

HIGHLAND AVENUE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH CHILD/YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY



“But Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.’ Matthew 19:14

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
I. Definitions.....	3
II. Screening and Selection of Church Staff and Adult Volunteers.....	4
III. Ongoing Education of Persons Who Work With Children and Youth.....	5
IV. Supervision of Children and Youth.....	6
V. Transportation.....	8
VI. Trip and Retreat Supervision.....	9
VII. Use of Church Facilities by Outside Groups.....	10
VIII. On-Line Safety.....	11
IX. Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse.....	11
X. Implementation.....	13
XI. Application.....	13
APPENDIX I.....	
CHILD/YOUTH PROTECTION WORKER APPLICATION.....	14
APPENDIX II.....	
INTERVIEW GUIDELINES.....	16
APPENDIX III.....	
REFERENCE CHECK.....	18
APPENDIX IV.....	
AUTHORIZATION AND REQUEST FOR CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK.....	19
APPENDIX V.....	
PARTICIPATION COVENANT STATEMENT.....	20
APPENDIX VI.....	
PARENTAL CONSENT AND MEDICAL AUTHORIZATION.....	21
APPENDIX VII.....	
CHILD/YOUTH PROTECTION INCIDENT REPORT FORM.....	23
APPENDIX VIII.....	
EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION.....	24
APPENDIX IX.....	
PHOTO PERMISSION.....	25
APPENDIX X.....	
CONSENT FORM FOR ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS.....	26
APPENDIX XI.....	
DISQUALIFYING CONVICTIONS/ARRESTS.....	27

Child and Youth Protection Policy

Introduction

A central tenet of the Christian faith is the inherent value and worth of all children, youth, and adults. Children and youth are least able to protect themselves in our society and are particularly vulnerable to abuse and neglect. The Highland Avenue Fellowship Church is desirous of doing what it can to protect the youth and children who participate in the life of this congregation. We believe in implementing a policy and adopting procedures to protect our children as follows:

The policies set forth below apply to all persons who provide supervision over or have care and custody of children/youth or who come into contact with children/youth in church facilities or church-sponsored activities. Please note that all persons who are employed in, or volunteer for 10 or more hours per month, at any church preschool, daycare, or other childcare program, charter school, VPK, other government-licensed program, or summer camp are subject to additional requirements under Florida statutes or Department of Children and Families (DCF) regulations, including Level II background screening, mandatory adult: child ratios, educational certification requirements, and, in some cases, mandatory reporting requirements which are not addressed in this policy.

I. Definitions

A. “Child” and “Adult”

A “**child**” is anyone under the age of 18 years. A “**youth**” is anyone at least 12 years of age but not yet 18 years old. An “**adult**” is anyone 18 years of age or older.

B. Church Personnel

For purposes of this CYPP, “**Church Personnel**” are defined to include the following:

- “**Paid Staff Person**” is anyone employed by the church, including all appointed or supply clergy and all other staff on the payroll of the church.
- “**Adult Volunteer**” is any adult not paid by the church who serves in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors, including volunteers in the nursery, daycare, schools, Sunday School, VBS, drivers, and chaperones. Adult volunteers who are not screened must be supervised by a screened adult or screened adult paid staff person.
- “**Screened Adult**” is a volunteer or paid staff person who has undergone the church’s screening process. A screened adult does not need to be a church member but must have been a regular attendee and active participant in church activities for at least six (6) months prior to undergoing the screening process. Exceptions to the 6-month rule: the spouse of a newly-appointed clergy or a transferee from a FL UMC congregation, upon verification of screening and participation from the prior church.
- Not included in the definition of “**Church Personnel**” are “**Youth Helpers**” or “**Youth Staff.**” Youth helpers (below the age of 18) may assist in activities involving children/youth but must be supervised by at least one screened adult at all times. Youth staff must also be supervised by at least one screened adult if assisting in any child/youth activity.

C. “Regularly Work With or Around Children/Youth”

For purposes of this Policy, the following are included in the definition of church personnel who “**Regularly Work With or Around Children/Youth:**”

1. All clergy whether appointed or otherwise who are engaged in ministry or service to the church.
2. All paid staff persons, except those whose duties are performed entirely when children/youth

- are not present.
3. All paid staff persons whose living quarters are on the grounds of the church or related entity.
 4. Adult volunteers whose service regularly takes them throughout the church facility or grounds or who have keys to church buildings.
 5. Adult volunteers who supervise or assist with supervising children or youth in ministries, programs, or activities more than 3 times per year.
 6. Adult volunteers who transport children/youth without other adults in the vehicle more than 3 times per year.
 7. Adult volunteers who participate in overnight activities with children/youth more than 2 times per year.
 8. Adult volunteers who assist in the nursery more than 4 times per year.

D. “Child/Youth Abuse”

For purposes of this Policy, **child/youth abuse** includes any of the following:

1. **Physical Abuse:**

Violent, non-accidental contact or allowing such contact with a child or youth that results in injury or mental, emotional, or physical harm. This includes, but is not limited to, striking, biting, or shaking. Injuries include bruises, fractures, cuts, and burns. Injuries and/or harm do not have to be visible for physical abuse to be occurring. Abuse can also include purposely giving a child poison, alcohol, drugs, or other substances that substantially affect the child’s behavior, motor coordination, or judgment or that result in sickness or internal injury.

2. **Sexual Abuse:**

Any form of sexual activity with a child/youth, whether at the Church, at home, or any other setting. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another minor.

3. **Emotional Abuse:**

A pattern of intentional conduct which crushes a child’s/youth’s spirit or attacks his/her self-worth through rejection, threats, terrorizing, isolating, or belittling.

4. **Neglect:**

Failure to provide for a child’s/youth’s basic needs or failure to protect a child/youth from Harm.

II. Screening and Selection of Church Staff and Adult Volunteers

The Pastor and the Executive Board are charged with the responsibility of developing, implementing and evaluating the process for recruiting, screening, selecting, training and supervising of non-apointive church staff. The Pastor and the Paid Staff Person(s) or Screened Volunteer(s) in charge of Children’s/Youth ministries at the church are charged with the responsibility of developing, implementing and evaluating the process for recruiting, screening, selecting, training and supervising adult volunteers.

A. All church personnel who work with the children/youth shall comply with the following **Screening and Selection Requirements** prior to beginning their involvement with children/youth:

- a. Complete an application form with 3 reference checks (See Appendices I and III);
- b. Complete a background check consent form (See Appendix IV);
- c. Receive appropriate clearances from all reference checks and Florida or national background check, as appropriate;
- d. Undergo personal interview (See possible questions for interviews in Appendix II);
- e. Attend training on current issues of child protection and the church’s child/youth protection policies at least once per year;
- f. Sign a statement that they have read, understood, and agree to abide by this Child/Youth Protection Policy (See Appendix V—Participation Covenant);

- g. Undergo a Driving or Motor Vehicle records check if the person will be transporting children/youth; and
- h. Undergo a renewed background check every 3 years.

B. Related Screening and Selection Procedures for the Church:

- a. A designated Paid Staff Member or Member of the Executive Board shall interview an applicant and contact the applicant's references.
- b. A designated Paid Staff Member or Member of the Executive Board shall ensure that an applicant submits a background check consent and that an appropriate background check is performed. At a minimum, the background check will include the one offered by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. (This may be done online at <http://www.FDLE.state.fl.us/CriminalHistory>) and a national criminal background screening.
- c. The application, background check consent, documentation of reference checks, interview notes, background check reports, interview notes, motor vehicle screening (if applicable), and signed participation covenant shall be maintained as *confidential* files in a locked cabinet where other church records are kept. Access to such files shall be limited to those charged or involved with supervising Church Personnel or involved in determining whether an applicant should be approved to work regularly with children/youth.
- d. Information gathered about an applicant will be carefully reviewed and evaluated to make a determination, in consultation with the Pastor, SPRC, or Director of Children and/or Youth ministries, as appropriate.
- e. Anyone whose background check indicates a conviction or plea of guilty or *nolo contendere* for any offense listed in Florida Statute § 435.04 shall not be approved for working with children/youth. Anyone whose background check indicates a pending arrest for any offense listed in the same statute shall not be approved to work with children/youth unless and until the arrest has been resolved in such a way that does not result in a conviction or plea of guilty or *nolo contendere*.

III. Ongoing Education of Persons Who Work Regularly or Occasionally With Children and Youth

The Pastor and the Executive Board shall ensure that regularly scheduled (i.e., at least annually) training focused on current issues of child protection is available to and received by those working with children and youth. Attendance at this training shall be required of all paid staff persons, screened adult volunteers, and non-screened adult volunteers who work with children and/or youth.

The training should include at a minimum:

- A. The definition and recognition of child abuse.
- B. Current child protection issues.
- C. The Church's policy and procedures on child abuse and the reasons for having them.
- D. The need to maintain a positive classroom environment, including appropriate discipline and age-level characteristics.
- E. The appropriate behavior for teachers and leaders of child/youth events.
- F. Abuse reporting responsibilities and procedures.
- G. Definition of appropriate interpersonal boundaries.

IV. Supervision of Children and Youth

A. General Rules

- 1. Two Adult Rule: Two non-related, screened adults must be present at all non-classroom programs or

activities involving children/youth.

2. All activities involving children/youth must be supervised by at least two screened adults.
3. Three Year Rule: All screened adults supervising children/youth must be at least 3 years older than the age group they are supervising. Adults who do not meet this criteria must be under the direction of a screened adult who is at least 3 years older than the age group.
4. Six Month Rule: Adult Volunteers working with children/youth must be a member or regular attendee at church for at least 6 months prior to working with children/youth. Exceptions to the 6-month rule: the spouse of a newly-appointed clergy or a transferee from a FL UMC congregation, upon verification of screening and participation from the prior church.
5. Windows/Open Doors: Each room set aside for children/youth must have a door or wall with a window, half doors, or open doors. Windows in doors tend to remove the opportunities for secrecy and isolation, conditions every child abuser seeks. Half doors should be considered for Toddler to Second Grade children to keep them from wandering outside the classroom.

B. Supervision of Classroom Activities

1. Crib/Toddler to Second Grade

Two unrelated, screened Adults must be present for all classroom activities involving infants, toddlers, and children in grades K-2.. Where the two adults are related, a third adult must present. In addition, a designated floating adult should periodically check all classrooms. Children must be escorted to and from bathroom facilities or when otherwise leaving the room by either one of the supervising adults or by a designated floating person. Whenever two adults are not available to supervise (whether in the classroom or bathroom), the classroom/outer bathroom door must remain open with the adult standing near the door.

2. Grades 3-5

At least two screened adult must be present for all classroom activities. In addition, a designated floating adult should periodically check all classrooms. Children should be escorted to and from bathroom facilities or when otherwise leaving the room by either one of the supervising adults or by a designated floating person who checks on all classrooms. Whenever two adults are not available to supervise, the classroom doors must remain open.

3. Grades 6-12

At least two screened adults must be present for all classroom activities. A designated floating Adult should periodically check all classrooms.

C. Classroom Discipline

1. All teachers and workers will use the following disciplinary measures. If a child is behaving inappropriately, the teacher or worker will tell the child specifically what he/she is doing that is not acceptable and state what the expected behavior is (e.g., for young children, “We do not throw the blocks. We use blocks for building.”). If this measure is not effective, the child will be guided to another activity. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be placed at a table to work alone away from other students. If the child’s disruptive behavior continues after these steps are taken, the child’s parents or legal guardians should be contacted. If they are not available, the child may be taken to the children’s ministry director and left under his or her supervision along with another adult. **No corporal discipline is to be used at any time.** If isolating the child within the classroom or removal of the child from the room becomes necessary, the situation will be recorded on a disciplinary incident form and discussed with the child’s parents or guardian as soon as possible.
2. The Church does not tolerate assault, threats, harassment, or abuse against Church personnel or students. Verbal or written threats, racial/ethno-cultural harassment, physical and/or sexual harassment, or abuse perpetrated by anyone in the Church is unacceptable. The Church supports efforts designed to protect

the welfare of staff and students. In dealing with matters of alleged assault, threats, harassment or abuse, the dignity and rights of all are to be preserved and respected. The Church is to be characterized by a safe and harmonious working environment in which the needs and well-being of every individual is paramount.

3. Violent behavior shall not be tolerated and will be dealt with accordingly:
 - a. ***Students under the age of twelve:*** Where children in this age group are behaving in a violent manner and are non-responsive to instruction telling them to stop their behavior, staff members shall use the minimum amount of force necessary to prevent injury to persons or property within the vicinity of the violent person(s). The parents of the child must be involved in any action plan for remediation. The decision to report to the police will be made by the senior pastor or his designee unless the incident could constitute abuse of any kind, in which case it becomes a mandatory reporting situation. The staff member is to immediately report to the pastoral staff and the appropriate state agency any incidents involving abuse, sexual assault, serious injury, and serious damage.
 - b. ***Students twelve or older:*** For young people ages 12–17, any violent incident that may be considered criminal shall be reported to the police as required by state law or, if not required by law, at the discretion of the pastoral staff. Students who are 18 years or over are considered adults, and the procedures of the state criminal code will be followed if these persons are charged and/or tried for criminal activities. Any violent behavior, whether or not it is reported to the police, is to be reported to the pastoral staff and recorded by the staff member on an incident report containing a description of the violent incident, a reference to any call made to the police and, if applicable, reference to any disciplinary response. This information, together with any letters to the student and/or parent/guardian, must be filed in the Church office.

D. Open Door Policy

Parents, volunteers or staff of the church should be permitted, as reasonableness dictates, to visit and observe all programs and classrooms at any time.

E. Sign-in/Sign-out Procedure

Programs for infants, toddlers, and children in Grades K-2 must have procedures to ensure that children are released only to their parents or guardians or those designated by them. Adults responsible for children who are infant through toddler should sign-in their child and indicate the names of the authorized person(s) to whom the child may be signed-out. Adults responsible for children age 2 through Grade 2 should sign their child in and out of Sunday School and other children's activities. Picking-up children by unauthorized adults is forbidden.

F. Supervision of Non-Classroom Activities

At least two unrelated, screened adults must be present for all non-classroom activities involving children and/or youth. Permission from the child's/youth's parent or guardian must be obtained prior to a child's/youth's attendance at a meeting held in an individual's home.

G. Mentoring Programs

Although mentoring programs inherently promote the development of a one-to-one relationship between an adult mentor and a child/youth, such programs must be conducted in a group setting in compliance with the other requirements of this policy, including that at least two adults be present at all times, one of whom must be a screened adult, screening of all mentors who serve on a regular basis, and that the open door policy is observed. Mentors may not give gifts to individual children/youth without the knowledge of their

parent/guardian. Gift giving should be done on a group basis or for special occasions only (such as birthday, Christmas, confirmation, graduation). Gifts should be modest and appropriate for the occasion. Mentors must never serve as a financial resource. The general prohibition on one-to-one communications between church personnel and children/youth is relaxed in the context of mentoring relationships; however, mentors must obtain permission from the parent/guardian regarding the forms of communication a mentor may use in communicating with a mentee.

H. Counseling of Youth and Children

In instances where circumstances dictate that counseling of a child/youth would be most effective on a one-on-one basis, an appropriate Screened Adult may meet individually with a child/youth with the knowledge and consent of at least one Paid Staff Member. At any counseling session with children or youth, the counseling must take place in a location where other staff members will be able to witness the interactions and, if counseling in a room, the door of the room used should remain open for the entire session, unless there is glass in the door or wall which gives a clear view into the room. If another adult is not in the building and able to witness the interaction when the counseling occurs, the session must be moved to a public place, such as a restaurant or outside where other people are present.

NOTE 1: At the initial meeting, the counselor should first determine if they are qualified to address the child's/youth's needs effectively. Counseling should be limited to no more than three sessions. Referral to another more qualified counselor should be considered.

NOTE 2: This policy is not intended to govern a licensed professional counselor in a paid counseling relationship with a child or youth.

I. Time Following Group Events

Following child/youth group events, it is inevitable that occasionally a child's/youth's transportation arrives after all other participants have departed. In those circumstances, a child/youth may be supervised by one screened adult. Under those circumstances, the general rule requiring the presence of two screened adults is suspended, and the screened adult is responsible for exercising his/her best judgment for the participant's well-being. In an emergency, and only with the express permission of the parent/guardian, a screened adult may transport a child/youth home, provided that the transportation complies with the requirements set forth below.

V. Transportation

A. General Rules

Transporting children and youth is an important concern. Their safety can be at risk in a variety of ways. This Policy includes both Requirements that must be followed and recommended Guidelines. Whenever feasible the recommended Guidelines should be followed, allowing for the use of discretion and good judgment depending upon the event attended, the locale of the event, and the age group participating.

B. Requirements

1. Drivers must be known to the designated adult leader of the event.
2. When a child/youth is transported in any vehicle, the driver must be either the child's/youth's parent/guardian, or a screened adult or an adult paid staff person who is at least 18 years old, or a professional, licensed transportation company or charter service. If a taxi or ride-sharing company is used, the provision in V.B.3 and IV.A.1 must be followed.

3. At least two children/youth must be in any vehicle driven from church to an offsite church activity.
4. When a child/youth is transported in a church-owned vehicle, the driver must be at least 21 years of age who has undergone a motor vehicle record search and has been found by the appointed clergy, designated supply pastor, or his/her designee to be satisfactory.
5. Drivers must have a valid driver's license for the vehicle being operated. For example, if driving a church bus, a commercial license is required. A copy of the driver's license must be on file at the church.
6. Drivers must require that seat belts be used at all times and the number of passengers must not exceed the number of seat belts.
7. Drivers should be advised of a designated route and should not deviate from it except in cases of emergency or road detours.
8. Drivers are not permitted to use cell phones or mobile devices unless required for communication with other drivers and are not permitted to text message while driving. Hands-free GPS (Global Positioning System) may be used.
9. Youth drivers are not permitted to drive from church to an off-site church activity. Youth drivers may either meet the group at the location of the church activity or must be transported from church by adult drivers otherwise in compliance with this policy.
10. When a trip is planned and the destination is expected to be 100 miles or more from the point of departure, drivers are to be listed on an "approved driver list" maintained in the church office. If the trip will exceed 500 miles roundtrip, a Church Trip Form must be completed and submitted to the Church Office and approved by the Pastor or Executive Pastor prior to trip.
11. Persons who regularly drive church owned vehicles are to be listed on an "approved driver list" maintained in the church office.
12. In order to be listed on the "approved driver list" of drivers, a Motor Vehicle Record search must be conducted by the Church office.
13. Approved Drivers must read and sign an acknowledgement form indicating that the Child/Youth Protection Policy has been read and will be followed (See Appendix IV).
14. These Requirements apply to each driver of each vehicle used to transport children/youth to an offsite church activity, including when multiple vehicles are traveling to the same location in a caravan.
15. Drivers must receive training for the church-owned vehicle being operated.

C. Recommended Guidelines

1. Drivers should be accompanied by at least one other adult.
2. Youth who drive their own vehicles should be reminded regularly of the importance of vehicle safety and comply with B-9 above.

VI. Trip and Retreat Supervision

Trip and Retreat settings can call for different child/youth protection requirements depending on the circumstances. What follows are Requirements that must be followed and recommended Guidelines. Whenever feasible the recommended Guidelines should also be followed, allowing for the use of discretion and good judgment depending upon the circumstances of the setting, who is in attendance, etc. Those in charge of the trip or retreat should be mindful of both Requirements and Guidelines, in addition to applying their own wisdom to the needs of a given occasion.

A. Requirements

1. There must be at least two unrelated, screened adults present for all trips, retreats and other events where the children and/or youth gather overnight at, or away from, the church campus.
2. There must be at least one screened adult for each gender present at co-ed overnight events. At single

gender overnight events, at least one of the two screened adults present must be of the same gender as the child/youth.

3. Church personnel are prohibited from sleeping in the same bed, sleeping bag, tent, or room with children or youth, unless the child/youth is an immediate family member of the adult.
4. When children/youth are participating in an event held in one open space, such as the church gym or camp lodge, multiple adults may sleep in the same space, provided that at least two screened adult are present at all times.
5. The person in charge of youth/children for each overnight trip and/or retreat must carry parental permission slips, including permission for emergency medical care. (See Appendix VI).
6. When groups are away from the church campus, there must be access to a phone, cell phone, or mobile device.
7. If the outing involves a swimming pool or deep bodies of water, a certified lifeguard should be present onsite or accompany the group. If a certified lifeguard is not available, at least one adult who is certified in CPR must accompany the group.

B. Guidelines

In a hotel type setting, rooms should be assigned as follows:

1. Children/youth should be assigned with at least two children/youth per room.
2. Assignments should be made so that an adult room is between two children/youth rooms. Whenever not feasible, the adult room should be adjacent to the child/youth rooms.
3. Two Adults of the same gender as those being checked should make random monitoring hall trips and room checks at night.
4. A hotel should be selected where the rooms open to the interior of the building (i.e., do not open to the outside).

VII. Use of Church Facilities by Outside Groups

All outside groups that use church facilities, with or without a fee, that have children/youth under the age of 18, or have the potential to come into contact with children/youth under the age of 18 must: agree to operate in compliance with this Child/Youth Protection Policy and to ensure that all of their employees or volunteers have been trained on and agree to comply with this Policy; demonstrate that they enforce screening, safety, and supervision procedures that are consistent with this Policy. Such outside groups must provide documentation agreeing to this requirement. Having an officer of the group sign the Adoption statement of this Policy is acceptable. Church Trustees should monitor compliance in connection with any agreement to allow outside groups to use church space or facilities. Documentation should be maintained with other church records.

VIII. On-Line Safety

It is acknowledged that the use of computers and other electronic means of communications may be useful tools in supporting child and youth ministries. However, it should also be recognized that these forms of communication also potentially pose a unique risk.

- a. Church computers that are set up to permit guests or program participants to access the internet should be in high-traffic areas and be randomly monitored by staff or screened adults. Controls shall be in place to prevent access to inappropriate content.

- b. Church Personnel (as defined in Section I.B above) are prohibited from using the Internet, whether via church computers or personal devices, to view or download any sexually oriented materials on church property or in the presence of children/youth.
- c. Electronic communications with children/youth should be limited to information about program dates and activities and may be made only by group emails, the church's official website, or church's public Facebook page, or other social media platforms, of which the parents are aware and have given consent or can access publicly. One-to-one communication with children/youth is prohibited. If there are extenuating circumstances that require one-to-one communication with a child/youth, the communication must be made via email or text, on which the parent or legal guardian is copied. (See Consent Form for Electronic Communications with Children/Youth – Appendix X) If copying a parent is inappropriate, any non-group communication must also be copied to a member of the pastoral staff (or his/her designee for such communications). All communications with children/youth and parents must comply with the Ministry's code of conduct and all applicable policies.
- d. Church Personnel may not "friend" or otherwise initiate or accept one-on-one connections with any unrelated youth/child on Facebook, or similar social media site or platform, or "tag" any photograph of a participating child/youth on Facebook.
- e. Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from taking photographs or videos of youth at Ministry functions and/or posting them anywhere online, including on the Ministry's website, social networking sites, or on the staff member's private social networking sites unless a liability waiver/permission form has been signed by the parents and the staff member(s) has/have been authorized by the Ministry to do so.
- f. Nursery, preschool, and elementary school workers (up through 5th grade) are prohibited from taking any photos or videos of children in any ministry capacity, for any reason, without the written consent of the parents and consent of the administration.
- g. (See the Photo Permission Form in Appendix IX)
- h. If written permission to take and/or post photos has been provided, no personally identifiable information of participating children/youth may be posted on line or on any social media site. Refrain from using names and do not post a last name, address, or phone number when posting photos.

IX. Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

Florida Statute 39.201, entitled "Mandatory Reports" requires EVERY person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse, abandonment, or neglect by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare to report such knowledge to the central abuse hotline.

While the statute is limited to situations involving abuse by a parent, custodian, caregiver or other persons responsible for a child's welfare, the moral imperative to protect children extends to other situations where abuse is suspected. Suspected abuse within the context of a church day school or pre-school does fall within the description of the Florida Statute and a report is required.

The following policy applies whenever child abuse, abandonment, or neglect is suspected or observed by any ministry worker:

- a. Immediately, yet with dignity and respect for the sacred worth of the accused, remove the accused from further involvement with children and/or youth. Once the proper authorities have been contacted and the safety of the child or youth is secured, the appointed clergy or other designated persons may, if appropriate, inform the accused that abuse has been reported. **NOTE:** Follow the advice of the investigating authorities regarding whether the accused may be notified of the allegations.
- b. If abuse is observed by, disclosed to, or suspected by a volunteer and/or paid staff person of the church,

the observer shall report the incident immediately to the appointed clergy or supply pastors. If the clergy/pastor also believes reasonable suspicion of abuse exists, the worker and the clergy/pastor will contact the legal authorities together, thus fulfilling the mandated reporting obligation of both parties. If the clergy/pastor does not believe reasonable suspicion of abuse exists and determines that the incident does not need to be reported, the worker who first raised the concern is still legally required to report the situation if he or she still believes reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect exists; reporting to the clergy/pastor does NOT absolve the worker of his or her mandatory reporting obligation. . If the appointed clergy or supply pastors are not available, the matter should be reported to the Executive Board Chairperson, and the same process applies.

- c. If the accused is the appointed clergy or supply pastor or a member of her/his family, the allegations shall be immediately reported to the Executive Board Chairperson and immediately reported to the proper authorities in accordance with the policy in b above and as required by state or local law. If the Executive Board Chairperson is not available the matter should be immediately reported to a member of the Executive Board and immediately to the proper authorities in accordance with the policy in b above and as required by state or local law.
- d. Notify the parents of the victim and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety and well-being of the child or youth until the parent(s) arrive. **NOTE:** If one or both of the parents is the alleged abuser, follow the advice of the authorities concerning notification of others.
- e. Take all allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Show care and support to help prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the **first** priority. Respond in a positive and supportive manner to the victim and the victim's family.
- f. The church should provide a supportive atmosphere to all those who are affected, offering both objectivity and empathy as it seeks to create a climate in which healing can take place.
- g. After having reported the suspected abuse to the proper authorities, the appointed clergy or supply pastors should report the incident immediately to the Executive Board. Keep a written report of the steps taken by the Church in response to the reported abuse. (See Form VII). The report should be brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation. It should be kept in a secure place. It should be written in ink or typed to prevent it from being changed.
- h. Church Personnel are not to undertake an investigation of the incident. In all cases of reported or observed abuse, they should be at the service of the official investigating agency and law enforcement.
- i. Any contact with the media should be handled by a **pre-determined** spokesperson selected by the appointed clergy and supply pastors. The church spokesperson should generally convey a spirit of concern for the spiritual, physical, and emotional wellbeing of all who are affected, and that the matter is being diligently and appropriately handled.

NOTE: The question that sometimes arises is: What about a "confidential communication" with a clergy person?

Florida law (FS 90.505) provides that some specific communications may be considered confidential if they occurred in the context of "seeking spiritual counsel or advice" from a clergy person. Thus a clergy person may be confronted with the dilemma of discovering or suspecting abuse in the setting of a privileged conversation. While the church has historically placed a high value on clergy keeping such confidences, Saint Paul's Community Church of Eau Gallie provides an exception in cases of suspected child abuse or neglect.

In the process of implementing or interpreting this CYPP, err at all times on the side of protecting children/youth. The moral imperative is to do that which will best protect children/youth.

X. Implementation

Unless otherwise specifically stated, it shall be the responsibility of the Executive Board to implement this Policy, to ensure that training pursuant to this policy is conducted at least annually, and to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of this Policy.

XI. Application

All of those who participate in the life of this congregation and use its facilities – individuals, organizations, and groups within and outside this congregation -- are required to respect, implement, and adhere to these provisions as a minimum.

Adoption

This Child and Youth Protection Policy is adopted by action of the Executive Board of the Highland Avenue Fellowship Church this _____ day of _____, 20__.

Appointed Clergy

Executive Board Chair

**APPENDIX I
CHILD/YOUTH PROTECTION WORKER APPLICATION**

Full Name: _____

Home Address: _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Occupation: _____

Employer: _____

Current Job Responsibilities: _____

Previous Experience with Children/youth: _____

Special Interests, Hobbies, Skills: _____

Availability to Work? (Check One or More)

Days: _____ Evenings: _____ Weekends: _____

Can You Make a One-Year Commitment? Yes or No

Do You Have Your Own Transportation? Yes or No

Do You Have a Valid Driver's License? Yes or No; If Yes Please Provide Your License Number:

Initial here that we have your permission to check and obtain a report of your driving record and to share that information with those persons who will act on this Application?

_____ Yes No _____ Initials _____ Date initialed: _____

Why Do You Want To Work With Children/Youth? _____

What Gifts, Education, Training, or Interests Do You Have That Would Help You Work With Children/Youth?

What are your views on appropriate ways to discipline?

Have you ever been charged with, convicted of, or plead guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony (including but not limited to drug-related charges, child abuse, or other crimes of violence, theft or serious motor vehicle violations)?

Yes or No

If "Yes" explain:

Have you ever had to deal with a child abuse situation in any way, including being abused, being accused of abuse, knowing someone who was abused, etc.? Yes or No

If Yes, please explain: _____

If Yes, what was your role: _____

References: Please list three personal references (i.e., people who are not related to you by blood or marriage) and provide a complete address and phone number for each.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

Relationship to Applicant: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

Relationship to Applicant: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

Relationship to Applicant: _____

Do we have your permission to contact these references as well as anyone else in order to obtain information about you for the purpose of considering you for a position of one who would work with children and / or youth? _____ Yes
No _____

Do we have your permission to share this information with those persons who will participate in acting on this Application? _____ Yes No _____

Date: _____

Signature of Applicant

APPENDIX II INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

There are a number of interview questions that can help in determining the motives behind why people want to work with children. Other questions can help to identify traits often found in child abusers. By asking questions, keeping notes and sharing your concerns and thoughts with other interviewers you may be able to screen-out potential abusers in the early stages of the pre-employment process.

- Tell me about yourself. This begins the interview with less threatening, open-ended questions. It allows the candidate some control in what he/she wants to share. They often reveal information in response to this question that you could not or would not think to ask.

- Summarize your employment history. Look for frequent moves, gaps in employment, and reasons for termination.

- Tell me about your experiences with children. Have you worked or volunteered for other youth serving organizations? Watch for adults whose lives seem to revolve around spending time with children.

- Share with me a favorite family memory. Adults raised in abusive households may have issues that they haven't dealt with. The majority of abusers have been abused as a child.

- What strengths can you bring to this job?

- Why do you want to work with children? Once again, watch the candidate who is too child focused or those who want to work with children because they are "pure", "innocent", "trusting", "non-judgmental", "clean", etc. Adults should want to work with children because they have something to offer children. Beware of the adult who wants to work with children because children meet the adult's needs for control, love, or affection.

- What do you do in your spare (leisure) time? What are your hobbies or interests? Watch for those who prefer to spend their free time with children and those whose hobbies are more appealing to children than they are to most adults (i.e., video games, photography, models, magic, etc.).

- What ages of children do you prefer to work with? Child sexual abusers generally have a specific age they prefer. Does the candidate indicate a preference for sex, age, certain traits?

- Do you have any reservations about working with children of different ages? Same as above.

- Do you think there are any reasons to treat boys and girls differently? Listen closely to their reasons or rationale. Does it feel right?

- How were you disciplined as a child? How did you feel about this way? Watch for families that used physical punishment as a method to resolve problems. Does the candidate have unresolved issues related to their upbringing or do they condone this type of discipline?

- What do you consider acceptable discipline? Watch for the adult who needs to control or those with positive attitudes toward corporal punishment. Listen for signs that the candidate may use psychological abuse to punish. Does their response indicate that they lack respect for children's thoughts and feelings?
- How do you tend to deal with stress? Can the candidate recognize when they are under stress? Do they have a plan for dealing with it? Is it acceptable? What makes you angry? How do you deal with anger? Same as above.
- If you saw another teacher/staff/volunteer, one you liked and respected, strike a child, what would you do? Make sure at some point the candidate plans to tell a supervisor.
- Have you ever been reprimanded at work? For what? Was the reprimand related to their ability to deal with children?
- Who are your best friends? Adult's best friends should be other adults.
- Do you relate better with adults or with children? Why? Be cautious of anyone who relates better to children than adults.
- How would you react to any accusation of child abuse? Watch for a comfort level, a reasonable response, a panic look, a carefully thought out manipulative response.
- What would you do if a child told you a secret? Make sure the candidate does not make a promise not to tell.
- What would you do if a child asked you a question about sex? Is the candidate comfortable with the topic? Do they share only what the child is asking?
- Ask other "what if questions. Watch for a candidate whose responses are consistent with the church's philosophy, who asks other staff for help and support; one who is a team player. Note how quickly they resort to punitive punishment and how realistic or honest the responses are.
- Ask other interview questions pertinent to the position you're interviewing for.

Be cautious of candidates who seem overly anxious to be hired, those who seem "too smooth" and those who try to take over the interview.

**APPENDIX III
REFERENCE CHECK**

Applicant name: _____

Reference name: _____

What is your relationship to the applicant? _____

How long have you known the applicant? _____

How well do you know the applicant? _____

How would you describe the applicant? _____

How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to children/youth?

How would you describe the applicant's leadership abilities? _____

How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to adults? _____

How would you feel about having the applicant as a volunteer worker with your child and/or youth? _____

Do you know of any characteristics that would negatively affect the applicant's ability to work with children or youth? If so, please describe.

Do you have any knowledge that the applicant has ever been charged with or convicted of a crime? If so, please describe. _____

Please list the names of other people you feel it would be beneficial for us to contact before making a decision on whether or not the Applicant should work with children or youth and please indicate a means of contacting them.

Please list any other comments you would like to make:

Reference inquiry completed by: _____
Signature Date

Thank you very much for your response!
You may return this form to:

APPENDIX IV
AUTHORIZATION AND REQUEST FOR CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK

I, _____, HEREBY AUTHORIZE Highland Avenue Fellowship Church to request any local, state or federal law enforcement department or agency to release information regarding any record of any investigations, charges or convictions contained in its files, or in any criminal file maintained on me, whether said file is a local, state, or national file, and including but not limited to accusations and convictions for crimes committed, against minors, to the fullest extent permitted by local, state and federal law. I release any and all law enforcement departments, agencies, and their employees from all liability that may result from any such disclosure made in response to this request. I also give my permission for this information to be shared with those persons who will participate in making decisions with respect to my application.

You are authorized to rely upon a photocopy or fax copy of this document.

Signature of Applicant Date

Print applicant's full name: _____
Print all other names that have been used by applicant (if any):

Date of birth: _____

Place of birth: _____

Social Security number: _____

Driver's license number: _____

State in which license was issued: _____

License expiration date: _____

Request sent to: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

APPENDIX V
PARTICIPATION COVENANT STATEMENT

The congregation of Highland Avenue Fellowship Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statement reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

No adult who has been convicted of or has pled guilty or *nolo contendere* to child abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse), neglect, or abandonment may work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity.

All adults involved with children or youth of our church must have been active participants of the congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment.

All adults involved with children and youth of our church shall observe the Child Protection Policy at all times.

All adults involved with children and youth of our church shall attend regular training and educational events provided by the church to keep volunteers informed of church policies and laws regarding child abuse.

All adults involved with children and youth of our church shall immediately report to their supervisor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

Please answer each of the following question:

Do you agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children and youth? Yes No

I have read this Participation Covenant, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

Signature of Applicant

Date

APPENDIX VI
HIGHLAND AVENUE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH
PARENTAL CONSENT AND MEDICAL AUTHORIZATION

Name of child/youth: _____ Grade: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____
Street/Apt Number City Zip code

Daytime Phone Number: _____ Evening Phone Number: _____

As the parent (or legal guardian) of: _____
Child/Youth's Name

I understand that my child/youth will be participating in a number of activities for the calendar year ____, which carry with them a certain degree of risk. Some of the activities are swimming, boating, hiking, camping, field trips, sports and other activities which the church may offer. I consent for my child to participate in these activities.

Please indicate any restrictions on your child's/youth/s activities:

_____ I represent that my child/youth is physically fit and has the necessary skills to safely participate in these activities.

_____ I represent that my child/youth has restrictions on the following particular activities:

_____ I also understand and give consent for my child to travel to and from these events in transportation provided by volunteer drivers.

Allergies or other health considerations:

Insurance Company: _____ Policy/Group # _____

MEDICAL TREATMENT AUTHORIZATION AND LIABILITY RELEASE

I HEREBY GIVE PERMISSION FOR THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR MY CHILD AT THE MINISTRY TO AUTHORIZE MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR MY CHILD IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY, INCLUDING TO ADMINISTER EPINEPHRINE. I

understand that, although certain volunteers and/or other workers have been familiarized with allergies, anaphylaxis, and epinephrine administration, these individuals are not medically trained personnel and do not have professional training or experience in meeting the needs of children with such allergies or to identify symptoms or signs that the student is in distress or may need emergency medical treatment.

In potential emergencies requiring immediate medical attention, I understand that my child will be taken to the nearest hospital emergency room. My signature below authorizes the responsible

person at the Ministry to have my child transported to and treated at that hospital. It also authorizes the Ministry personnel to contact my child's allergy physician or primary care physician in the event of an emergency. I AGREE to pay all costs associated with my child's emergency care.

In consideration of my child being permitted to participate in the event(s) described above and other valuable consideration the receipt of which is acknowledged, I hereby **AGREE TO RELEASE, DEFEND, INDEMNIFY, AND HOLD HARMLESS THE MINISTRY** and its agents and employees from any and all past, present, future, known and unknown liabilities, actions, causes of action, claims, expenses, personal injuries, and damages, **INCLUDING THOSE CAUSED BY THE NEGLIGENCE OR FAULT OF THE MINISTRY, ITS LEADERS, EMPLOYEES, OR VOLUNTEERS**, and including, without limitation, interest, penalties, court costs, attorney's fees, and expenses resulting from or on account of injury to my child, myself, or my property in connection with any medical care provided to my child. I **FURTHER RELEASE** any and all claims brought by or through me, including claims for loss of consortium and all similar claims based on relationships with other people. I expressly agree that this release, waiver, and indemnity agreement is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted in the State of Florida and that if any portion hereof is held invalid, it is agreed that the remainder shall, notwithstanding, continue in full legal force and effect.

I ALSO AGREE that any controversy or claim, by or through me, arising out of or relating to the care anticipated by this form shall be settled by binding Christian arbitration conducted by the National Center for Life and Liberty or another Christian arbitrator, and judgment on the award may be entered in any court having jurisdiction thereof. This release contains the entire agreement between the parties hereto and the terms of this release are contractual and not mere recitals.

I FURTHER STATE that I have carefully read the foregoing release and know the contents thereof, and I sign this release as my own free act. This is a legally binding agreement which I have read and understand.

Signature of Parent or Guardian _____

Notary Stamp/Seal, Date and Signature _____

APPENDIX VII
Child\Youth Protection Incident Report Form

Reason for report: _____

Date of incident: _____ Time: _____

Place of incident: _____

Name of reporter: _____ Title: _____

Name(s) of Child(ren)/Youth: _____ Age(s): _____

Briefly describe what happened:

Were there any witnesses? ____ Yes No ____ If Yes, list.

What action did you take?

Has the incident been resolved? ____ Yes ____ No Explain:

Have the following people been notified?

Pastor	_____	Bishop's Office	_____
Parent	_____	Police	_____
SPRC Chairperson	_____	Sheriff	_____
District Superintendent	_____	Other	_____

Signature of reporter: _____ Date: _____

Report submitted to: _____

Appendix VIII
Emergency Contact Information

Appointed clergy and supply pastors: _____

Chairperson of Executive Board:

Director of Youth Ministries: _____

City of Melbourne Police Department: _____

Brevard County Sheriff's Department: _____

County Child Abuse Reporting: _____

Florida Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-96 ABUSE (1-800-962-2873)

Appendix IX
Photo Permission FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH and ADULTS
OF Highland Avenue Fellowship Church
1591 Highland Avenue
Melbourne, Florida 32935

I give permission for still or video pictures of my child to be used for promotional purposes.

I do not give permission for still or video pictures of my child to be used for promotional purposes.

Signature of **PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF CHILD/YOUTH (if under 18 years of age)**

I give permission for still or video pictures of myself to be used for promotional purposes.

I do not give permission for still or video pictures of myself to be used for promotional purposes.

Signature of **ADULT (if 18 years of age or older)**

Appendix X
Consent Form for Electronic Communications with Children/Youth
Highland Avenue Fellowship Church
1591 Highland Avenue
Melbourne, Florida 32935

My child, _____ (“Participant”), has my permission to receive communications from _____ Highland Avenue Fellowship Church Youth Leadership. I understand that such electronic communications may be made via telephone, cell phone, text messaging, e-mail, the Church’s social media accounts, or other electronic means.

Please note: By providing the email address and/or cell phone number of a minor Participant, the parent or guardian grants permission for electronic communication from the group leader to the Participant in regards to all group activities in which Participant participates.

Participant’s e-mail: _____

Participant’s cell phone: _____

I do/do not [**circle**] insist that I be copied on all emails.

I do/do not [**circle**] insist that I be copied on all texts or messaging.

I do/do not [**circle**] insist that those permitted to communicate with my child become my friend on Facebook before communicating with my child.

I further understand that Children and Youth Ministries will use the Internet as an aid in teaching lessons including, but not limited to: Sunday School, Children’s Church, Kids 4 Christ, and Living Light. All computers accessible to Children and Youth have parental controls in place.

I understand it is my responsibility to update the information below if it changes.

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

Telephone: _____ **Parent/Guardian Cell Phone:** _____

Parent/Guardian E-Mail: _____

Parent/Guardian Facebook Name: _____

Date: _____

Appendix XI Disqualifying Convictions/Arrests

FS 435.04., which applies only to employment by a licensed child care facility, provides useful guidelines regarding the offenses which should disqualify a paid staff person or volunteer from working with children/youth in other non-licensed settings. The list of disqualifying offenses under FS 435.04 includes the following:

1. Any offenses listed in s. 943.0435 (1) (a) 1, relating to the registration of the individual as a sexual offender.
2. Section 393.135, relating to sexual misconduct with certain developmentally disabled clients and the reporting of such sexual misconduct.
3. Section 394.4593, relating to sexual misconduct with certain mental health patients and the reporting of such sexual misconduct.
4. Section 775.30, relating to terrorism.
5. Section 782.04, relating to murder.
6. Section 787.01, relating to kidnapping.
7. Any offense under Chapter 800, relating to lewdness and indecent exposure.
8. Section 826.04, relating to incest.
9. Section 827.03, relating to child abuse, aggravated child abuse, or neglect of a child.

Conviction or pleading guilty or *nolo contendere* to any of the offenses listed above (or to similar offenses under the law of any other jurisdiction) shall disqualify an individual from a position involving working with children/youth. Conviction or pleading guilty or *nolo contendere* to any other felony offense or to criminal conduct involving minors under Florida law or any similar statute of another jurisdiction should be seriously considered as a factor that would disqualify an individual from employment or serving as a volunteer in a position involving work with children/youth.

Anyone whose background check indicates a pending arrest for any offense listed above shall not be approved to work with children/youth unless and until the arrest has been resolved in such a way that does not result in a conviction or plea of guilty or *nolo contendere*.

**HIGHLAND AVENUE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH
CHILD/YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY**

- 3/26/2023
Change “Elder” to Executive”-entire document