless of the age of the minor, unless noted otherwise:

- 4.1.1 At least two childcare workers must be present at all times, regardless of the number of minors present at an event. This applies to church sponsored activities both on and off of church premises.
- 4.1.2 There must be at least two workers, with at least one being an adult worker (age 18 or older) present at all times. When assigning an adult childcare worker, cognitive function will bear as much weight as chronological age. Those having reached the age of 18, but not able to function cognitively at the adult level due to established medical reasons will be paired with another adult worker at all times.
- 4.1.3 A means for outside observation will be provided at all times during activities taking place on church premises (ie: open door, window in door, video camera, etc.).
- 4.1.4 Minors may not be physically disciplined, including spanking, pinching, slapping, grabbing, or pulling of the minor. If a minor is not responsive to verbal redirection a parent or guardian will be called to assist or take the minor from the situation. Physical restraint will only be used in a situation where it is reasonably necessary in order to prevent a minor from physically harming him or herself or another individual.
- 4.1.5 Workers are responsible for the overall safety of minors under their care. Any health or safety concerns will be given to the worker's overseer or pastor as soon as possible.
- 4.1.6 At no time will a minor be entrusted to the care of HCF volunteers/leaders without a means of direct and immediate contact with a parent or approved guardian.
- 4.1.7 Information about minors will be collected upon their first visit and will be easily accessible at all functions to security and ministry personnel. Information will include name, birthday, address, name(s) of parent or guardian, phone numbers, emails, special instructions, and important medical information. Updates will be requested periodically in order to maintain and ensure accuracy.

### **4.2 Physical Contact:** Appropriate physical contact is an important part of a minor's development and is generally suitable at church sponsored events. Appropriate physical contact should decrease in frequency with older minors compared with young children.

- 4.2.1 Examples of appropriate physical contact include: short congratulatory or greeting hugs, brief pats on shoulder or back, handshakes, high-fives, hand holding (for preschoolers and/or in cases of safety issues with grade-schoolers).

## Ministry to Minors Policy and Procedure

*Harvest Christian Fellowship*

- 4.2.2 Examples of inappropriate physical contact include: touching a minor in anger or disgust, touching a minor in a manner that may be construed as sexually suggestive, touching a minor between the navel and the knee (carrying or comforting toddlers & infants is permissible), touching a minor's private parts (except in the case of diaper duties or necessary bathroom procedures).
- 4.2.3 Physical contact must never be forced. A minor's preference not to be touched must be respected (ie: tickling, hugs, etc.).
- 4.2.4 Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection must be immediately reported to a Pastor.
- 4.2.5 Physical contact should always be for the benefit of the minor, and never based on the emotional needs of a worker.
- 4.2.6 Physical contact and affection will always be given in observable places or when in the presence of other minors or adult volunteers. It will be much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when in open areas.
- 4.2.7 Workers are responsible for protecting minors under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
- 4.2.8 During ministry times when the 'laying on of hands' may be appropriate, the volunteer may only touch a minor's shoulder, head, back or arms. Whenever possible, this form of physical contact will take place with members of the same sex.
- 4.3 Transportation of Minors: Volunteers may, from time to time, be in a position to provide transportation for minors. The following guidelines will always be observed:
  - 4.3.1 Drivers must be approved as mentioned in the above Screening Policy.
  - 4.3.2 Drivers must be 21 years of age or older to transport minors.
  - 4.3.3 Drivers must observe all traffic laws and speed limits while transporting minors on behalf of HCF.
  - 4.3.4 Minors will be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to non-public places are not allowed.
  - 4.3.5 Under no circumstances will an adult transport a minor of the opposite sex alone without another adult in the vehicle, or the approval of the minor's parent/guardian.