

Children & Young Persons Safety Policy

(Updated June 2023)

CHURCH DETAILS

Name: Zion Bishan Bible Presbyterian Church (hereafter, "The Church")
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PURPOSE

The Church recognizes the importance of its ministry to children and young people, and its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people committed to the Church's care. In fact, this is the responsibility of the whole Church. Everyone who participates in the life of the Church has a role to play in promoting a safer Church for all.

Care of children and young people is primarily provided by the Church's pastors, children and youth ministry staff, the Children's Discipleship teachers, Children's Discipleship assistant teachers, the Youth Disciple Ship (YD) leaders and other youth leaders (such the Youth Fellowship Committee and small group leaders).

This document sets out the safeguarding policy for children and young people. It serves to ensure that relationships between anyone and children and young people take place in a safe environment. All staff and volunteers involved in the Church's activities catering to children and youth are strictly required to adhere by the document's guidelines.

If you have any concern for a child or in relation to any child protection matter, please speak immediately to one of the pastors of the Church, the children/youth ministry staff, or the Safeguarding Team (contact details provided below).

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions are adopted:

<i>Child</i>	Any individual below the age of 13 including infants (aged 0 to 18 months) and toddlers (aged 18 months to 3 years)
<i>Young person</i>	Any individual below the age of 21
<i>Volunteer</i>	Individuals who of their own free will offer to help, lead or provide care for children and young people during the Church's activities. These do not include individuals who do not have direct interaction with a child or a young person (for example, an individual who is providing logistical assistance to a ministry is not included in this policy)
<i>Staff</i>	A paid employee of the Church (including the pastor, the ministry staff, the

	administrative staff and church interns)
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COMMITMENT OF VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF

Volunteers and Staff who have committed to serve in the children or youth ministry activities should comply by the following good practices:

Screening Procedures

1. Volunteers are interviewed by staff before engaging in work with children and young people.
2. Volunteers are to declare if they have any criminal record pertaining to children and young people. If volunteers are found to have criminal record pertaining to children and young people, the pastors and ministry staff should convene a meeting to discuss the nature of the past offence, how it may affect his/her service and reassess the volunteer's suitability for service.
3. Volunteers to be familiar with the Child and Young Person safety policy.

Presence of Two or More Volunteers

1. As far as possible, do not be alone with a child/young person where your activity cannot be seen. This may mean leaving the doors open in a room or informing another adult on the same premise that a meeting is taking place.
2. A minimum of two volunteers/staff is required to be present with a child or a group of children (aged 6 years and under). The only exception is when the activity takes place in a public place such as the fellowship hall, a coffee shop or a library.

Behaviour of Volunteers and Staff when Dealing with Children and Young People

1. All children and young people should be treated with respect and dignity appropriate for their age, watching the language, tone of voice and body language that is used in our interactions with them.
2. Learn to manage and discipline children and young people without resorting to physical punishment or verbal abuse. If you need to discipline a child or young person, do so apart from the group and not in front of everyone. Reject the behaviour, not the child/young person, and encourage the child/young person when you notice good behaviour. When you face challenges, do approach the ministry staff for support and guidance.
3. Restroom Use
 - a. Infants and toddlers: Diapers should be changed preferably by parents or caregivers. Should they not be available, a **female** volunteer/staff should do so in the presence of another volunteer

- b. Pre-school children: Preschoolers (aged 18 months to 7 years and are toilet trained) should be accompanied by a **female** volunteer to the toilet. The accompanying volunteer should wait at the door, and offer assistance to the child only after encouraging the child to handle as many of the processes herself/himself as possible. Another volunteer should be kept informed of the visit to the toilet.
 - c. Primary-school going children: Primary-school going children (aged 7 to 12) should find a buddy of the same gender to accompany him/her to the toilet. A volunteer or staff should be kept informed of the visit. If the children do not return after 10 min, volunteers should check in on the child.
- 4. Engage in safe and appropriate physical contact with children and young people such as:
 - a. Brief hugs
 - b. Pats on shoulders or back
 - c. Handshakes
 - d. Hands on shoulders
 - e. Holding hands of children
 - f. Holding hands during prayers
- 5. Refrain from inappropriate physical contact with children and young people such as:
 - a. Long hugs / embraces (except when the child/young person is in distress and requires immediate comfort. In such a case, only female volunteers should step forward.)
 - b. Kisses on the mouth
 - c. Holding children over 3 years of age on the lap
 - d. Touching the bottom, genitals or chests of children and young people (other than for infants' diapering purposes)
 - e. Occupying a bed with a child or young person
 - f. Tickling a child or young person
 - g. Giving massages to a child/young person or asking for one from a child/young person
 - h. Comment or compliment a child/young person's physique or body development
 - i. Giving money to a child or young person
 - j. Any other contact / affection that is unwanted by the child/young person
- 6. Do not invite a child or young person to your home alone. Invite a group and always ensure that another adult is in the home. Ensure that the parents are aware of the whereabouts of the child/young person.

SAFEGUARDING RESPONSES

How do I respond to a child or young person wanting to talk about abuse?

- 1. Listen and show acceptance of what the child or young person says (even when the story seems unlikely).

2. Do not try to investigate (beyond gathering basic facts of what happened), as you are likely to contaminate any evidence and testimony such that conviction of any guilty abuser can be made impossible.
3. Stay calm
4. Look at the child or young person directly
5. Tell the child or young person you will need to let someone else know (DO NOT PROMISE CONFIDENTIALITY)
6. Even when the child or young person had broken a rule or had been delinquent, they are NOT responsible for the abuse.
7. Never push for information. But inform a staff so that the child or young person can be followed up.
8. Helpful responses: "You have done the right thing"; "That must have been really hard"; "I am glad you have told me"; "It's not your fault"; "I am sorry this happened to you", "I will help you"
9. Avoid saying: "Why didn't you tell anyone?"; "I don't believe it!"; "Are you lying?"; "It's a serious allegation!"

I am worried that a child or adult may be at risk of abuse or neglect by someone in a family, household or community. What should I do?

1. Identification
 - a. Physical abuse: note any injuries that is not consistent with the explanation given for them, or any injuries that occur in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games etc (such as the forearm)
 - b. Sexual abuse: any allegations made by a child or young person should be taken seriously. Sexually provocative or seductive behaviour of a child or young person is sometimes an indicator of possible sexual abuse. All of such reports should be made known to the staff involved in the activity.
 - c. Emotional abuse: regression of mood or behaviour, particularly when a child becomes withdrawn or clingy. Depression, aggression and severe anxiety are also sometimes displayed.
 - d. When unsure, always speak with the staff involved and seek clarification.
2. Contact the staff responsible for the ministry or a pastor IMMEDIATELY. Speak only to that one person and no one else, even in confidence.
3. The staff will consider the circumstances and contact the Child Protection and Welfare Services, Ministry of Social & Family Development. Do not try to investigate the claim.
4. Consider your own feelings and seek pastoral support if needed.
5. If you see another volunteer or staff behaving in ways that might be misconstrued or inappropriate, speak with the staff involved.

Contact Details:

- June Tan, Children's Ministry Staff: June@zionbishan.org.sg
- Jacqueline Lie, Youth Ministry Staff: Jacqueline@zionbishan.org.sg
- Danny Chua, Safeguarding Ministry Staff: Danny@zionbishan.org.sg
- Deborah Liew, Safeguarding Deaconess: deborahliew@gmail.com

References:

- The American Church in Paris (20 March 2012) Child and Youth Safety Policy. Retrieved from <http://www.acparis.org/acp-child-and-youth-safety-policy>
- Rev Dr Laurie A Vervaecke's (2009) Child Protection: Guidance for Churches.