

Reformed Baptist Church - Child Protection Policy

RBC is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for children and youth. We also seek to minimize any vulnerability to unwarranted accusations of improper behavior that our organization, volunteers, and employees may experience as they fulfill their ministerial duties. To fulfill these commitments as fully as possible, our leadership team has adopted the following procedures to be used, without exception, when selecting new employees and ministry workers that will work with children or youth.

For the purposes of this policy, the term worker will refer to an individual volunteering to work with children or youth as part of a ministry of the church. Children and youth are defined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as “anyone between the ages of zero and 17 years.”

Worker Screening Procedures

1. All candidates seeking a worker position that involves working with children or youth will complete and return the following:
 - An RBC Children & Youth Volunteer Application,
 - A Child Abuse History certification from the Department of Human Services,
 - A Report of criminal history from the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP), and
 - Either
 - A Disclosure Statement for those who have lived continuously for 10 or more years in Pennsylvania **or**
 - A Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Criminal Background Check (including fingerprinting) for those who have not lived continuously for at least 10 years in Pennsylvania.
2. The deacons, or their designee, will carefully review the application, ensuring that the candidate is an appropriate match for the ministry position. The deacons will also ensure that all application materials—the volunteer application form, background checks, reference check, notes from interviews, etc.—are stored in a locked file cabinet or other secure location.
3. If the individual appears to be an appropriate candidate for the ministry position, the deacons, or their designee, may check at least two references to confirm the information that the candidate provided on the ministry application.
4. When indicated by the volunteer application, reference and/or background checks, any worker candidate, who **is a registered sex offender** or who has a prior history of physical or sexual abuse directed against another person, will be removed immediately from consideration for any ministry working with children or youth within our organization.

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Employee Screening Procedures

1. The same procedures required for workers also apply to all potential employees, regardless of the ministry position for which they are being considered.
2. No registered sex offender will be allowed to serve as an employee of RBC or as a worker in any ministry at RBC that involves working with children or youth.
3. When indicated by our reference and/or background checks, employment candidates who have a prior history of physical or sexual abuse directed against another person will be removed immediately from consideration for employment anywhere within our organization.

Waiting Period

All worker candidates must attend RBC regularly for at least three months before they will be considered for any ministry position involving working with children or youth.

Supervision

1. At least two workers must be present at every church sponsored or organized activity, function or program for children or youth. At least two workers must be present in each nursery, classroom, or other enclosed area used for children or youth activities. At least one of these workers must be 21 years of age or older.
2. Workers should arrive at least 10 minutes before a scheduled activity. They must remain at their assigned post until all children or youth in their care have been picked up by an authorized person. No children or youth should be released to find their parents or wait unattended for transportation.

Counseling

Workers should not engage in counseling of children or youth. If a ministry worker believes that a child or youth needs specific counsel, they should contact the Sunday School Superintendent who, in turn, will contact the parents, should he feel that the situation warrants it.

Work Restrictions

1. For children age 6 or older, at least one female worker should take girls to the restroom and one male worker should take boys to the restroom. The worker should check to make sure the facility is safe and then wait outside the restroom for the children. The presence of a second worker as an escort is also recommended to provide additional accountability.
2. Children age 5 or younger (boys and girls) should be assisted as needed in the restroom by a female worker.
3. Never touch a child's private areas except when necessary, as in the case of changing a diaper.

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4. Workers (other than the parents of a child) should avoid the appearance of impropriety - such as sitting older children on their lap, and kissing or embracing children or youth.
5. Workers are to release the children in their care only to parents, guardians, or persons who have a signed authorization to pick up the child.

Discipline

1. Workers are never to spank, hit, grab, shake, or otherwise physically discipline any child or youth. Physical restraint should only be used in a situation where it is reasonably necessary to prevent an individual from physically harming himself/herself or another individual.
2. Disciplinary problems should be reported to the ministry activity coordinator or supervisor or to a parent or guardian.

Injuries or Illness

1. Workers who are ill (with a fever or a communicable sickness or disease that can be transmitted by cough or by touch) are responsible for finding a replacement worker or contacting a ministry coordinator or supervisor to avoid passing the illness or disease to others.
2. A suitable worker—one who has been previously approved through our ministry screening process—must be used to take the place of a worker who is ill.
3. A child or youth who is found to be sick or ill should be returned to their parent or guardian as soon as the illness is discovered. If immediate return is not possible, then the child who is ill should be isolated in a manner that allows a worker to monitor the child until he/she can be returned to a parent or guardian.
4. Take reasonable steps to avoid contact with blood, saliva, or other bodily fluids.
5. Ministry coordinators and supervisors who become aware of an injury to a worker or participant will take steps to ensure that proper medical attention is given to the injured person and provide for continued monitoring of the remaining participants in the activity.
6. Children or youth who have received an injury that is obviously minor should be given first aid as needed at the time of injury. The child's or youth's parents or guardians should be notified of the injury when they pick up the injured individual.
7. Any injury that may require medical treatment beyond simple first aid should be given immediate attention. The parents or guardians of the injured child or youth should be notified immediately, along with the ministry worker's coordinator or supervisor. If warranted by the injury, emergency medical personnel should be called. If medical personnel are called, a church officer must be informed as soon as possible.

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Recordkeeping

1. Ministry workers should prepare a written Notice of Injury report whenever an injury occurs during a ministry function.
2. Promptly forward the incident report to the ministry coordinator or supervisor.

Staff Accountability Policy

All RBC employees and workers will:

- Read and be familiar with the RBC Child Protection Policy.
- Be expected to behave in accordance with the Scriptures and RBC Child Protection procedures.

Notice of Abuse or Injury

1. Workers are considered mandated reporters and are required to report suspected child abuse if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse (see attached FAQs for the definitions of child abuse and when and how to make a report). A worker may consult with a church leader for advice before making a report but is not expected or required to do so. It is the responsibility of the individual that suspects the abuse to make the report.
2. Workers or church employees who become aware of any injury of children or youth occurring within any ministry activity must immediately inform their activity coordinator, supervisor, or ministry leader.
3. Activity coordinators and supervisors who become aware of any injury of children or youth connected with a ministry activity must immediately inform the ministry leader about it. The ministry leader should then complete a Notice of Injury form if the injury is serious.
4. A worker who reports suspected child abuse should notify an elder of the report as soon as possible after submission of the report. The elders will notify the deacons.
5. IN CASE OF EMERGENCY DIAL 911 (Buffalo Valley Regional Police Department (570) 524-4302 and (570) 524-2943.
6. The deacons must promptly notify our church's insurance carrier upon notice of a report of alleged abuse.
7. Brotherhood Mutual (570)-495-4056, Sarah Hoffman or toll free 1-855-464-5679

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Violation of Policy or Procedures

1. Ministry workers must promptly notify their ministry coordinator or supervisor when they or others violate the procedures mandated by this policy.
2. Ministry coordinators, supervisors, and ministry leaders who become aware of a violation of the procedures set by this policy are required to take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance with them. In the process of ensuring compliance with this policy, it may become necessary for the deacons to remove workers from their position.

Investigation

1. Reformed Baptist Church considers any allegation of abuse or molestation a serious matter. Each situation must be reported to civil authorities.
2. Employees who are the subject of an investigation of alleged abuse will be suspended from their position, with pay, pending completion of the investigation. Employees who admit to the abuse or molestation will be terminated consistent with the established employment practices of the church.
3. Workers who are the subject of an investigation of alleged abuse will be suspended from their positions until completion of the investigation.
4. The church will permanently remove any employees or workers from their ministerial duties within the organization if they are found guilty of abuse or molestation. Whenever termination of employment is a factor, the church also may consult with legal counsel.

Dealing with Law Enforcement, News Media

1. All ministry leaders, employees, and workers of this ministry will cooperate fully with law enforcement or governmental agencies investigating allegations of injury, abuse, or molestation of children or youth.
2. A church officer will be the designated spokesperson to handle all inquiries from the news media. The church spokesperson will be the only person to convey information concerning the situation, doing so in a prudent manner to avoid compromising an ongoing investigation and to maintain the privacy of the individuals involved.

Annual Review

1. At the beginning of each school year (September), the church will conduct a review meeting. At that time, the procedures mandated by this policy will be reviewed with all workers, employees, ministry coordinators and supervisors, and the leadership of the organization.
2. Paid ministry employees and all workers working in any capacity with children and youth will complete a brief renewal application annually.
3. Should the renewal application indicate that any employees or workers have become unsuitable for working with children or youth, they will be removed immediately from their current position. They will not be considered for positions involving work with other similar groups.

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Revision of Policy & Procedures

The leadership of this ministry will regularly review this policy and the procedures established within it. If necessary, the policies and procedures will be modified in accordance with the RBC Constitution and Bylaws. When changes are made, ministry leaders will communicate them to all employees and workers affected by the policy changes.

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Information from the FAQs on the keepkidssafe.pa website

What is child abuse?

Child abuse, according to the CPSL, means intentionally, knowingly or recklessly doing any of the following:

- Causing bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Fabricating, feigning or intentionally exaggerating or inducing a medical symptom or disease which results in a potentially harmful medical evaluation or treatment to the child through any recent act.
- Causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury to a child through any act or failure to act or a series of such acts or failures to act.
- Causing sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any act or failure to act.
- Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Creating a likelihood of sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Causing serious physical neglect of a child.
- Causing the death of the child through any act or failure to act.
- Engaging a child in a severe form of trafficking in persons or sex trafficking, as those terms are defined under section 103 of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (114 Stat. 1466, 22 U.S.C. § 7102).

Child abuse also includes certain acts in which the act itself constitutes abuse without any resulting injury or condition. These recent acts include any of the following:

- Kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing or cutting a child in a manner that endangers the child.
- Unreasonably restraining or confining a child, based on consideration of the method, location or the duration of the restraint or confinement.
- Forcefully shaking a child under one year of age.
- Forcefully slapping or otherwise striking a child under one year of age.
- Interfering with the breathing of a child.
- Causing a child to be present during the operation of a methamphetamine laboratory, provided that the violation is being investigated by law enforcement.
- Leaving a child unsupervised with an individual, other than the child's parent, who the parent knows or reasonably should have known was required to register as a Tier II or III sexual offender or has been determined to be a sexually violent predator or sexually violent delinquent.

"Recent" is defined as an abusive act within two years from the date the report is made to ChildLine. Sexual abuse, serious mental injury, serious physical neglect and deaths have no time limit.

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Are you a mandated reporter?

The following adults are considered mandated reporters and are required to report suspected child abuse if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse:

- A clergyman, priest, rabbi, minister, Christian Science practitioner, religious healer or spiritual leader of any regularly established church or other religious organization.
- An individual paid or unpaid, who, on the basis of the individual's role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, is a person responsible for the child's welfare or has direct contact with children.
- An individual supervised or managed by a person listed above, who has direct contact with children in the course of employment.

When must a mandated reporter make a report?

A mandated reporter must make a report of suspected child abuse if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse under any of the following circumstances:

- The mandated reporter comes into contact with the child in the course of employment, occupation and practice of a profession or through a regularly scheduled program, activity or service.
- The mandated reporter is directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or training of the child, or is affiliated with an agency, institution, organization, school, regularly established church or religious organization or other entity that is directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or training of the child.
- A person makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that an identifiable child is the victim of child abuse.
- An individual 14 years of age or older makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that the individual has committed child abuse.

Must I report suspected abuse if I learn of the abuse from someone other than the child who was allegedly abused?

Yes. Nothing requires the mandated reporter have direct contact with the child in order to make a report.

How does a mandated reporter make a report if they suspect child abuse?

Mandated reporters must make an immediate and direct report of suspected child abuse to ChildLine either electronically at www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis or by calling 1-800-932-0313.