



GRACE
REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

Child Protection Policy

Grace Reformed Baptist Church of Mebane, NC

For children and youth ages 0-17
and GRBC volunteers who serve them

February 2019

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Scope of Responsibility

A General Statement of the Scope of this Policy:

All church officers, staff, official ministry leaders-whether they work directly with children or not- **and children's ministry volunteers of any kind** must complete GRBC-provided childcare training, required background checks, pre-screening requirements, and read and officially acknowledge adherence to this policy.

If there is an incident of abuse with an officer, staff, leader, volunteer, member or regular attender, alleged or substantiated, and the alleged or convicted person leaves GRBC and attends or seeks leadership in another identified church, the Elders will **disclose** allegations or self-admission or criminal conviction of neglect or abuse **to the leadership at the other church and other associated denominational databases via an electronic letter.**

All people, leadership, members, and regular attenders alike, must abide by North Carolina State Law. **NC Gen. Stat. § 7B-301**: Any person or institution who knowingly or wantonly fails to report the case of a juvenile as required, or who knowingly or wantonly prevents another person from making a report as required, is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

Vision and Mission

Our Vision: Generations of Godliness

In obedience to the Lord (Matthew 28:18-20), our vision is to see a new generation of young people and children pursuing godliness (II John 4). Consistent with this covenant is a life of purity and integrity among all church members, especially among those who serve our young people and children.

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, ESV)

“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3:14-15, ESV)

Therefore, the Elders and Deacons have created this document, the GRBC Child Protection Policy, to give practical expression to that calling, commitment and vision.

Our Mission: To Glorify God

The children's ministry of Grace Reformed Baptist Church (GRBC) ("the church") exists *to glorify God* by:

- Displaying Christ in all we say and do (I Cor. 10:31; 2 Cor. 4:1; Col. 3:17, 23).
- Maintaining a godly, safe, and secure environment for our children (I Timothy 3:14-15; I Cor. 14:40).
- Supporting and encouraging parents who are primarily responsible for teaching biblical truths to their children (Ephesians 6:4).
- Making the whole counsel of Scripture known to children with special emphasis on the Gospel (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Romans 1:16-17).
- Praying for the children and relying on the Holy Spirit to regenerate their hearts through the faithful teaching of His Word (Romans 10:17; Ephesians 2:4-10).
- Living faithfully before the children and modeling for them how Christians are called to respond to God, interact with each other, and with the world around us (Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 11:1).
- Encouraging children to learn to serve and to not just be served (Mark 10:43-45).
- Maintaining the highest ethical standards such that volunteers and teachers always live and serve above reproach, protecting the reputation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Preparing children to one day walk with God as adults, which means getting them ready to be a part of the public services and, Lord willing, one day, fully participating adult members.

Child Abuse Protection

Protecting Children before They Arrive

Ensuring a safe environment begins long before Sunday or Wednesday services. Every applicant who wishes to serve in children's ministry is required to go through a screening procedure, which includes a background check and completion of GRBC child-protection training.

Screening Procedure

To ensure safe and quality child care, GRBC has established the following screening procedure and child-protection training as prerequisites for all who serve in children's ministry.

- All volunteers must be members of GRBC in good standing.
- Service may not commence until all pre-screening requirements are completed.
- All who serve in children's ministry are required to fill out a Child Worker Application questionnaire to keep on file. This questionnaire will be made available to the volunteer candidate online.

- The ministry leader will ensure this questionnaire is completed. If the applicant answers yes to any of the questions, it will require an elder review, but will be kept confidential, unless the elders are necessarily required to involve others.
- For requirements of those serving in the nursery, please refer to the Nursery Policies and Procedures document.
- Adult-member volunteers are welcome to serve in children's ministry, subject to approval and direction of the Elder who oversees children's ministry.
- Members' children, who are at least three grades older than the children they are assisting, are welcome to serve as helpers or even as teachers (subject to the approval and direction of the Elder who oversees children's ministry), but they are always to be in addition to and sponsored/mentored by an adult volunteer.
- When approving a volunteer, Elders should screen out any volunteers with ongoing sexual sin problems. Should such a problem arise for an approved volunteer, the Elders will ask the volunteer to step away from children's ministry.
- All volunteers age 18 and above must complete GRBC child-protection training¹ and pass a background check². Records indicating the completion of the [Darkness to Light](#) (DTL) training and results of the background checks will be kept by the Church Office Administrator in the system of record, with access only by administrators. Those who find testimonies of child abuse to be personally traumatic may read the Stop it Now booklet titled [Prevent Child Sexual Abuse](#) as a substitute for Darkness to Light training, with the permission of an elder.
- Background Checks reports that return "alerts" but still recommend "Pass" will be shared by the administrator with no less than two elders. These reports will not be electronically saved or printed.
- Background Checks reports that return "alerts" and recommend "Fail" will be shared with no less than two elders. These reports will not be electronically saved or printed. The ministry deacon and or leader will also be notified. The volunteer candidate will be denied the ability to serve with children and will also be notified the reason.
- All church officers, staff, and children's ministry volunteers must complete GRBC-provided childcare training.
- Additional training sessions will be scheduled for existing volunteers as it becomes necessary to update them on policies and procedures. Parents are encouraged to attend these sessions.

GRBC reserves the right to reject any applicant for volunteer service or dismiss any existing volunteer for any reason, including, but not limited to, refusing or failing to complete screening; failing to provide requested information; providing information that is subsequently determined as false or misleading; sin or suffering issues that compromise the applicant or volunteer's ability to care for children; any criminal report or charge; failure of a background check that suggests the applicant is not suitable to help with children.

¹ As of February 2019, GRBC's official child-protection training is provided by [Darkness to Light](#).

² As of February 2019, GRBC's official background check system is provided by [Protect My Ministry](#).

Short Term Worker

Certain events of the church that occur occasionally – VBS, Sidewalk SS party, Youth Group event, etc. may require additional temporary volunteers such as drivers, food providers, and recreation assistants. These workers are required to have a background check (if over age of 18), fill out the *Child Worker Questionnaire*, and receive policy training relevant to the age children with which they are working. However, they do not have to complete the Darkness to Light Training. These workers will serve in assisting roles and under the oversight of a worker who is fully certified under the GRBC *Child Protection Policy*.

Protecting Children As They Arrive and Depart

Arrival and Departure Times

Volunteers should be ready to accept children 15 minutes prior to the start of any session, so that parents have enough time to transition their children before the session begins.

Parents of children up to 2nd grade are required to pick up their children immediately after the conclusion of the session. In the event that a child is not picked up within 15 minutes of the end of the session, volunteers will ask a fellow childcare volunteer or staff to locate the parents. Volunteers will accommodate a parent's request that their child of any grade level remain in class until they are picked up.

The Policy for arrivals and departures from the nursery is outlined in the Nursery Policies and Procedures document.

Divorce, Separation or Custody Visitation

In a situation where a child's parents are divorced or separated, volunteers should release that child only to the parent or guardian who brought the child to check-in, or a guardian that the parent specifically designates, such as a grandparent or older sibling. If the other parent or anyone else attempts to check-out the child, the volunteer or staff should immediately contact the Elder or Deacon responsible for that ministry, or if they are unavailable, any other Elder or Deacon. If anyone presents a court order for a child's release, the Elder or Deacon must contact the police and release the child only to police custody.

Protecting Children While They Are In Our Care

Visibility

In the time leading up to the start of Sunday School, classroom doors always remain open. When Sunday School doors are first opened, there may be some classrooms where only a single teacher has arrived, but during this period the hallway is busy with other teachers and early parents, and with doors open, classrooms are easily monitored.

When there are multiple volunteers in a classroom, doors can be closed in order to preserve order and keep sound levels between classrooms appropriate.

A similar policy will apply to the nursery and is outlined in the Nursery Policies and Procedures document.

Two Volunteer Rule

For all Sunday School classes, at least two qualified adult volunteers must be present in each classroom when the doors are closed. Occasions when the doors are open and only one person is in a classroom with a child should occur infrequently and only when the Sunday School hallway is busy.

Helpers are always ancillary to and supervised by at least one of the two qualified adult volunteers. Helpers are never to be left alone with any children without the presence of at least one of the two adult volunteers.

Staff, Deacons and volunteers must never leave a child alone in a classroom.

A staff member, Deacon or volunteer may take any child out of the classroom only for a compelling reason, such as to use the restroom or address an illness, emergency, or to comply with a building evacuation.

Staff or volunteers should not have private one-on-one meetings with any child younger than 13. Please refer to the Physical Contact Policy found in this document for detailed information governing encounters between volunteers and children and teens.

In the nursery area, children will never be left with only one volunteer. For nursery staffing detail, please refer to the Nursery Policies and Procedures document.

Child-to-Volunteer Ratios

In addition to always having at least two volunteers present, the following minimum adult-child ratios are required during the three regularly scheduled weekly meetings of the church:

- Children in the nursery: Please refer to the Nursery Policies and Procedures document.
- Children ages 1-2: Two adults for every eight children [2:8]
- Children ages 3-5: Two adults for every sixteen children [2:16]
- Children ages 6-12: Two adults for every twenty-four children [2:24]
- Teens: Two adults for every thirty-six teens [2:36]

Once an adult-child ratio is met, additional children may not be accepted into a classroom unless and until sufficient volunteers are added to achieve the ratio. If for any reason the minimum ratio is not achieved, the Elder or Deacon responsible for that ministry, or if they are unavailable, any other Elder or Deacon, should be notified and asked for more volunteers in order to achieve these ratios. Whenever age-groups are combined, the applicable minimum ratio is determined by the age of the youngest child.

Diaper Changing and Restroom Procedure

0 Months through 2 Years

Please refer to the Nursery Policies and Procedures document.

2 Years through 5 Years (K Class)

Parents should take their children to the restroom prior to signing them into a class. At check-in and drop-off, parents should let the volunteers know if their child is potty training.

In the event that a child needs to use the restroom, a female volunteer will escort the child into the ladies' room, and use discretion as to whether help is needed. The child must return to their classroom with the volunteer.

1st and 2nd Grade

Any child who needs to use the restroom must be accompanied by a volunteer who will wait outside the closed restroom door until the child is finished.

3rd Grade and Higher

Any child who needs to use the restroom may go on his or her own.

Appropriate Discipline

All children's ministry volunteers are responsible for providing a loving, respectful, and orderly atmosphere in which children can learn, play, and interact with others. This atmosphere should be maintained by preparing beforehand, proactively directing children towards acceptable activities, modeling and verbally encouraging their positive behavior, and, when necessary, correcting or redirecting inappropriate behavior.

Acceptable means of redirecting inappropriate behavior may include: correcting the child verbally, withholding a certain privilege or activity for a brief time, or separating a child from the situation or problem for a brief time (particularly if the behavior is endangering or upsetting other children). During correction, a child should never be removed from the classroom. Correction should be discreet. It is acceptable to step just outside the classroom doorway with the child in order to limit disruption (and embarrassment) in the classroom. However, correction should not take place outside the sight of others.

Steps of correction might include (depending on the age of the child): (1) removing the child from the situation or problem; (2) pointing out the problematic behavior; talking to the child about his/her sin and need for Christ; (3) praying for and redirecting the child to a new activity; (4) helping the child to reconcile with any offended party when appropriate. Volunteers should view misbehavior as an opportunity to model the gospel before children by acting with forgiveness, restoration and grace.

Children's ministry volunteers and staff members are strictly prohibited from using any form of corporal punishment such as slapping, kicking, punching, spanking, or hitting. They should never communicate harsh words, insults, belittling comments, threatening words, or any other verbal humiliation to children.

If a child's behavior is uncontrollable or a child does not respond to the acceptable means of discipline indicated above, a volunteer or staff should contact and communicate this to the child's parents. If the child assaults, harasses or bullies other children, misbehaves beyond minor infractions, or establishes a pattern of misbehavior, the parents should be called immediately to remove the child. Volunteers, staff or Deacons are allowed to physically restrain a child if he/she is physically endangering themselves or other children. Volunteer and staff are to report such behavioral problems (as well as the action taken to address the behavior) to the Elder or Deacon responsible for that ministry, or if they are unavailable, any other Elder or Deacon. Once a child is removed from children's ministry, reinstatement is possible at the discretion of the Elder and Deacon responsible for that ministry. A child may be reinstated if the risk of re-offense has been adequately reduced.

For further information regarding discipline, see the Elder or Deacon responsible for that ministry.

Physical Contact Policy

Three types of relationships are important to consider:

- volunteer-to-child
- child/teen-to-child/teen
- volunteer-to-teen

Volunteer-to-Child

While appropriate physical contact with children can be an effective component in communication, redirecting attention, calming restlessness, or showing godly love and care, it may also be misinterpreted. Particularly in our interaction with children, we want to be blameless and above reproach. The following points will help workers to avoid any compromise or concerns in this area.

- **Always remain in open sight of other adults.**
- Appropriate touch is positive physical contact that nurtures children and develops a sense of emotional security and maturity in their interactions with adults. Appropriate touch is applied to meet the needs of children and not adults.
- Appropriate physical contact varies by type according to the age of the child. What is appropriate for nursery children (holding, rocking, sitting on laps, etc.) will not be appropriate for grade school children.
- Inappropriate touch involves, but is not limited to, coercion or other forms of physical contact that exploit a child's lack of knowledge, satisfy an adult's physical needs at the expense of the child, violate laws against sexual or physical contact between adult and child, and attempt to modify a child's behavior with physical

force. Additionally, any touch that a child or parent expresses discomfort with is inappropriate.

- Only women may take children ages 2 through 5 to the restroom.
- Sitting on laps is only appropriate for children through age 5.
- In general, a man will need to limit physical contact with a child more than a woman in the same situation, especially when working with older children.
- Volunteers should refrain from any physical activity that might make a child feel unsafe or uncomfortable. For some children this may require that volunteers refrain from rough-housing, wrestling, shoulder or piggy-back rides.
- Only touch children in “safe” areas and briefly. “Safe” areas generally include hands, arms, shoulders, upper back, or with a gentle pat on the top of the head. Never touch a child on or near any region that is private or personal, unless when necessary while assisting in a diaper change or restroom visit.
- Never touch a child out of frustration or anger. Physical discipline is not an appropriate means of correcting any child other than one’s own.
- A child should never be pressured to kiss, hug, or hold hands with staff, a volunteer, or another child.

Children and Teenagers

- Male and female teens under 18 should never be left alone together while engaged in children’s ministry.
- No inappropriate touching will be accepted between two children, two teens, a teen and a child, or any combination of minors.
- Fighting will not be tolerated between children or between teens. Any child or teen participating in violent action will be removed from a class/program and placed into his or her parents’ or guardian’s custody.

Volunteer-to-Teen

- A volunteer working with teens is responsible to adhere to this policy at all times, whether at church, a youth activity at someone’s home, during informal time with youth at or away from church, during one-on-one times in any setting, and when in contact with youth via phone or social media.
- A volunteer should never be alone with a teen of the opposite gender in any setting.
- A volunteer should never engage in any inappropriate touching with teens of either gender.
- A volunteer should never carry on one-on-one communications via social media with a teen of the opposite gender (e.g., texting, private messaging, email, or apps.) If contacted, a volunteer may respond to a teen of the opposite gender by adding another volunteer to the conversation.
- Any romantic interest between a volunteer and a teen must not advance to the level of a relationship without express permission from the parents of the teen, and without explicit notification of staff. The volunteer in such a parent-approved relationship must continue adhering to this policy when serving in children’s ministry.

- One-on-one mentoring/discipleship time is appropriate in many situations between a volunteer and a teen of the same gender, as long as the parents or guardians of the teen approve each activity. For example, going to a restaurant together, studying the Bible, jogging, or teaching skills such as programming, baking, woodworking, sewing, and car maintenance.
- Overnight activities involving a single volunteer and any number of teens of either gender are not allowed.
- Overnight activities (such as camping) with multiple volunteers and multiple teens (all of the same gender) are allowed with the permission of the parents or guardians of each teen.
- Overnight activities that involve teens of both genders (e.g., mission trips, conferences, lock-ins, or camping trips) must include multiple volunteers of each gender.
- Overnight activities involving both genders must provide separate sleeping quarters for each gender.
- The requirement of separate sleeping quarters must be overseen and enforced by multiple volunteers of each gender.
- At no time may a volunteer share a bed with a teen, and at no time may a volunteer share a private sleeping area (e.g., a tent, cabin, dorm room, or classroom) with a single teen of either gender.
- One or more volunteers may share a sleeping area with multiple teens of the same gender, but must never be alone with one of them in that area. Reasonable sleeping proximity must be established and enforced in such a sleeping area.
- It is appropriate for married volunteers to share sleeping quarters with one another when engaged in an overnight activity. However, these quarters must be separate from teen sleeping quarters, and the teen sleeping quarters must already meet all other requirements of this policy.

Parents in the Sunday School Classroom and Nursery

For very young children (2-3 years old): Parents are welcome to attend class with their children. This can aid children in learning appropriate class behavior and feeling comfortable.

For children older than 3 years old: If a child would feel more at ease with a parent in the Sunday School classroom, this is allowed temporarily (for a few minutes), especially for visitors or children who are going through separation anxiety. If this goes beyond a few minutes and the child cannot remain without the parents, the parents should remove the child from the classroom. The parents and child are encouraged to relocate to the couches in the foyer where the parents can hear the audio of the adult class and the child can be with them.

Parents causing difficulty or presenting concerns that inhibit the welfare of a Sunday School should be kindly but firmly dismissed, optionally, with their child. If this situation escalates,

the volunteer experiencing the difficulty or concern may contact the Elder or Deacon responsible for that ministry, or if they are unavailable, any other Elder or Deacon.

For safety and security reasons, it is against the Nursery Policies and Procedures to allow any unauthorized parent into the nursery.

Children or Teenagers in the Classroom (not including the Nursery)

For this section, *Helpers* are defined as minors who are at least three grades older than the children they are assisting, and are assisting in some area of children's ministry alongside an adult.

These helpers fall into two categories:

1. **Helpers who are coming with a parent to serve alongside of them.** These helpers do not count toward the adult-to-child ratios. Helpers must be children of members; are not themselves a member the church; will not go through childcare training, but will be allowed to serve with their parent at the discretion of the children's ministry staff. Helpers will be supervised by the adult volunteers in the same room.
2. **Helpers who are teenagers.** These helpers are vetted by children's ministry staff. Helpers must be children of members, but are not themselves required to be members of the church. These helpers do not count in the adult-to-child ratios. Helpers are supervised by any adult volunteer in the same room. Teenagers may not accompany younger children to the restroom.

Food and Drink Policy

For the Nursery food and drink policy, refer to the Nursery Policies and Procedures document.

In the Sunday Schools, volunteers may not bring food or drink for the children unless it is aligned with the following policy.

The 2-year-old class distributes goldfish crackers as a snack partway through class. Parents who may be unfamiliar with this practice are told of this when they drop off their children for the first time, and may request that their child not receive this snack.

That being an exception, Sunday School classes do not generally have snack time. Children are not fed during most class periods. The only other exception may be as a lesson illustration. In this situation teachers should make sure that the item being handed out does not have common allergens such as peanuts, shellfish, and so on. In addition, teachers ought to be aware of and take precautions for serious allergies of children in the class.

Some Sunday School classes distribute candy at the end of class as a reward for successfully saying verses. This candy is given out as children are being released to their parents, and the parent decides whether or not the child may eat this candy. If a parent does not want their child to be offered candy in this situation, they can ask the teachers to refrain from giving this type of reward to their child.

Children should not bring their own food or drink to class, since volunteers cannot guarantee that the right food will be given to the right child, that a child will not eat another child's food, or that children will not share their food with one another.

Sometimes the high school classes have snacks and/or drinks available. Teens are responsible to know whether they have allergies and govern their intake accordingly.

Security and Emergency Response

Emergency Situations

In emergency situations, if appropriate, 911 will be called to secure help and Deacons will summon staff and volunteers to the nursery or Sunday School wing to assist with the emergency.

Anyone who becomes aware of an emergency should contact staff, volunteers, or a Deacon with their concerns. Staff and volunteers can contact a Deacon if needed. The Deacon of the Month (DOM) can be found in a seat in the back of the auditorium on the right during any service.

Deacons are familiar with a separate Emergency Response Policy. When it becomes appropriate, they follow it, providing leadership in an emergency.

Accidents, First Aid and Medical Emergencies

There is a first-aid kit in the kitchen in the cupboard above the right sink. There is also a defibrillator in a marked glass cupboard just outside the doors to the sanctuary, and specific individual church members are trained to use it.

In the event of a child's life-threatening injury or illness, emergency medical services (911) will be called. The child's parents will be located and informed immediately.

Evacuation Procedures

The Nursery Policies and Procedures document contains a complete outline of how the nursery will be evacuated in an emergency.

The Emergency Response Policy outlines how the Sunday School wing will be evacuated in an emergency.

The Deacon of the Month (DOM) is responsible to provide guidance in evacuating any part or all of the church in an emergency. Evacuation procedures should be practiced once a year.

In the event of a fire, a Deacon, staff, or volunteer should call 911 and also assist all children in immediately evacuating the building. The Deacon of the Month (DOM) will direct key responders to the nursery and Sunday School wing as needed and direct Deacons to lead those evacuation efforts.

Parents are encouraged to allow trained staff members to evacuate all children according to the defined process, and to pick up their children in the designated meeting area. Evacuation information and routes are printed on placards throughout the building. Volunteers and parents should familiarize themselves with this information.

Live Threat Response

A live threat includes a shooting or some other type of security hazard.

Step 1: Volunteers and Staff Evacuate Children

- As soon as a Deacon or a volunteer is confronted with a real threat, they are to respond immediately and call 911.
- If it is safe to do so, as a first course of action, evacuate the building. Refer to the Evacuation Procedures section detailed above.

Step 2: Volunteers and Staff Communicate the Danger

- When it is safe to do so, whoever sees or hears the live threat should notify a Deacon or staff of the live threat. Sunday School teachers, Nursery Workers or a Deacon will then notify the Deacon of the Month (DOM) and remaining volunteers of the live threat.
- A Deacon or volunteer should call 911. Give the following information:
 - Location and the nature of the threat.
 - If shots have been fired, tell police that we have an “active shooter.” Local Police are trained specifically to respond in an “active shooter” situation.

Step 3: Hide

- If evacuation is not a safe option, hide in as safe a place as possible.
- Close and lock any doors to that place, including the top portion of each door in the nursery and if possible:
 - Barricade the doors with heavy furniture.
 - Close and lock windows and close blinds.
 - Turn off the lights.
 - Silence all electronic devices.
 - Maintain silence.
 - Have children lie or sit on the floor away from the door.
 - If possible, stay out of sight through any interior windows.

Step 4: Staff or Volunteers Fight the Live Threat

- If neither running nor hiding is a safe option, when confronted by a shooter or some other danger, adults in immediate danger should consider trying to disrupt or incapacitate the attacker by using aggressive force. A firearm that is legally concealed, or items in their environment, such as fire extinguishers or chairs may be used to confront or neutralize a threat.
- Under no circumstances will a child be allowed to confront the potential danger.

After the area has been made safe and secured by police, the Deacons will communicate an “all clear” sign to anyone who is in lock-down mode.

Missing or Kidnapped Child

In the case of a missing child, staff will first conduct a thorough check of the nursery or Sunday School wing to make sure the child is not in another part of the building. If the child is not found after a thorough check of the immediate areas, the Deacon of the Month (DOM) will be notified. The Deacon of the Month (DOM) will inform the missing child’s parents that their child is missing, and will lead an effort to locate the child according to the Emergency Response Policy, which may involve calling 911 and notifying local police.

In the case of a kidnapping, call 911 to secure help from the police and notify the Deacon of the Month (DOM) who will notify parents and summon key responders.

Parental Involvement in Emergency Procedures

The children’s ministry leadership or the Deacon of the Month (DOM) will decide how and when to notify parents of security or emergency situations. Involving parents too early might cause unnecessary fear or panic. If an emergency does develop, parents will need guidance, pastoral care and counseling, and Elders will be ready to walk with parents through difficult situations.

Reporting and Response

Investigation of abuse must be conducted by law enforcement.

Summary of NC Obligation to Report Law

1. Any person or institution who has cause to suspect that a child under the age of 18 is abused, neglected, or dependent must make a report to the county department of social services (DSS). G.S. 7B-301.1.
2. Every person is required to report suspicion of abuse or neglect of someone who is currently a minor. (Universal Mandated Reporting is required in NC). This means church leaders, volunteers, and any church member or attender, including children. The suspicion must be reported to the police first, then reported to the church leaders.
3. Suspicion is not the same as knowledge or confirmation. If you suspect abuse or neglect, even without all of the facts, report the suspicion to Mebane Police who will report to Child Protective Services (CPS). You do not have to know for sure – you are to report if, in good faith, you have suspicion. When in doubt, report.
4. If the suspected abuse has been allowed by the parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker, this additional information must be reported to the police.

5. **Gen. Stat. § 7B-301:** Any person or institution who knowingly or wantonly fails to report the case of a juvenile as required, or who knowingly or wantonly prevents another person from making a report as required, is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

In the event of suspected or observed child abuse—whether sexual, physical or emotional, children’s ministry volunteers must adhere to the following policies (refer to the [NC Juvenile Code on Child Abuse](#) for additional information.)

- If it is a “questionable behavior” offense: Examples include flirtations, shoulder massages, etc. Volunteers should notify an Elder to take the appropriate course of action.
- If you witness an obvious offense (e.g, an instance of a volunteer observing sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, and/or noticing peculiar abrasions, or lacerations), immediately:
 - First, separate the offender and victim if possible.
 - Next, call 911 - notify police.
 - Finally, notify the Elders.
- The Mebane Police will contact Child Protective Services (CPS) and other services to provide for the welfare of the victim.

Provide a Caring Response

Following the report to the police, a caring response must be provided to all parties involved. As stated above, we are committed to being a church that is safe, which is especially important for victims, parents and others who are reporting abuse and neglect. Those reporting are experiencing a crisis, and the church must be sensitive and wise in dealing with these situations. To that end we will focus on some key principles:

- Meetings with victims will not be an interrogation and should be focused on conveying trust and not accusing.
- All meetings with victims should only involve people well suited to meet the needs of the victim. That will include at least one in attendance who is of the same sex as the victim.
- Seek professional assistance (within 24 hours of an allegation).
 - Notify the insurance agent.
 - Notification should be limited to those who need to know about the allegation and to those who can assist by providing a professional, confidential, and helpful response.
- Provide support for the victim, assuring that:
 - The church takes any allegation of abuse very seriously
 - The church does not tolerate incidents of sexual misconduct, and considers such incidents to be unscriptural, subjecting the perpetrator to discipline.
- The church will not tolerate any retaliation against the victim(s), accused, or their families for filing a complaint, no matter how it is resolved.
- As far as possible, church leaders will provide pastoral care to the accused.

- Decide on options regarding the alleged perpetrator. (These will vary from restricting the individual's activities on a temporary basis to the possibility of prosecution.)
- Respond to congregational concerns.
- Response to media. Normally, one person will be designated by the Elders to speak to the media on behalf of the church.

The Mebane Police are trained extensively in how to handle these situations. They work very closely with [CrossRoads](#) in Burlington (www.crossroadscares.org) through the process with a minor. All forensic interviews are conducted at CrossRoads in coordination with local law enforcement personnel.

Responding to Child Pornography

It is illegal under North Carolina state and federal law to produce, transport, share, receive or possess child pornography. It is considered a form of child sexual exploitation. Today, instances of child pornography can occur on a computer through the Internet or even on a smartphone. The statutes and definitions are well defined at findlaws.com, but are listed here for reference:

- **Definition:** Any film, photograph, negative, slide, magazine, or other visual medium depiction, electronic visual image, computer or computer-generated image or sound recording which is of a child (under age 18) or appears to include a child engaging in a sexual act.
- **NC Statutes**
 - **N.C. General Statute §14-190.16:** First Degree Sexual Exploitation of a Minor (production)
 - **N.C. General Statute §14-190.17:** Second Degree Sexual Exploitation of a Minor (copying or distributing)
 - **N.C. General Statute §14-190.17A:** Third Degree Sexual Exploitation of a Minor (possession)
- **Possession:** Anyone who knowingly possesses or seeks and accesses child pornographic material.
- **Distribution:** Anyone who distributes, promotes, copies or finances the distribution (or conspires, attempts, or prepares) any "child sexually abusive material."
- **Production:** Anyone who persuades, induces, entices, coerces, causes, or knowingly allows a child to engage in "child sexually abusive" activity.
- **Minor:** a person under 18 years of age.
- Mistaken age is not a legitimate defense to a prosecution.
- Child pornography is also a federal crime. Federal laws addressing child pornography are:

- **18 U.S.C. § 2251-** Sexual Exploitation of Children (production of child pornography)
- **18 U.S.C. § 2251A-** Selling and Buying of Children
18 U.S.C. § 2252- Certain activities relating to material involving the sexual exploitation of minors (possession, distribution and receipt of child pornography)
- **18 U.S.C. § 2252A-** Certain activities relating to material constituting or containing child pornography
- **18 U.S.C. § 2260-** Production of sexually explicit depictions of a minor for importation into the United States

If any person becomes aware of an individual within the church who is involved with child pornography according to the definition in the first paragraph, they must report it to the police. The persons most likely to discover this violation are computer technicians and information technology workers. The law does not require technicians or service providers to actively search for illegal material, only to report it if they encounter it. The person reporting the violation cannot be sued by the defendant under this law if the reporting was done in good faith.

A person convicted of a child pornography offense is required to register as a sex offender, at which time the church will engage the person according to the policy detailed in the following section.

Sexual Offenders in the Church

Preparation

- The Church Office Administrator shall register with the NC Offender Subscription Service to receive email notifications regarding when an offender registers with an address in our radius alert area or about a specific registered offender.
- The Church Office Administrator shall forward these notifications to the Deacons.
- Anyone with knowledge of an alleged or convicted sex offender attending our services, activities, or seeking membership, must inform the Deacons.

When an Alleged or Convicted Offender Attends GRBC or a GRBC-Related Activity

If any Elder, Deacon, or children's ministry worker learns *in advance* that an alleged or convicted sexual offender wants to attend a GRBC service:

- Most sex offenders will not be legally allowed to attend church services.
- If a registered sex offender wants to attend church services, that individual must meet the criteria that allows their presence on premises where children gather. The

pertinent statute governs violent sexual offenders and sexual offenses involving minors, including the possession, production, or distribution of child pornography.

- If a sex offender is legally allowed to attend church, then the following apply:
 - The Deacons must be informed and they, in turn, must inform the Elders.
 - The Elders must meet with the offender and decide whether to admit him or her to church services or GRBC-related activities. Admission of the offender will be based on factors such as extent of prior convictions, and his or her willingness to follow guidelines documented in this policy. This is not a comprehensive list of admission criteria.
 - A member of the Diaconate will contact the offender, letting him or her know that he or she must be accompanied at all times while on GRBC's property or anywhere in GRBC's buildings.
 - A Deacon will be responsible for coordinating the offender's accompaniment and ensuring compliance.
- If an alleged or convicted sexual offender participates in any GRBC-related activity or public service that has the possibility of children being present:
 - The Elder and Deacon overseeing children's ministry, and children's ministry workers should be notified.
 - A Deacon, or someone the Deacon may designate and oversee, will accompany the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender at all times while he or she is on GRBC's property or anywhere in GRBC's buildings.
 - He or she will not be allowed in the Children's Sunday School wing or in the Nursery hall.
 - The Deacons will work with members to adopt guidelines governing an alleged or convicted sexual offender participating in GRBC-related activities that do not occur on church property, but elsewhere. The person must always be accompanied and supervised.

When an Alleged or Convicted Offender Attends Regularly

If he or she chooses to attend regularly:

- The Elders will be notified.
- The congregation will be notified in a public service of the church, most likely the members' meeting. GRBC reserves the right to forbid someone from coming to the church for worship services, programs or activities. When participating in church activities outside of the church building, the same guidelines apply.
- The sexual offender should provide the Deacons with the name of his or her probation officer. A Deacon will contact the probation officer and find out:
 - 1) more about the underlying offense – offenders tend to minimize their offenses, and
 - 2) the specific terms of their probation in order to make sure the offender stays in compliance while regularly attending the church.

When a Sexual Offender Seeks Membership at GRBC

If the offender seeks membership at GRBC, the Elders retain a right to refuse membership. If the Elders grant membership to an offender, it will be conditional on his or her agreement to:

- The applicant will receive a copy of this document or a summary of its contents.
- Disclose and verify the history of sexual offenses, related convictions, and the legal disposition of their adjudication to the GRBC Elders and Deacons.
- Sign a written document that details all of these items, including any additional items that the Elders or the Deacons deem important to include.
- Refrain from any form of communication (including telephone, IM, texting, email, social media or any other type of technology), social fellowship, physical contact, mentoring, baby-sitting, or coaching with children or youth or participating in any activities or programs related to children or youth, both inside and outside of the church.
- A member of the Diaconate must contact the offender's probation officer to verify the underlying offense and the individual's specific terms of probation.
- The Deacons must perform a thorough criminal background check.
- If the information provided by the offender differs from the information given by the probation officer or gathered by the Deacons, that will be grounds for denying membership.
- Disclosure of the information will be made to parents and the congregation and released to the church at the discretion of the Elders. Disclosure will take the form of a letter detailing this information sent directly to all member parents and announced at a congregational meeting.
- A Deacon, or someone that Deacon may designate and oversee, will accompany the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender at all times while he or she is on GRBC's property or anywhere in GRBC's buildings or in attendance at any church-related services, activities or gatherings that has the possibility of children being present.
- Any other restrictions may be imposed at the Elders' discretion.
- The church reserves the right to notify the leadership, congregation, and parents of anything that the Elders deem significant for these groups to know.
- The Elders warn the sexual offender that the church will report any suspected illegal activity to civil authorities.
- The Elders also warn the sexual offender that any violation of the code of conduct (including allegations or suspicion of abusive behavior) may result in discipline and banning from the church facilities or any church-related programs and activities.

Other Guidelines About Sexual Offenders

If a sexual offender applies for a volunteer or staff position, he or she will be denied by the church. Exceptions may only be made upon the approval of the Elders, full-disclosure to the congregation and a congregational vote.

If a sexual offender does not disclose a former allegation, conviction or adjudication, and it is subsequently revealed, the offender will be removed from any paid or volunteer position immediately and may be removed from membership as well.

If a sexual offender is a minor, the church reserves the right to bar that minor from any children or youth activities, and will follow the guidelines set out in this policy for any sexual offender who seeks participation in church-related public services, programs or activities.

If a sexual offender leaves GRBC (as a member or regular attender) and begins attending another church, the Elders will disclose allegations or self-admission or criminal conviction of neglect or abuse to the leadership at the other church.

Glossary

Background check: The process of looking up and assessing criminal records and other relevant information of an individual in order to determine his or her qualifications to serve as a volunteer in a given ministry area

Child: Any individual, age 0–17, in the care of GRBC

Child abuse: Any physical, emotional, or sexual maltreatment of a child as defined by state law

Child-protection policies: Any courses or principles of action adopted by a group or party in order to ensure the protection and safety of a child

Church member: GRBC members in good standing

DTL Training: Darkness to Light Training

Emotional abuse: A form of abuse characterized by a person subjecting or exposing another to behavior that is psychologically harmful

GRBC: Grace Reformed Baptist Church of Mebane, North Carolina

Juvenile: The legal designation of an adolescent, age 11-17

Lock-in: A sleepover party, usually held in a public place, such as a church or school, in which the participants are not allowed to leave until the next morning.

Minor: A person, age 0-17

Physical abuse: Abuse as defined by state law involving contact or the purposed allowance of contact intended to cause feelings of intimidation, injury, or other physical suffering or bodily harm

Qualified volunteer: GRBC member in good standing, having submitted to a criminal background check and completed the required training/safety orientations

Reasonable Cause to Suspect: *Reasonable Cause to Suspect* does not require that one be “certain” that abuse occurred, or that one have evidence or “proof” that abuse occurred. While the law does not define exactly how likely abuse must be before one is required to report, a good rule of thumb is that (in addition to reporting any child whom you believe has been abused/neglected) one should report abuse whenever one has a nagging feeling that abuse/neglect may have happened.

Sexual abuse (child): Child abuse of a sexual nature according to state law, including inappropriate touching, sexual acts, displays or uses of pornography involving a child

Volunteer: Unpaid GRBC member committed to serve in occasional or consistent work in a particular GRBC ministry area; similar terms may include: worker, caregiver, teacher

Youth: A juvenile, child or adolescent, age 11–17, in the care of GRBC

Acknowledgements

[Capitol Hill Baptist Church \(CHBC\) Child Protection Policy](https://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/ministries/children/child-protection-policy/)

<https://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/ministries/children/child-protection-policy/>

This document is based on the CHBC policy

[First Baptist Church \(FBC\) Durham Child-Volunteer Protection Handbook](https://www.fbcdurham.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Child-Protection-Policies-Handbook.pdf)

<https://www.fbcdurham.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Child-Protection-Policies-Handbook.pdf>

[Look Out For Child Abuse](https://lookoutforchildabuse.org/reporting-when/); Penn State Hershey – Center for the Protection of Children
<https://lookoutforchildabuse.org/reporting-when/>

Summit RDU Church Response Plan:

http://bradhambrick.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Response-Plan-for-Sexual-Abuse-Against-a-Minor-at-Church_Generic-2018.pdf

Appendix

1. North Carolina

Professionals Required to Report

Gen. Stat. § 7B-301

Any person or institution that has cause to suspect abuse or neglect shall report.

Reporting by Other Persons

Gen. Stat. § 7B-301

All persons who have cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent, or has died as the result of maltreatment, shall report.

2. Institutional Responsibility to Report

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

Standards for Making a Report

Gen. Stat. § 7B-301

A report is required when a reporter has cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent, or has died as the result of maltreatment.

Privileged Communications

Gen. Stat. § 7B-310

No privilege shall be grounds for failing to report, even if the knowledge or suspicion is acquired in an official professional capacity, except when the knowledge or suspicion is gained by an attorney from that attorney's client during representation only in the abuse, neglect, or dependency case. No privilege, except the attorney-client privilege, shall be grounds for excluding evidence of abuse, neglect, or dependency.

Inclusion of Reporter's Name in Report

Gen. Stat. § 7B-301

The report must include the name, address, and telephone number of the reporter.

3. Mandatory Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect

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This publication is available online at

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/systemwide/laws-policies/statutes/manda/>.

Disclosure of Reporter Identity

Gen. Stat. § 7B-302

The Department of Social Services shall hold the identity of the reporter in strictest confidence, except that the department shall disclose confidential information regarding the identity of the reporter to any Federal, State, or local government entity or its agent with a court order. The department may only disclose confidential information regarding the identity of the reporter to a Federal, State, or local government entity or its agent without a court order when the entity demonstrates a need for the reporter's name to carry out the entity's mandated responsibilities.

4. North Carolina

Failure to Report

Gen. Stat. § 7B-301

Any person or institution who knowingly or wantonly fails to report the case of a juvenile as required, or who knowingly or wantonly prevents another person from making a report as required, is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor. A director of social services who receives a report of sexual abuse of a juvenile in a child care facility and who knowingly fails to notify the State Bureau of Investigation of the report as required is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

False Reporting

This issue is not addressed in the statutes reviewed.

5. Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect in North Carolina, Third Edition, 2013, with 2016 supplemental chapter by Janet Mason, Sara DePasquale:

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“3. Finally, if in doubt, make the report.

While the legal definitions of abuse, neglect, dependency, caretaker, and other key terms are important, a person who is concerned about a child but in a quandary as to whether the definitions or a particular definition applies should make a report. If the report is made in good faith, there is no liability risk in reporting. (See Chapter 9.) If the child or family needs assistance, even if it turns out that a report was not required and the department of social services is not authorized to conduct an assessment—that is, the report is screened out—the department may be able to suggest other

resources to which the reporter can either direct his or her concern or refer the family that needs assistance.” Pages 70-71