
VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Child Safety & Protection Policy

Official Policy Document

Church Name	
Policy Year	
Approved By	
Effective Date	
Next Review Date	

This policy is binding on all individuals serving in any capacity during VBS.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish mandatory standards for the safety, protection, and well-being of all children participating in Vacation Bible School (VBS). This document governs child protection procedures, supervision requirements, incident reporting, volunteer screening, and emergency response.

Compliance with this policy is a condition of service for all volunteers, staff, contractors, and any individual interacting with children during VBS activities.

Scripture Foundation:

“Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” — Matthew 19:14 (ESV)

2. Scope & Applicability

This policy applies to all of the following:

- Adult volunteers
- Teen helpers (ages 13–17)
- Church staff members assigned to VBS
- Security personnel
- Contractors and guest presenters
- Parents and guardians while on church premises during VBS hours

Any individual who refuses to comply with this policy shall be removed from service immediately and may not return during the VBS program.

3. Definitions

Child / Minor	Any individual under the age of 18 enrolled in or attending VBS.
Screened Adult	An adult who has completed a written application, background check, and signed this policy.
Two-Adult Rule	The requirement that a minimum of two screened adults be present whenever children are supervised.
Mandated Reporter	Any individual legally required to report suspected child abuse or neglect to civil authorities.
Incident Report	Official written documentation of any injury, behavioral concern, or safety event.
VBS Director	The church-designated lead responsible for all VBS operations and policy enforcement.

4. Volunteer Screening & Eligibility

4.1 Adult Volunteers

All adults serving in any volunteer capacity during VBS must satisfy the following requirements prior to service:

- Complete and submit a written volunteer application
- Consent to and pass a criminal background check
- Read and sign this Child Safety & Protection Policy
- Receive formal approval from VBS leadership or the Senior Pastor
- Attend mandatory safety training prior to VBS Week 1

4.2 Teen Helpers (Ages 13–17)

- Complete a teen volunteer application
- Receive pastoral or leadership approval
- Read and sign this policy (parental co-signature required for minors under 18)
- Serve exclusively under direct adult supervision at all times

4.3 Disqualifying Factors

An individual may be disqualified from serving if their background check reveals any of the following:

- Any conviction involving a minor
- Any conviction for a violent offense
- Any sexual offense conviction
- Any substantiated finding of child abuse or neglect

Disqualification decisions are made solely by church leadership and are not subject to appeal through this policy.

5. Child Protection Standards

5.1 Two-Adult Rule

**This rule is absolute and non-negotiable.
Violations must be reported to the VBS Director immediately.**

- **A minimum of two screened adults must be present with children at all times.**
- No adult may be alone with a child in any closed, private, or unsupervised space.
- All rooms and spaces used for children must have open doors or windows visible from public hallways.
- Any violation of this rule must be reported to the VBS Director the same day.

5.2 Supervision Ratios

The following adult-to-child ratios are mandatory minimums. Leadership may require higher ratios at their discretion.

Age Group	Minimum Adults	Maximum Children
Preschool (PreK–K)	1 per 5	10
Early Elementary (Grades 1–3)	1 per 8	16
Upper Elementary (Grades 4–6)	1 per 10	20

Enhanced supervision is required for all outdoor activities, water activities, off-campus events, and any situation involving children with special needs.

5.3 Bathroom Procedures

- An adult must inspect the restroom and confirm it is clear before children enter.
- The adult must remain stationed outside the restroom entrance while children are inside.
- Children must be escorted to restrooms in pairs whenever possible.
- No adult may enter a restroom stall with a child under any circumstances.

5.4 Physical Contact Standards

All physical contact between volunteers and children must be:

- Age-appropriate and openly visible to other adults
- Limited to side-hugs, high-fives, or brief shoulder contact when comforting
- Never initiated over the objection of the child

The following are expressly prohibited:

- Lap-sitting by children age 4 and older
- Extended one-on-one physical contact
- Any contact involving a child's private areas, except in documented medical emergencies

5.5 Secure Check-In & Check-Out

- All children must be registered with verified parent/guardian contact information and medical data on file.
- Authorized pick-up individuals must be designated in writing at registration.
- Children may only be released to individuals presenting matching security credentials.
- Any child not picked up within 30 minutes of dismissal triggers the **Late Pick-Up Protocol**.
- Early departures and late arrivals must be processed through the central check-in station.
- Attendance rosters must remain with the group leader at all times and never be left unattended.

6. Code of Conduct

All individuals covered by this policy shall adhere to the following conduct standards without exception.

Required Conduct

- Use respectful, appropriate language in all interactions with children and families.
- Follow all supervision requirements and policies as written.
- Report any policy violation, concern, or suspicious behavior to the VBS Director immediately.
- Wear an official VBS name badge visibly at all times while serving.

Prohibited Conduct

- Being alone with a child in any unsupervised or private setting
- Any form of physical discipline, including spanking, grabbing, or restraint
- Yelling at, shaming, humiliating, or isolating a child as discipline
- Exchanging personal contact information with any minor
- Private electronic communication with any minor (text, social media, email)
- Photographing or recording children using personal devices
- Discussing personal, sexual, political, or otherwise inappropriate topics in front of children
- Consuming alcohol or illegal substances at any time during VBS service

Violation of any prohibited conduct standard may result in immediate removal from service, revocation of volunteer status, and referral to civil authorities where applicable.

7. Health & Safety Standards

7.1 Illness Exclusion Policy

Children must be excluded from VBS if they have experienced any of the following within the prior 24 hours:

- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Confirmed contagious illness (strep, pink eye, COVID-19, etc.)
- Uncontrolled coughing or other symptoms of active infectious illness

If symptoms develop during VBS, the following steps are mandatory:

1. Escort the child immediately to the designated health area.
2. Notify the parent or guardian by phone. Child must be picked up.
3. Complete an Incident Report before end of day.

7.2 Allergy & Medication Management

- All allergy information must be collected at registration and noted on group rosters.
- Snack and activity leaders must review allergy rosters before each session.
- No food may be distributed without confirming no allergies are present.
- EpiPens and prescribed medications must be stored per written parental instructions.
- Emergency medications must be immediately accessible — not locked in a cabinet.
- Volunteers may not administer medications unless specifically authorized in writing by the parent.

7.3 Facility Safety

Prior to VBS opening each year, the VBS Director must verify:

- All classrooms have been inspected and cleared of hazards
- Unused rooms are locked or inaccessible
- Storage areas containing chemicals or tools are secured
- All cords are taped down and walkways are clear of trip hazards
- All emergency exits are clearly marked and unobstructed
- First-aid kits are stocked and accessible in each assigned zone

8. Emergency Procedures

Written emergency response plans are maintained for each of the following scenarios. All room leaders must review these plans prior to Day 1.

8.1 Pre-Assigned Emergency Roles

The following roles are assigned at the beginning of each VBS year:

Emergency Caller	Dials 911 immediately. Remains on the line and provides location and situation details.
Parent Communication Lead	Manages all parent/guardian notifications. No parent is contacted by any other volunteer.
First Responder Liaison	Meets emergency personnel at the building entrance. Escorts them to the scene.
Child Accountability Lead	Maintains and verifies headcounts of all children during any evacuation or shelter event.

8.2 Fire Evacuation

- All leaders must know their assigned evacuation route before VBS begins.
- Leaders must bring attendance rosters and perform a headcount at the assembly point.
- No child may re-enter the building until clearance is given by the fire marshal or equivalent authority.
- Parents are contacted only after children are confirmed safe and accounted for.

8.3 Severe Weather

- All groups move immediately to the designated interior shelter area.
- Headcount is verified once all groups have reached the shelter.
- Groups remain sheltered until an all-clear is issued by the VBS Director or civil authority.

8.4 Lockdown / Intruder Response

- All groups move immediately to their designated lockdown room.
- Doors are locked and windows are covered.
- No one enters or exits until the VBS Director issues a verbal all-clear.
- Emergency Caller contacts 911 if an active threat is confirmed.

8.5 Missing Child Protocol

4. Immediately notify the VBS Director.
5. Do not announce to the general public. Contain the search discreetly.
6. Assign volunteers to search all interior spaces simultaneously.
7. Lock all exits if child is not located within 5 minutes.
8. Contact 911 if child is not located within 10 minutes.
9. Contact parent/guardian once authorities have been notified.
10. Complete a full Incident Report before end of day.

Laminated emergency procedure cards must be posted in every room before VBS opens. Room leaders are responsible for knowing the contents of their card.

9. Incident Reporting

All incidents involving injury, behavioral violations, safety concerns, or suspected abuse must be documented in writing using the official VBS Incident Report form on the day the incident occurs.

9.1 Required Documentation

Every incident report must contain:

- Date, time, and specific location of the incident
- Full names of all individuals involved (children, volunteers, witnesses)
- Factual, objective description of the event (no assumptions or editorial language)
- Actions taken and by whom
- Parent/guardian notification details (time, method, name of person notified)
- Signature of the reporting volunteer and the VBS Director

9.2 Reporting Obligations

- Volunteers must report all incidents to the VBS Director immediately — not at the end of the day.
- Volunteers may not conduct independent investigations or make promises of confidentiality.
- Incident reports are confidential and stored by church leadership.
- Multiple incidents involving the same child or volunteer must be cross-referenced in documentation.
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10. Mandatory Reporting of Abuse & Neglect

All individuals covered by this policy are considered mandated reporters. This is a legal obligation that supersedes any internal church process.

Suspected child abuse or neglect must be reported to the appropriate civil authorities in accordance with applicable state law. Internal reporting to church leadership does not satisfy the legal obligation to report to civil authorities.

10.1 Indicators of Possible Abuse

Volunteers must be alert to and report the following:

- Unexplained physical injuries or bruising
- Behavioral changes including withdrawal, aggression, or regression
- A child's direct or indirect disclosure of abuse
- Inappropriate sexual knowledge or behavior for the child's age
- Signs of neglect including inadequate clothing, hunger, or hygiene

10.2 Disclosure Response Protocol

If a child discloses abuse to a volunteer, the following steps are mandatory:

11. Listen calmly. Do not express disbelief, shock, or ask leading questions.
12. Respond with: "Thank you for telling me. You did the right thing."
13. Do not promise the child that the information will be kept confidential.
14. Report to the VBS Director and/or Children's Pastor immediately.
15. Document the disclosure using the child's exact words in an Incident Report.

The VBS Director is responsible for contacting the appropriate civil authorities. Individual volunteers do not contact authorities independently unless the VBS Director is unavailable, in which case the volunteer contacts authorities directly.

Failure to report suspected abuse is a violation of this policy and may constitute a violation of state law. When in doubt, report.

11. Behavior Management

11.1 Permitted Responses

Behavioral concerns must be addressed using the following graduated response:

16. Verbal redirection — calm, direct, and immediate.
17. Clear warning — state the expected behavior and consequence.
18. Brief removal from the activity with a second adult present.
19. Parent/guardian contact.
20. Dismissal for the day, or from the remainder of VBS, with full documentation.

11.2 Prohibited Responses

The following responses are expressly prohibited regardless of behavior:

- Any form of physical punishment
- Public humiliation or shaming
- Isolation of a child without adult supervision
- Verbal aggression, threats, or raised voice

12. Media, Technology & Data Policy

12.1 Photography & Recording

- Photographs and video recordings of children may only be taken by designated church staff using church-owned equipment.
- Volunteers are prohibited from photographing or recording children using personal devices.
- Images of children may not be posted to personal social media accounts.
- Church-published images require a signed media release on file for each child depicted.

12.2 Personal Devices

- Volunteers may not use personal cell phones while actively supervising children.
- Phones must remain stored during VBS sessions. Exceptions are limited to verified emergencies.
- Volunteers are prohibited from private electronic communication of any kind with minors.

12.3 Registration Data

- All registration data is classified as confidential.
- Access is restricted to the VBS Director and authorized church staff only.
- Printed rosters and attendance sheets must be secured at all times and may not leave the premises.
- Data must be retained per the church's records retention policy and disposed of securely.

13. Visitor & Access Control Policy

- All individuals entering the VBS program area must check in at the central registration station.
- Parents and guardians are permitted in designated drop-off and pick-up areas only.
- Any unidentified individual found in a children's area must be approached by leadership and escorted out.
- Volunteers who observe an unauthorized individual must notify the VBS Director immediately and must not confront the individual alone.
- Security personnel, if assigned, have authority to deny entry to any individual who cannot verify authorization.

14. Policy Enforcement & Violations

The VBS Director is responsible for enforcing this policy. Any individual who fails to comply with the requirements of this policy is subject to the following consequences:

- Immediate removal from service for the duration of the VBS program
- Revocation of volunteer status pending review by church leadership
- Referral to civil authorities where conduct may constitute a violation of law

This policy does not limit the church's authority to take additional disciplinary or legal action as circumstances require.

POLICY ACKNOWLEDGMENT

VBS Child Safety & Protection Policy

By signing below, I confirm the following:

- I have read and understood the VBS Child Safety & Protection Policy in its entirety.
- I agree to comply with all requirements set forth in this policy as a condition of my service.
- I understand that failure to comply may result in immediate removal from service and other consequences as described in Section 14.
- I understand that I am a mandated reporter and have a legal obligation to report suspected abuse or neglect.

Volunteer Name (Print) _____

Signature _____

Date of Signature _____

Assigned Role / Station _____

Received & Filed By (Leadership) _____ **Date** _____

This signed form must be retained by church leadership for a minimum of three years.