



Port Royal Baptist Church Child and Youth Protection Policy

Updated: 11-12-2022

General

I. Goal

It is the goal of Port Royal Baptist Church to provide a safe environment for the physical and emotional well-being of all children and youth participating in church activities, including participants in any daily or temporary childcare program. Port Royal Baptist Church's goal is to inform workers and enforce policies to ensure that all children and youth are safe and well protected while attending scheduled services, activities, and outings.

II. Definition of "Children" and "Youth"

The term "child" or "children" or "youth" shall include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years of age.

III. Selection and Screening Process of Adult Leaders and Volunteers

It is the goal of Port Royal Baptist Church (afterwards referred to as "the church") to adequately screen the persons considering working with children/youth participating in church programs, including in any daily or temporary childcare programs, activities, or outings. The screening process will consist of criminal background checks and a pre-determined waiting period prior to working with children.

IV. Adult Leaders and Volunteers

All adult leaders/volunteers who work with children/youth must be members of Port Royal Baptist Church.

V. Minimum Age of Adult Leaders and Volunteers

All primary leaders/volunteers who work with children/youth must be (21) years of age or older. Younger persons may assist adults, but shall not take the place of adult workers. The church may utilize responsible teenagers (under the age of 18) only in positions with and under the direct supervision of an approved adult worker 21 years or older.

VI. Probationary Period for Adult Leaders and Volunteers

Adult leaders/volunteers will not be allowed or permitted to supervise children/youth in any capacity until they have worked alongside a veteran leader/volunteer for a period of three (3) months. This time of interaction allows for a better evaluation and suitability of the volunteer as it relates to working with children/youth. This probationary period may be waived with the authorization of the Personnel Committee in the case of a new staff member.

VII. Criminal Background Checks of Adult Leaders and Volunteers

A criminal background check and child abuse registry check shall be required of all adult leaders/volunteers who will be working with children/youth. No one who has been convicted of a crime involving abuse (sexual or otherwise) or violence will be allowed to work with children/youth. All felony convictions will be evaluated on an individual basis based on time elapsed since the offense and the nature and severity of the crime. Completing the *Port Royal Baptist Church Child Protection Policy Authorization/Acknowledgement Form* authorizes the church to conduct these checks. Completed background checks will be kept in the safe deposit box owned by the church and social security numbers will be properly shredded and disposed once background checks are completed. The determination as to whether an adult leader/volunteer is "cleared" to work with children/youth will be made by the Deacon Officers (of which there are three) and the Pastor.

The nature and extent of these background checks **will** include:

- a. A search by name and social security number against the county criminal, federal criminal, statewide criminal, county civil law enforcement, and sexual predator databases, both state and federal.
- b. Volunteers to be screened include all persons who will be involved in the care, teaching, and supervision of minors.
- c. Background checks will remain active for a period of three (3) years.

The nature and extent of these background checks will **not** include:

- a. Personal credit history
- b. Driving record

VIII. Adult Supervision

A minimum of two registered adult leaders/volunteers 21 years of age or older are required at all children/youth church activities, including, but not limited to, Nursery, Sunday School, Children's Church, Youth meetings/outings, and Vacation Bible School.

One-on-one contact between adult leaders/volunteers and children/youth members is prohibited.

- In situations requiring a personal conference between an adult leader/volunteer and a child/youth, the meeting is to be conducted with the knowledge and in view of other adults.
- Online communications between adult leader/volunteer and child/youth (texting, phone calls, chat, etc.) must include another adult leader/volunteer or parent.
- Communication by way of social media between an adult leader/volunteer and a child/youth (i.e., Facebook, Snapchat, etc.) must include another adult leader/volunteer or parent.

Discipline must be constructive:

- Discipline must reflect Christian values.
- Corporal punishment is prohibited and is never permitted.

- Disciplinary activities involving isolation, humiliation, or ridicule are also prohibited and are never permitted.
- Adult leader/volunteer has discretion to expel child/youth from class/activity/outing based on child's/youth's disruptive behavior.

IX. Church Activities and Outings Requirements

The buddy system must be used by all children/youth.

The use of cell phones, cameras, mirrors, drones, etc., in places or situations where privacy is expected is prohibited.

All aspects of the church's children/youth activities or outings are open to observation by parents, leaders, and other church members.

The church does not recognize/authorize any secret organization as part of its program.

Hazing and initiations are prohibited and have no part during any church activity or outing.

All forms of bullying and harassment including verbal, physical, and cyberbullying are prohibited.

Inappropriate public displays of affections, by either adults or children/youth, are prohibited during all church activities or outings.

Sexual activity is prohibited during all church activities or outings.

Provocative attire is prohibited by all adults and children/youth for all church activities and outings.

X. Overnight Church Activities and Outings Accommodations

For all children/youth activities and outings, separate accommodations for adult male and adult female leaders/volunteers will be required, unless they are husband and wife.

Separate accommodations must be provided for male and female children/youth. Children/youth sharing overnight accommodations (i.e. hotel rooms) must be no more than two years apart in age. Parents and guardians may only share overnight accommodations with their children/youth.

Adult leaders/volunteers shall not share individual overnight accommodations (i.e. hotel rooms) with children/youth.

XI. Acknowledgement of Church Policies

All adult leaders/volunteers must acknowledge in writing that they understand the church policies pertaining to the protection of the children/youth, and that they agree to abide by them. This requirement will be met by having adult leaders/volunteers sign the *Port Royal Baptist Church Child Protection Policy Authorization/Acknowledgement Form*.

Reporting and Responding to Alleged Misconduct Toward Children

XII. Reporting Policy

It is the policy of the church to report to law enforcement any incident of misconduct toward any child/youth in the church. This would include participants in temporary childcare programs. The policy is as follows:

- Supervisors and staff shall not treat any report frivolous.
- Employees, workers, and volunteers who observe questionable or inappropriate behavior will report this behavior as soon as possible to the Pastor, supervising staff member, or Chairman of the Deacons, as appropriate.
- The church shall suspend the accused person from the performance of duties involving children until the official law enforcement investigation has been completed and cleared.
- Cooperate fully with law enforcement officials.
- The Pastor, or his agent, will inform the victim's family of the steps that are being taken. (Church legal counsel should assist in this determination).

- When misconduct is confirmed, the church will immediately dismiss the volunteer from that position.
- The Pastor, in consultation with legal counsel, will determine the amount of information he believes is appropriate to relate to the congregation and/or the public.

XIII. Liaison with the Community

The Pastor, or his agent, will serve as the church's sole access to the media. The church should emphasize to the public its position on misconduct toward children, its concern for the victim, and the steps being taken to address the safety of all children and youth, and the protection against false accusations.