

Memorial Drive Ministries (“MDM”)

Campus Wide Child Safety Policy

I. GENERAL PURPOSE:

MDM’s mission is to foster diverse worship, innovative social services, and transformative relationships. As a shared ministry space for our various Onsite Partner organizations (“Onsite Partners”), we are committed to sharing God’s love with people of all faiths, cultures, and backgrounds. Children are key members of this community (as used herein, “Children” shall mean anyone under the age of 18, unless expressly stated otherwise). Therefore, this policy is being used to (1) keep Children safe while they are on campus and (2) establish shared standards and reporting requirements among all Onsite Partners and for everyone who comes onto our campus.

II. DEFINITIONS:

For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological, or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes (but is not limited to) the following:

- A. Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- B. Emotional abuse – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling, and persistent teasing.
- C. Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- D. Neglect – depriving a child of their essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

III. BACKGROUND:

One of the symptoms of our fallen world is the abuse that is inflicted upon Children. Within recent years, it has been dramatically shown that this problem also occurs in churches and ministry settings. Potential abusers, being denied access to Children in other places, often seek opportunity and trusting environments in churches and ministries.

While these measures will require time, work, and diligence, safeguarding the well-being of our Children and our community is worth it. The measures of this policy help protect our Children and our community. This policy will standardize the care of Children on our campus and help parents understand what they can expect whenever their Children are on the MDM campus. Nothing in this policy should be viewed as a replacement or interpretation of any law applicable to the subject matter herein. Each individual and each Onsite Partner are responsible for complying with all applicable law.

IV. ONSITE PARTNER COMMITMENTS AND REQUIREMENTS:

- A. General Commitment: All Onsite Partners who work with Children shall operate diligently and thoroughly to prevent child abuse directly and to prevent the opportunities and environments where it is possible for abuse to occur. In furtherance of this general commitment, and in addition to any obligations imposed by law, each Onsite Partner shall abide by the following specific requirements:
 1. *Preliminary and Training Requirements:*
 - Adopt the policies herein or otherwise have an adequate Child Safety Policy in place, which meet or exceed the commitments contained in this policy.
 - Provide MDM a copy of such policy upon MDM’s reasonable request.
 - Conduct and retain background checks on all volunteers and staff that work with Children (which, for this specific requirement, shall mean anyone under the age of 21) *prior* to the commencement of their work.
 - Prohibit any person whose background report contains any, sexual offense, violent offense, or history of abuse/neglect from working with Children for or in connection with such Onsite Partner.

- Ensure that all leaders working with Children (which, for this specific requirement, shall mean anyone under the age of 21) have undergone a training in “Darkness to Light” or a comparable child abuse prevention training *prior* to beginning their work.

2. *Supervisory Requirements:*

- Make every effort to ensure that all Children are supervised at all times by at least two unrelated adults in the room wherever such Child or Children are. (For this specific requirement, one adult shall be at least 21 years of age *and* at least five years older than the oldest participating Child, and the second adult must be at least 18 years old and a high school graduate. If necessary and prudent (given the age of the participating Children), the second adult may be replaced by a high school youth who is at least 15 years old if such youth has completed a child abuse prevention training appropriate for such youth’s age level and responsibilities.)
- If the foregoing cannot be complied with for limited, special circumstances (e.g., emergencies or mentoring), ensure that another adult has a clear line of visibility to the situation at all times.
- Keep open all room doors where Children activities are happening unless there is a swinging half door, a window in the door, or a side window beside it. Vision through such windows must be unimpaired. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.
- Never administer corporeal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of Children in any circumstance or at any time.

3. *Restroom Requirements:*

- Instruct its staff and volunteers to check bathrooms to ensure they are empty prior to allowing Children to enter.
- Endeavor to never allow any employee or volunteer to be alone with a Child or Children in a bathroom, and certainly never with the door closed or stall closed. An adult may enter a bathroom or stall (and if at all possible and prudent, leave the door open) only if a Child needs and requests assistance, and prior to assisting such Child the adult shall inform another adult of the need for assistance and the other adult shall remain in the bathroom while assistance is provided.
- Ensure its staff and volunteers escort Children (preferably only in groups) to the bathroom nearest to their activity.

4. *Hazard-related Requirements:*

- In the event a child ever becomes accidentally locked in a vehicle in a parking lot on MDM’s campus, immediately call 911 and break a window. Georgia heat is too deadly to permit any delay.
- Ensure that each leader working with Children knows the location of the nearest first aid supplies and fire extinguisher.
- Immediately report any dangerous or broken items to the MDM Facilities Manager.
- If a child or youth is injured, follow these steps:
 - For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and notify the Child’s parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from their care. (It is each Onsite Partner’s responsibility to have such supplies on hand and available to staff and volunteers.)
 - For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, immediately summon the parent and/or guardian. If warranted by circumstances, call 911 and request an ambulance.

5. *Online and Social Media Requirements:*

- Protect the privacy and identity of their program participants online, especially Children.
- Obtain and store signed photo releases before publishing or posting photos of Children online.
- Treat a “Zoom room,” or any other online platform that connects an adult to a Child, like a regular room. To the greatest extent possible, have at least two unrelated adults in the Zoom when Children are present or when communicating with Children room (e.g., copying another adult on emails). If that is not possible, the single adult should record and save a copy of the Zoom session (or comparable online media platform conversation).

V. **RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE:**

- A. **Receipt of Allegations:** Allegations of abuse or misconduct should never be taken lightly or disregarded. They demand the utmost attention and concern for the well-being, integrity, and reputation of the alleged victim first, as well as the accuser, the accused, and the entire community affected. The protection of the child is of primary importance.

When hearing an allegation from a child, an adult should try to refrain from any appearance of shock or discomfort, instead listening carefully, patiently, and empathetically. Allow the child to tell his or her story. Thank the child for sharing. Avoid leading questions or probing for information that the child is unwilling to give. Reassure them that it is not their fault and that they did the right thing by telling someone. Explain what you’ll do next and then report what the child has told you immediately and as accurately as possible.

- B. **Individual Action after Awareness/Allegation Received:** If any volunteer or staff of any Onsite Partner becomes aware of or suspects the abuse or neglect of a child, they shall immediately notify the following:

1. their direct supervisor,
2. the pastor or director of their Onsite Partner,
3. the director of MDM, and
4. the Director of Operations of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta.

- C. **Onsite Partner Action after Awareness/Allegation Received.** The Onsite Partner that has become aware of or suspects the abuse or neglect of a child, they shall immediately:

1. Notify the parent or guardian of the child (unless the parent or guardian of the child is the alleged abuser, or it would pose a risk to the child to inform the parent or guardian).
2. **Make a report to the civil authorities in the case of suspected abuse or misconduct.** (This is required by Georgia law. See below for the methods available for reporting.)
3. Immediately place on leave the staff or volunteer alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct.
4. Confirm to the Director of MDM and the Director of Operations of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta that a report has been made pursuant to the below to the civil authorities.

- D. **Reporting Suspected Abuse or Misconduct.** This is required by Georgia law. The ways to report abuse or misconduct of a Child are set forth below. **If there is fear of imminent danger, call 911.**

Reports can be made by any of the following methods:

1. Telephone: Central Intake at 1-855-GACHILD / 1-855-422-4453, available 24/7/365.
2. Fax: 229-317-9663
3. Email: cpsintake@dhs.ga.gov
4. Web-based reporting: <http://dfcs.dhs.georgia.gov/child-abuse-neglect>