



Child Protection Policy

No. 500.05

Bethesda Mission is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for children and youth participating in Mission activities. The Mission seeks to minimize any vulnerability to unwarranted accusations of improper behavior that our organization, volunteers, and employees may experience as they fulfill their Mission duties. To fulfill these commitments as fully as possible, Bethesda Mission has adopted the following procedures to be used, without exception, when selecting ministry volunteers and new employees.

EMPLOYEE AND VOLUNTEER SCREENING PROCEDURES

Employees

A background and identity check, including criminal background and child abuse clearances, will be conducted on all final candidates seeking a position that involves working with children or youth. When indicated by reference and/or background checks, candidates who pose a threat to others, or have a prior history of physical or sexual abuse directed against another person, will be removed immediately from consideration for employment at Bethesda Mission.

Volunteers

All individual candidates seeking a volunteer position that involves working with children or youth will complete and return an initial ministry application. The Volunteer Coordinator will carefully review the application, ensuring that the candidate is an appropriate match for the ministry position.

If the individual appears to be an appropriate candidate, the Volunteer Coordinator will check at least two references to confirm the information that the candidate provided on the application. A background and identity check, including criminal background and child abuse clearances, will be conducted on all candidates seeking a volunteer position that involves working with children or youth. When indicated by our reference and/or background checks, candidates who pose a threat to others, or have a prior history of physical or sexual abuse directed against another person, will be removed immediately from consideration as a volunteer at Bethesda Mission.

For volunteer groups (i.e., from churches, civic groups, employers, etc.), a group leader will be required to complete a group application on behalf of all the group members. The application will include a list of all possible volunteers and their complete name, and all group volunteers working at the Youth Center or Women and Children's Shelter will be checked against the Pennsylvania State Police Megan's Law register. The group leader will be asked to certify that to their knowledge there are no participants who pose a threat to others, or have a known prior history of abuse directed against another person.

GUIDELINES

Counseling

The opportunity for staff, volunteers, or guests to share private and personal concerns with another staff, volunteer or guest contributes significantly to a person's spiritual, emotional and physical well being. Such private conversations are an integral part of a caring and loving Christian ministry. On the other hand, such private conversations create a high-risk environment for potential abuse situations to arise or for false allegations to be made. A proper balance is difficult to achieve with any set of policies or guidelines, especially given the variety of circumstances and relationships that may exist.

Therefore, before engaging in a private conversation or activity with another person, whether child, youth or adult, every staff member or volunteer engaged in ministry should weigh and balance the following considerations:

- Private conversations can be conducted more safely in public and populated locations. If possible, all conversations should be conducted in a public place, easily accessible to others.
- If the conversation does not involve confidential matters, but is generally small talk, it is not necessary to be alone in a private location.
- Be sure there is a good, healthy relationship with the other person. Private conversations and meetings should be avoided if any romantic interest starts to develop.
- Private meetings and conversations with members of the opposite gender are more prone to abuse and the appearance of impropriety. At no time should a male adult meet alone with a female child or youth, or a female adult meet alone with a male child or youth. It is recommended that one-on-one meetings between adults and young people should be between people of the same gender and take place in a public location.
- Consider the emotional stability and maturity of the individual. If lacking, private meetings with that person may be dangerous because such individuals may create the highest risk of false accusations.

Work Restrictions

- For children age 6 or older, at least one adult female should take girls to the restroom, and one adult male should take boys to the restroom. The adult should check to make sure the facility is safe and then wait outside the restroom for the children. The presence of a second adult is also recommended.
- Children age 5 or younger (boys and girls) should be assisted as needed in the restroom by an adult female.

- Never touch a person's private areas except when necessary, as in the case of changing a diaper.
- Workers should avoid the appearance of impropriety--such as sitting older children on their lap, kissing, or embracing others, etc.
- When an employee or volunteer transports children via a Mission vehicle or private vehicle for Mission-related activities, there should be at least one screened adult in addition to the screened worker driving the vehicle.

Discipline

- Workers are never to spank, hit, grab, shake, or otherwise physically discipline anyone on Mission premises or at off-site Mission-sponsored events. Physical restraint should only be used in a situation where it is reasonably necessary to prevent an individual from physically harming himself or another individual.
- If a child or youth disrupts a Mission program, a variety of responses may be utilized including a verbal warning, prayer with the disruptive child, discussion with the parents or caregivers, removal of the child, or suspension from the program.

Injuries or Illnesses

- Persons who are ill (with a fever, or a communicable disease that can be transmitted by cough or by touch) will not be permitted to participate in any Mission activities.
- A screened worker must be used to take the place of an employee who is ill.
- Participants should be returned to their parent or guardian as soon as illness is discovered. If immediate return is not possible, then the person who is ill should be isolated in a manner that allows an adult worker to monitor the participant until he/she can be returned to a parent or guardian.
- Take reasonable steps to avoid contact with blood, saliva, or other bodily fluids.
- Mission workers who become aware of an injury to a worker or participant will take steps to ensure that proper medical attention is given to the injured person and provide for continued monitoring of the remaining activity participants.
- Persons who have received an injury that is obviously minor should be given first aid as needed at the time of injury. The individual's parents or guardians should be notified of the injury when they pick up the injured person.
- Any injury that may require medical treatment beyond simple first aid should be given immediate attention. The parents or guardians of the injured person should be notified immediately, along with the ministry director. If warranted by the injury, emergency medical personnel should be called.

Recordkeeping

- All Mission functions involving children or youth should maintain an attendance list for every function. Record the date of the function, along with the names of all participants, volunteers and employees.
- Mission workers should prepare a written Notice of Injury (Attachment 1) report whenever an injury occurs during a ministry function and promptly forward to the ministry director.

NOTICE OF INJURY, ABUSE OR MOLESTATION

Bethesda Mission will take all allegations of abuse or molestation seriously and will promptly and thoroughly investigate whether abuse or molestation has taken place. The Mission is committed to reporting suspected abuse and to following God's leading in ministering to the needs of the child as well as the family. Staff will work cooperatively with Children and Youth Services by making Children and Youth Services aware of resources within our ministry as appropriate and to help staff as well as families to view Children and Youth Services as an ally rather than as an adversary to help the family and child.

To maintain confidentiality, the identity of the perpetrator, victim and family should not be disclosed to anyone other than staff members involved in the decision to report the abuse or those directly involved in ministering to the family.

When suspected abuse has been reported to Children and Youth Services, care will be taken not to interfere with any investigation by Children and Youth Services and law enforcement officials.

Whenever an allegation of abuse comes to the attention of a staff member, an incident report will be completed and careful documentation will be made of all steps taken in these situations. The report, along with any report to Children and Youth Services, will be kept in a locked file cabinet under the supervision of the Executive Director or his designated staff.

Whenever possible abuse situations by a staff member, volunteer, Board member or third party are reported, contact will be made with the Mission's insurance carrier representative and legal counsel to inform them of the situation.

The following are steps to report situations of possible abuse not involving ministry volunteers or staff persons (e.g., family member):

- Whenever the question of abuse comes to the attention of a staff member or volunteer, that person will immediately report it to the ministry director, or Program Director.

- The ministry director or Program Director will evaluate the situation, and when there is a determination of suspected or actual abuse, the circumstances will be reported immediately by calling Childline (1-800-932-0313) or Children and Youth Services. A written report must be submitted to Children and Youth Services within 48 hours of the oral report.
- Depending on the circumstances, efforts will be made to notify the appropriate parent(s) or guardian(s) of the contact with Children and Youth Services.

The following are steps to report an allegation of abuse involving a ministry staff or volunteer:

- The allegation will be taken seriously and evaluated by the ministry director, Program Director, Human Resources Manager and/or Executive Director. Consultation with legal counsel prior to taking any action will be obtained.
- The ministry director, Program Director, Human Resources Manager, and/or Executive Director will evaluate the situation, and when there is a determination of suspected or actual abuse, the circumstances will be reported immediately by calling Childline (1-800-932-0313) or Children and Youth Services. A written report must be submitted to Children and Youth Services within 48 hours of the oral report.
- Depending on the circumstances, efforts will be made to notify the appropriate parent(s) or guardian(s) of the contact with Children and Youth Services.
- An employee who is the subject of the investigation will be removed from their position, with pay, until the investigation is completed.
- A volunteer who is the subject of investigation will be removed from their position pending completion of the investigation.

RETALIATION

The Mission prohibits retaliation made against any employee, volunteer, Board member, or guest who reports a good faith complaint of child or sexual abuse or who participates in any related investigation.

FALSE ACCUSATIONS

Making false accusations of child or sexual abuse in bad faith can have serious consequences for those who are wrongly accused. The Mission prohibits making false and/or malicious sexual abuse allegations, as well as deliberately providing false information during an investigation. Anyone who violates this rule is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

MEDIA POLICY

In the event of media inquiries of any alleged child or sexual abuse, only persons designated in Administration Directive 500.03 - Media Relations are authorized to communicate with the media on behalf of the Mission. The designated spokesperson(s) should be prepared to provide information concerning the Mission's policy for the protection of children, the Mission's concern for the safety of the victim and all children, the procedures the Mission has followed to reduce the risk of abuse to children and to minister to families involved in abuse situations. Care should be given to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.

AUDITS

The Human Resources Manager will conduct periodic audits of employee and volunteer records to ensure that the policy is correctly administered.

DEFINITIONS

Children and Youth. Anyone between the ages of zero and 18 years.

Child abuse. Harm or threatened harm to the health or welfare of a child or youth which occurs through non-accidental physical, emotional, spiritual, or mental injury.

Emotional abuse. Threats, critical words, demeaning terms or names, depriving a child of any sign of affection, or other similar spoken or unspoken emotional cruelty. Conveys a message that the child is worthless and undeserving of love and care.

Employee or Staff. Any person serving at Bethesda Mission in an official, paid capacity. This definition also includes those who serve as interns even if they work without compensation.

Physical abuse. Intentional, deliberate behavior that causes bodily harm to a child. It can take several forms, including assault, shaking, kicking, choking, bone fractures--non-accidental injuries, in general.

Public Locations. A place where there is no expectation of privacy, where the general public may be present, including all portions of Bethesda Mission facilities during the hours when people are generally present and meetings are scheduled.

Sexual abuse. Any sexual contact between a child and an adult (or older, more powerful youth).

Volunteers. Any person who performs supportive activities at any of our locations. These activities may include, but are not limited to, babysitting at the Women's Shelter, cooking, cleaning, assisting at Youth Center activities, soup line help, devotions, or teaching classes.



**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY
ADMINISTRATION DIRECTIVE 500.05**

**POLICY RECEIPT
AND
UNDERSTANDING ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

I acknowledge that I have received and read Administration Directive 500.05 Child Protection Policy and understand or have sought understanding of its content. I understand that Bethesda Mission will prohibit any person thought to present a potential threat to children or youth from working with any minors in Bethesda Mission youth programs. Immediate disciplinary actions will be taken against anyone in acts that violate this policy.

I understand that it is my responsibility to abide by all rules contained in the policy. I understand how to report incidents of injury, abuse or molestation as set forth in the policy.

Printed Name

Employee or Volunteer Signature

Date

NOTICE OF INJURY

Time and Place of Injury	Date of Injury	<input type="checkbox"/> A.M. <input type="checkbox"/> P.M.
	Where did the injury occur?	
Person Injured	Name	Age
	Address	Telephone
	Name of parents/guardian (if a minor)	
	Injuries sustained:	
	Where was injured taken? (hospital/doctor):	
	Relationship to organization: <input type="checkbox"/> Visitor <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Program Participant <input type="checkbox"/> Shelter Guest <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
	If injury occurred on insured's premises, for what purpose was the injured on the premises?	
	If injury occurred elsewhere, what connection did injured have with the insured's operations or activities?	
	Does the injured party have personal medical insurance that could apply? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
	Name of medical insurance company:	
Full Description of Incident		
Witnesses	Name	Telephone
	Address	
	Name	Telephone
	Address	
Mission Worker Signature		Date