

# KIDS SAFE

## *Policy and Guidelines of the Quail Springs Church of Christ to Ensure the Safety and Well Being of Our Children*

### **Policy #1 Ongoing Supervision of the Child Safety Program**

The Eldership, upon recommendation from the Sr. Minister, will appoint one person to supervise the child safety program. This program shall govern all church activities that involve custody and/or supervision of children and teens less than 18 years of age.

#### **1.1 Review of Safety Program**

Each coordinator will review compliance with safety policies and potential risks annually in a brief written report that will be given to the person responsible for the child safety program. The reports should include:

- *A listing of any new programs or program changes and the additional risks these changes may incur.*
- *A brief summary of policy violations and the program leader's response to these violations. Any patterns of violations that suggest policy changes are needed should be identified.*

The supervisor will summarize the reports received from coordinators per incident and submit an overall report to the Eldership.

#### **1.2 Waiver of Policies**

Church policies may be waived occasionally for exceptional circumstances. The goal of Quail Springs Church of Christ is to promote safety while maintaining practical flexibility in children's and youth ministry. Waiving of "Kids Safe Program" policies will only be authorized, on an ad hoc basis, by the Quail Springs Church of Christ Eldership.

#### **1.3 Modification of Policies**

Changes in these policies must be approved by the Quail Springs Church of Christ Eldership. These policies may be modified or

withdrawn by Quail Springs Church of Christ at any time. These policies are not intended to create an implied or express contract with any person. They are not intended to create a legally enforceable or binding promise or representation. They are merely an attempt to articulate standards and protocols.

#### **1.4 Activities Covered by These Policies**

All activities of Quail Springs Church of Christ that require church workers acting within the scope of their duties to have custody, care or supervision of persons less than 18 years of age shall follow these policies.

Quail Springs Church of Christ interprets the above guideline to mean that the following activities of the church as of this date, September 1, 1998, must observe these policies: NURSERY, PRESCHOOL, ELEMENTARY, AND ALL ASSOCIATED CHILDREN'S MINISTRY ACTIVITIES, YOUTH MINISTRY, INCLUDING MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL, ETC.

This policy does not apply to the following programs: any groups or organizations not affiliated with Quail Springs Church of Christ or not directly under the Eldership of Quail Springs Church of Christ.

*"Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. "*

*Jesus Christ  
Matt 19:14*

### **Policy #2 Operating Policies for all Children's and Youth Ministries**

#### **2.1 Statement of Purpose**

As a church, we believe that the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of children is vital. This policy is intended to ensure that church activities involving children are consistent with the teachings and example of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the Christian tradition of nurturing vulnerable children.

The primary purpose of this policy is to promote the safety and well-being of children and youth by providing clear instructions about the operation of children's and youth ministries at Quail Springs Church of Christ. The leaders of Quail Springs Church of Christ sincerely request the cooperation of the adults in our church who must abide by the important guidelines of this policy.

#### **Child and Youth Safety Takes Priority**

The greatest priority of Quail Springs Church of Christ children's and youth programs is to help kids through the Gospel and ministry of Jesus Christ. It is obvious that any sexual exploitation, abuse, or endangerment directly contradicts this priority and the values of Quail Springs Church of Christ.

Workers and supervisors who oversee youth workers must keep this priority in mind: adults do not have a right to serve as workers. Adults merely have a privilege to serve when selected by the church. This means that workers should err on the side of caution as they make subjective decisions involving the well-being of children and youth.

## A Higher Standard

As ambassadors of Jesus Christ, we must strive to be worthy of a very high standard of trust. For this reason, every worker at Quail Springs Church of Christ must avoid even the **appearance** of inappropriate behavior. All workers must diligently avoid any conduct that appears wrong to a reasonable observer, even if no actual misconduct takes place.

## Policy Standards and General Christian Moral Standards

Workers in children's and youth ministry are expected to observe these policies and guidelines as well as the other Christian standards of moral behavior.

## 2.2 Supervision of Children's and Youth Ministry Workers

### Adequate Supervision of Youth Workers

Church staff and volunteers who supervise children and youth workers are charged with the diligent enforcement of these policies. Violation of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from children or youth work for both volunteers and staff, at the discretion of the church.

Supervisors and all children and youth workers who suspect any unhealthy or abusive activities must discuss their suspicions promptly with the Children's Minister, Youth Minister or Senior Minister. An Incident Report is to be submitted within one week of the incident.

### Worker to Child Ratios

Quail Springs Church of Christ has a goal of maintaining **at least** 2 adult workers per classroom or scheduled event. The church recognizes that at different developmental levels, children may require a larger adult to child ratio. Those educational standards will be met to the best of the church's ability.

## 2.3 Touching Policy

We live in an age where child abuse is an unfortunate reality in our society. The church should deal with this issue as a "good shepherd" by taking steps to protect the children in our care. Quail Springs Church of Christ has implemented a touching policy that

will safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. The guidelines following are to be carefully followed by anyone working with children and youth.

- *Hugging, kisses and other forms of appropriate physical affection between workers and children are important for a child's development and are generally suitable in our church setting.*
- *Physical affection should be appropriate to the age of the child or youth. (For example, it is generally appropriate for a four-year-old to sit in a nursery worker's lap and give a kiss on the cheek, but it is not appropriate for a teenager and youth leader to behave this way.)*
- *Touching should be initiated by the child or youth. It should be a response to the child's need for comforting, encouragement, or affection. It should not be based upon the adult's emotional need.*
- *Touching and affection should only be given when in the presence of other children's ministry or youth workers. It is much less likely that touches will be inappropriate or misconstrued as such when two adult workers are present and the touching is open to observation. This rule is especially important when diapering a baby or helping a young child change clothes or use the restroom.*
- *Touching behavior should not give even the **appearance** of wrongdoing. As ministry workers our behavior must foster trust at all times; it should be above reproach. It is never appropriate to touch a child's private parts when showing affection.*
- *A child's preference not to be touched should be respected. Affection will not be forced upon a reluctant child.*
- *Church workers are responsible to protect children under their supervision from inappropriate touching by others.*
- *Church workers must promptly discuss any inappropriate touching or other-questionable behavior by other workers with their ministry leader, staff member, or an elder and/or fill out an Incident Report.*

## Policy #3 Worker Selection and Supervision

The following guidelines will be used as Quail Springs Church of Christ reviews applicants for positions in children's or youth ministry:

### 3.1 Minimum Age

All workers must be 18 years of age or older. Younger persons may assist adults, but they may not take the place of adult workers.

### 3.2 Confidential Interviews

All applicants must be interviewed for suitability for the work they desire to do. Interviews will be conducted by the leader of the program in which the applicant will work or by other persons designated by the program leader. The interview may be considered the contact with the coordinator at the time of volunteering either in person or by phone.

### 3.3 Three-Month Rule

Applicants must have been a member of Quail Springs Church of Christ (on the church role) for at least three months. This time of interaction between ministry leaders and the applicant allows leaders to better evaluate the suitability of an applicant for children and youth work. In some situations this rule is not feasible and may be waived on a basis of probation. If the three-month rule is waived, program leaders may take additional steps to screen the applicant at their own discretion.

### 3.4 Application Forms

Applicants must complete and sign an application and the related waivers giving permission to check references and background information.

### 3.5 Survivors of Child Abuse

Any applicant who is a survivor of childhood sexual or physical abuse needs the love and acceptance of the Quail Springs Church of Christ family. A person's experience with abuse and their recovery process may be pertinent to their suitability as youth and children's ministry workers. Applicants who are survivors of abuse should discuss this in confidence with the person who conducts the confidential interview. If an applicant is uncomfortable doing so, they may have the interview conducted by a minister.

When evaluating candidates, the following factors will be considered if an applicant is a survivor of child abuse:

- *whether the applicant has previously committed an act of child abuse or molestation (anyone who has mistreated children may not serve in children's or youth ministry)*
- *the extent of professional counseling the applicant has received*
- *the opinion of references, especially professional counselors who have served the applicant*
- *the opinion of leaders in other churches or youth organizations in which the applicant has been involved*
- *how closely the church is able to supervise and monitor the position for which the applicant is applying*

### 3.6 Screening Forms

Screening forms are required for all employees and volunteer workers applying for a position with the children's or youth programs.

### 3.7 Criminal Background Checks

Criminal background checks of applicants may also be done in situations deemed necessary by the director of the program in which the applicant is applying to work.

### 3.8 References

Church leaders will check **at least** two ref-

erences for each primary worker. The references will be done by phone, mail, or in person. Whenever possible, check three references and they should include: one person who has known the applicant well for an extended period of time or a former supervisor. For applicants for compensated positions, additional former supervisors may be checked.

The "Children's and Youth Worker Reference" form will be filled out by the person conducting the phone reference check.

### 3.9 Auto Safety

Persons who will drive vehicles used in conducting church business or transporting children on a regular basis must complete an "Auto Safety" form. A Motor Vehicle Record will also be obtained and kept on file.

### 3.10 Signatures on Guidelines

All applicants must agree by signature on their application that they understand the "Kids Safe Program" policies and guidelines and that they agree to abide by them, including amendments and/or revisions.

### 3.11 Confidentiality of Information

The church will keep confidential all information received in the applicant selection process. Selection information will be marked as such and stored with limited access afforded only to church staff and others with a need to know.

### 3.12 Delays in Receiving Information

While the church is waiting for background

information and references, applicants may begin working in contact with children. During this time, only closely supervised work should be done by the applicant. Failure to receive satisfactory responses in a timely manner may result in dismissal or withdrawal of the offer to work with the youth or children's ministry program.

### 3.13 Classification of Workers According to Their Duties

In order to screen workers appropriately to their responsibilities, Quail Springs Church of Christ will categorize workers into two categories: primary and secondary. Please note that the terms *primary* and *secondary* do not refer to the ages of children served, but rather to relative levels of responsibility and risk.

- **Primary workers**

*All paid stag employees, and volunteers in roles with greater responsibility or risk should be classified as primary workers and should meet the primary screening standards. Primary workers have greater interaction with and access to children, and more opportunity to harm children, so churches must take extra care in their screening.*

- **Secondary workers**

*Secondary workers are people who occasionally interact with minors and/or do so in less risky circumstances. For example, a volunteer who sees children only in a group setting, on church premises, and with a ministry leader present may be classified as a secondary worker. This category may include parents of participants who supervise activities.*