

POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION OF MINORS—BEREAN BAPTIST CHURCH

Believing that minors (infants, children and youth) are precious and important, Berean Baptist Church has developed this Policy for the Protection of Minors to protect the well-being of the minors we seek to serve, care for and supervise. It is also our intent to prevent false allegations against the employees and volunteers who work with the minors of Berean. This policy applies to programs conducted by Berean on Berean church property or off-site.

1. All volunteers for any position involving the care/supervision of minors must complete an application form.
2. Minors ages twelve to seventeen who desire to work in programs involving the care/supervision of children must also be screened according to the policy stated. Parents or guardians must sign application form of minors. No minor may work without an adult worker present.
3. Applicants must regularly attend Berean for at least six months before being accepted for any position involving the care/supervision of minors. The six month attendance requirement does not apply to
 - a. newly hired pastoral staff members, on the condition that they have been thoroughly vetted using references and background checks through the search process,OR
 - b. youth workers from churches with which Berean partners, who have been approved to work with children at those churches and who additionally have been approved through Berean's approval process.
4. Each application (including reference forms and criminal background check) will be reviewed by two individuals appointed by the Board. If concerns arise through this review regarding the applicant's fitness to serve in a position involving the care/supervision of minors, the reviewers will meet with at least one member of the pastoral staff to discuss these concerns with the following possible outcomes:
 - a. a majority of this group agrees to approve the applicant, or
 - b. a majority of this group does not agree to approve the applicant, in which case at least one member of the group will meet with the applicant to inform him/her of the decision and to encourage other avenues of ministry.
5. All application information will be kept strictly confidential. All information will be kept in limited access secured files, accessible only to the two individuals appointed by the Board to review applications, and to members of the pastoral staff.
6. Applicants who acknowledge having engaged in child abuse or actual or attempted sexual molestation of a minor will not be accepted for any position involving the care/supervision of minors. Applicants who have been arrested for or convicted of child abuse or actual attempted sexual molestation of a minor will not be accepted for any position involving the care/supervision of minors. Applicants who are currently the focus of an investigation concerning child abuse or actual or attempted sexual molestation of a minor will not be accepted for any position involving the care/supervision of minors.
7. Volunteers will be accepted for such positions after satisfactory review of application information, which includes:
 - a. application form
 - b. at least two reference forms
 - c. a Michigan state criminal background check
 - d. review of the National Sex Offender Registry list
8. The list of approved workers will be updated in the following ways:
 - a. If worker does not attend Berean for 6 months, he/she will be removed from list. Exceptions to this policy are workers who have been approved in the past and are:
 - 1) missionaries who remain under support by Berean,

- 2) college students who are studying out of town, or
 - 3) military personnel who have been deployed.
 - b. If the worker attends another church (see #3b) and has not worked with Berean youth for six months, he/she will be removed from the list of approved workers.
 - c. Renewal applications will be required of all approved workers at least every five years.
9. For all Berean programs involving the care/supervision of infants or children under the age of five, at least two approved workers must be present. At least one of these workers must be an adult female.
10. For all Berean programs, no worker may be alone with a minor except with written permission of his or her parent or guardian.
11. No male may assist any child to the bathroom. No male may change diapers. (Exception: Fathers may assist their own children to the bathroom or change their own children's diapers only if using bathrooms designated for such use). When a female child care worker is assisting any child to the bathroom, she should:
- a. stand outside the bathroom
 - b. prop the door open while the child is using the bathroom
 - c. if the child asks for help, go inside to help, but leave the door propped open.
12. Parents or guardians of infants and children up through sixth grade must sign each child in and out of the child care area.
13. All workers must wear name labels.

SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE:

All child care workers must be aware of indications that a child may have experienced abuse. Indications of physical abuse include: child reports injury by others; unexplained bruises, welts, lacerations, burns, fractures, abdominal injuries, or human bites; child is unusually wary of physical contact with adults, demonstrates extremes in behavior, or seems frightened of parents or caretakers. Indications of sexual abuse include: child reports abuse by others; has difficulty walking or sitting; torn, stained, or bloody underclothing, complaints of pain or itching in genital area; frequent or urgent need to use the bathroom; bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal or anal area; unusual interest in or knowledge of sexual matters; or other unusual and excessive behaviors inappropriate for a child of that age. These are not always indicative of abuse, but could be warning signs.

REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE:

Reporting abuse can precipitate severe consequences to a family, and it should never be done casually or for malicious purposes. If abuse is suspected, the worker should report such a case to the department head. He or she will contact a member of the pastoral staff. Pastoral staff will determine whether more information is needed or whether to contact Child Protective Services. If contacted, Child Protective Services is mandated by law to report suspected abuse to police. At all times, information will be kept confidential. (State law does not require volunteer youth workers in a church to report actual or suspected child abuse or neglect. Should a worker voluntarily make a report to civil authorities, however, the law provides that he or she will be immune to civil or criminal liability, provided the report was made in good faith and without malicious purpose.)

If the allegation is that a worker at Berean has abused a minor, the worker will be immediately relieved of his or her duties until the allegation is resolved.