

Elam Egypt Baptist Church



Child Protection Policy

Adopted October, 2016

Luke 18:15 And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they began rebuking them. 16 But Jesus called for them, saying, "Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 17 Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all."



PURPOSE

It is the purpose of the members and staff of Elam Egypt Baptist Church to provide a safe and secure environment for preschoolers, children, youth and disabled persons entrusted to our care. We do this to encourage those preschoolers, children, and youth and their families to grow in their relationship with God and one another.

A safe and secure environment includes a formal, written policy to help prevent the occurrence of child abuse. The following policy is for the protection of preschoolers, children, youth, disabled persons, volunteers and our entire church family at Elam Egypt Baptist Church. In order to accomplish this task, the following steps will be taken by the Child Protection Committee:

- Review and update, annually, the Elam Egypt Baptist Child Protection Policy
- Maintain the highest degree of confidentiality
- Secure adequate background checks on all volunteers working with children within any church sponsored function
- Secure adequate background checks on all members of this committee
- Maintain up to date documentation, which shall include a photo ID, on all volunteers working with children within any church sponsored function
- Maintain up to date documentation, which shall include a photo ID, on all members of this committee
- Provide adequate training for all volunteers working with children within any church sponsored function to include, but not limited to, recognizing and reporting child abuse.
- Provide adequate training for all members of this committee to include, but not limited to, recognizing and reporting child abuse.

SCOPE

This policy shall apply to all current and future workers, compensated and/or volunteer, who will have the responsibility of supervising the activities of preschoolers, children, youth, and disabled persons.

- Committee shall be a group of volunteers from within the active membership to include the Pastor, Deacon/Trustee Representative, Children's Committee representative, V.B.S. Representative, and no more than three at-large members.
- Committee shall be a sub-committee for the Board of Trustees and Body of Deacons and will not be under the Nominating Committee's annual selection process.
- Deacons and Trustees shall select a chairperson and at-large members for the committee based on their related experiences.
- All Committee members will be notified prior to any meetings.
- There shall be a minimum of five members present for each meeting.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions shall apply:

1. "Preschooler," "child," "children," "youth," and "minor" shall be defined as any individual under the age of eighteen (18) (or whose mental capacity is that of a minor).
2. "Adult" shall be defined as any individual not defined in Item #1
3. "Worker" shall be defined as any adult who serves as a volunteer and/or paid person given the responsibility of working with or caring for individuals defined in Item #1.
4. "Teenage Worker" shall be defined as any worker at least fourteen (14) years old or older, but under the age of eighteen (18) enlisted to assist with the care of individuals defined in Item #1. In addition, any minor 12-14 years old who has been officially certified as a babysitter.
5. "Child Abuse" shall be defined as verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse of any individuals defined in Item #1.
6. "Criminal Background Check" (CBC) is the procedure used by any qualified agency to check the background of adult volunteers and/or paid persons for criminal activity.
7. "Sexual Offender" is anyone convicted of any sexual offense and who is currently registered as a Sexual Offender.
8. "Accused" is anyone that an allegation of abuse, neglect or mistreatment of a child has been brought to the church's attention.

What is Child Abuse?

According to Georgia State Code O.C.G.A. 19-7-5, child abuse is defined as: "a) physical injury or death inflicted upon a child; b) neglect or exploitation of a child; c) sexual abuse of a child; or d) sexual exploitation of a child." Please refer to Georgia Code 19-7-5 and 16-12-100 for more detailed explanations concerning the above-mentioned circumstances.

Worker Enlistment

1. All paid employees of Elam Egypt Baptist Church will be required to complete an Employment Application.
2. Whether a paid employee or a volunteer, each worker desiring to work with minors, will also be required to complete a Worker with Minors Application, which is specifically designed for workers who will be working with minors. A Photo ID copy will accompany the application.
3. After an application is received, prior employment and volunteer service and personal references may be checked. It is suggested that, at a minimum, personal references be telephoned and a written memorandum be made of the contents of those telephone conversations, and that prior employment and church service references be contacted in writing.
4. Criminal background checks will be performed on each applicant after the applicant has signed the authorization/waiver/indemnity for, and prior to be enlisted as a worker. Annual criminal background checks will be performed on workers, randomly or as deemed necessary. Only qualified representatives of Elam Egypt Baptist Church, approved by the Pastor, Deacons and Trustees, will have access to the criminal background check report. Any prospective worker that has prior incidents of sexual misconduct or child abuse shall not be allowed to serve in any capacity where they would have individual access to minors. When an employee or volunteer is engaged to work with minors, they will be photographed and the picture(s) will be kept in the person's file. Photographs will be updated every 2 years or as deemed necessary. At the applicant's request, Elam Egypt Baptist Church shall allow the applicant to review his/her criminal history record transcript at the church, but in no event shall the church allow the applicant to retain and/or copy his/her transcript.
5. Standard interview questions will be developed and used in personal interviews with volunteer/employee applicants, after reviewing the application of the applicant, checking all references, and receiving a criminal background check report. These interview sheets will be filled out with the results of the interview and kept in the employee personal file, as well as the reference checks and the application. (Criminal background checks are not allowed to be kept more than 30 days after receipt). A separate file will be maintained permanently on each worker, whether paid or a volunteer.
6. Volunteers must attend at least 1 service per month in order to be eligible to work with children. Volunteers must attend the consecutive three months prior to working in Vacation Bible School (for example, the volunteer must attend at least one service during the months of March, April, and May in order to work in VBS in June).

Worker Training

Each worker will be given the legal definition of child abuse in writing, as well as the policy of the church on the reporting of child abuse. Workers will also be required to participate in child abuse training and read the written materials available on this subject to help them gain an appreciation for the reality of the concern. This will help workers identify child abuse in the future if they see signs of it.

Each worker will sign a form stating he/she has viewed video(s) and received written materials on child abuse. Forms for each person will be kept in his/her file.

Volunteer Information Form

Employees, teachers of minors, and volunteers of activities or programs for minors of Elam Egypt Baptist Church will be required to complete a Volunteer Information Form providing personal and confidential information necessary to perform security background checks and reference checks on each individual worker. While this process understandably trespasses into the privacy of our lives, the security of our children outweighs the personal invasion inherent with such investigations and disclosures. All personal information voluntarily disclosed, the results of all security background and reference checks or the refusal of any person to participate in a program or activity in lieu of such disclosure requirements will be maintained in the strictest of confidence.

Whether disclosed voluntarily or by result of the criminal background check, the following items will automatically disqualify an individual from participating in the leadership, sponsorship or supervision of any activities or programs with minors:

Any conviction for:

- Criminal homicide
- Aggravated assault
- Sexual abuse
- Sexual assault (rape)
- Aggravated sexual assault
- Injury to a child
- Incest
- Indecency with a child
- Inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance of a child
- Possession or promotion of child pornography
- The sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a minor
- Employment harmful to children
- Abandonment or endangerment of a child
- Kidnapping or unlawful restraint
- Public lewdness or indecent exposure
- Enticing a child

All charges for these crimes or convictions for any other crimes not listed above will be reviewed for interpretation of the criminal history record transcript and approved by the church for reviewing applicant transcripts. Only qualified persons (approved by the Pastor, Deacons and Trustees) may view information obtained on the criminal history record transcript.

Specific Acts or Omissions in Violation of the Policy

The following acts or omissions are violations of this Policy and will not be tolerated or accepted during any activity or program and are to be immediately reported to the designated program staff after the safety of the child, children, youth or minor involved has been assured.

- Any direct observations or evidence of sexual activity in the presence of or in association with a minor.
- Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abuse conducted toward a minor.
- Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any person and a minor
- Infliction or physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a minor.
- Physical neglect of a minor, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of Elam Egypt Baptist Church.
- Mental or emotional injury to a minor.
- The presence, possession, or being under the influence of illegal or illicit drugs.
- The consumption of or being under the influence of illegal or illicit drugs or alcohol while leading or participating in any function for minors at and/or sponsored by Elam Egypt Baptist Church.

Worker Supervision

1. The church will adopt the “two adult rule,” preferably a male and a female, which means no adult shall be left alone with a child, and requires a reasonable ratio of adult workers to be maintained in each situation involving the supervision of children. When two of the adults are spouses, a third adult must be present. The two adult rule shall be used in any sessions with minors.
2. Church staff and volunteer directors will supervise on an ongoing basis and make unannounced visits into classes or other program sites from time to time. The following items apply to all classrooms and programs involving minors at Elam Egypt Baptist Church:
 - A door without windows in which a class is being held shall remain open at all times.
 - Windows on doors should not be obstructed at any time.
 - A check-in, check-out procedure should be used for all Kindergarten aged children and younger.
 - A list of possible violations and proper reporting procedures will be posted in each room where activities or programs for minors are conducted.
3. An identification system shall be adopted so that the adults who drop off a child are the same adults who pick up the child. Permission slips will be available for adults to sign, authorizing the release of the child(ren) to other adults.
4. Parental permission shall be obtained in advance for involvement in church sponsored programs or activities (for example, CIA trips, mission trips, etc.).
5. Lists of workers who meet church approval as workers with minors shall be posted in the church’s educational building.

Child Abuse Prevention Reporting

Any person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect shall report the person's belief in accordance with this procedure. Non-accusatory reports (reports that identify the victim of abuse or neglect whether or not the person responsible for the abuse or neglect is known) shall be made to the Department of Family and Children Services (DFACS) and/or Law Enforcement in accordance with this procedure.

1. Fully comply with the child abuse reporting statute (Georgia Codes O.C.G.A. 19-7-5 and 16-12-100).
2. The church should also immediately contact the insurance company to report the occurrence, and should contact its attorney.
3. In instances where child abuse is confirmed or suspected and a member of the ministerial staff is the perpetrator, the Chairman of Deacons and/or Church Trustees should be contacted immediately.
4. This procedure is not only required as a condition of your job or volunteer position, but is also required by law.
5. Upon the first suspicion of an instance of child abuse, the following steps must be taken *immediately*:
 - A. Once observed or a suspicion of child abuse is raised, a report should be made to the Pastor.
 - B. The Pastor receiving the initial report will be responsible for reporting and assessing the condition of the child
 - C. The Pastor and the initial reporter should begin the "Reducing the Risk Application Checklist" to ensure that all steps have been taken regarding the report and follow-up.
 - D. The Pastor and reporter should gather data concerning the child. Data such as name, address, and other pertinent information will be obtained through discussions with the initial reporter and other appropriate staff members or workers. The name and address of the person responsible for the care of the child, if available, will be obtained.
 - E. **Within 24 hours** and after the above information is obtained, the Pastor will contact the Effingham County Department of Family and Children Services (during regular business hours) or the Effingham County Sheriff's Department. The receiving agency will begin an appropriate investigation of the report/incident.
 - F. The Pastor and Deacons/Trustees should meet to be made aware of the incident and a media spokesperson should be determined. A written statement should also be prepared to assist the spokesperson in responding to media questions.
 - G. The Pastor should contact the church's insurance company to alert them of the incident.
 - H. The person who reported the incident should complete the "Incident Report Form" for the church's documentation.
 - I. In cases where the victim has the mental capacity of a child but 18 years of age or older, the report should be made to Effingham County Adult Protective Services. Reports of suspicion of other adult or elder abuse should also be reported to Adult Protective Services.

In addition to the above, the guidelines below should be followed:

1. Maintain confidentiality of the investigation as much as possible. Emphasize confidentiality of the victim and any accused.
2. Cooperate fully with DFACS and Law Enforcement.
3. Suspend any accused from the performance of duties involving children until the investigation has been completed.
4. In instances where child abuse is confirmed, the church should immediately dismiss the worker from that position. Consideration of member termination should be considered, as appropriate in the circumstances.
5. In instances where the evidence is inconclusive, the church must take action depending on the strength of the evidence available and after consideration of the victim's family's request.
6. Steps should be taken for a response to the media. The plan should include one contact person (Deacon and/or Trustee) to address the media and public of the church's position on child abuse, its concern for the victim, and the extensive steps the church is taking to address the present occurrence and to reduce the risk and provide a safe environment for other children.

Every allegation of sexual offense or molestation should be investigated promptly and thoroughly by law enforcement or DFACS, and reported to the church's insurance company immediately. If such allegation is factual, the relationship with the worker should be terminated. It is unlikely the problem will ever be handled by relying on promises of the employee or volunteer to reform. Failure to take remedial action will make a claim difficult to defend.

Insurance

The church shall obtain a sufficient level of liability insurance coverage that would cover child abuse and sexual misconduct claims. If available, the church should have levels of coverage which are required for limited immunity.

Conclusion

Churches need to be prepared! This is the legal reason for creating safety policies, but there's a deeper, more significant reason – to protect our children. Policies are only printed expressions of the value placed on children. If the only reason for safety policies is to protect the organization, the church has missed God's love for children.

Some people may think that our church is too small or that our church "knows" everyone to worry about these safety problems. Remember it's much easier to make plans and develop safety policies as a means of prevention, rather than wait until they are needed as a reaction to an abuse case.

"Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father."

Matthew 18:10