

# Reformation Christian Fellowship Child Protection Policy

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## General Purpose Statement

Reformation Christian Fellowship henceforth referred to as RCF, 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 RCF from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and 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 “worker” includes both paid and unpaid persons who work with children and are involved in overseeing children during church functions, in overnight activities involving minors, in counseling of minors, or in one-on-one mentoring of minors.

## Selection of Workers

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

### 1. Six Month Rule and Covenant Member

No person will be considered for any worker position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with RCF for a minimum of six (6) months and have become Covenant Members. This time of interaction between our leadership and the application allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children. In addition to church membership, we will be looking for regular Sunday attendance and weekly involvement in church activities.

### 2. Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign RCF’s written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into their previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, reference, and employment information, a release of information form, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at RCF.

### 3. Personal Interview

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview will be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position by members of the Child Safeguarding Committee.

#### 4. Reference Checks

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past (previous experience with children is not required). Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at RCF.

#### 5. Criminal Background Check

A state criminal background check is required for all "workers" as defined above, except for workers under the age of 18. We may request an additional national background check if circumstances require it.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with our children includes, but is not limited to,

- a) convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission;
- b) failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form;
- c) currently being under church discipline.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at RCF.

### Defining 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 consistently not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling, and persistent teasing.
- Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child, 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.

In the event that a worker becomes concerned of possible abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to one of the Elders of RCF for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law

## Responding to Credible/Verified Allegations of Physical and Sexual Child Abuse

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

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The person 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 RCF will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. RCF will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. The insurance company will be notified, and RCF will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. RCF 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 RCF 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 permanently removed from their position working with children or youth.

## Responding to Credible/Verified Allegations of Emotional Abuse

## Responding to Credible/Verified Allegations of Neglect

## Two Adult Rule

There will be a minimum of two adult workers at all times in each classroom at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. There is a goal of having an extra approved, floating worker, in attendance to help with any additional needs. We do not allow minors to be alone with one worker in our classrooms, bathrooms, or in any sponsored activity, including counseling.

## 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.

## Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or worker) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 14
- Must be screened as specified above
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children

## Check-in/Check-out Procedure

For children below 12 years old, a security check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The child will be signed in by a parent or guardian, who will receive a “child check” for the child similar to a claim check. The parent or guardian must present the “child check” in order to sign out the child from our care. In the event that a parent or guardian is unable to present the “child check,” the nursery worker will contact the nursery coordinator. The nursery coordinator 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. Check-in will occur when two workers are present and ready to receive children.

## Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at RCF. 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:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 24 hours;
- Green or a yellow runny nose;
- Eye or skin infections; and/or
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease.

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

## Medications Policy

It is the policy of RCF not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent. 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). If a medical exception needs

to be made, parents are to contact the Nursery Coordinator to discuss a plan of action, fill out the Medication Release Form, and have the exception noted on the child's check-in tag.

## Discipline Policy

It is the policy of RCF not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with children's ministry lead if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

## Restroom Guidelines

Workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If bathroom assistance is necessary, the workers should use verbal instructions to help the child, but avoid, if at all possible, physical contact.

For the protection of all, workers 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. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class. Specific restroom protocol is found in Child Protection Procedures. Please see this document for more details.

Workers should check the child's name tag to see if diaper changes are allowed by nursery workers. If so, the baby should be changed on the changing table, while another worker is present.

## 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, workers 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 worker'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.

## Training

RCF will provide training on this child protection policy and procedures document to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events. All workers are required to attend training for assured compliance with this policy and are highly encouraged to attend further training opportunities provided by RCF.

Working in the nursery will not be allowed until training and interview are completed.