



**Hampton Roads Fellowship
Child Protection Policy**

Revised June 2023

Welcome!

Welcome to the children's ministry of Hampton Roads Fellowship (HRF). It is our goal to create a safe and loving environment in which the children entrusted to our care are able to learn about the character of God, discover Biblical truth, and learn what it means to follow Jesus Christ.

This handbook is designed to familiarize parents and HRF Kids teachers with our children's ministry procedures for keeping children safe. The specifications contained in this handbook apply to official children's ministry activities occurring during the scheduled meeting(s) of the church.

Changes may be made from time to time in the policies and procedures contained in this handbook without prior written or oral notice.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact the Deacon of Children's Ministry.

MISSION AND VALUES

HRF Kids exists to partner with families in the evangelism and discipleship of their children in order to build a Gospel-centered spiritual foundation for their lives.

We glorify God by:

- Supporting and encouraging parents who are primarily responsible for teaching biblical truths to their children (Ephesians 6:4). Our hope is that what children experience on Sunday mornings supports what is being taught at home in order to create a complete approach to spiritual formation. We believe our unique role, as the church, is to come alongside parents and give them training, tools and resources to invest in their children.
- Making the whole counsel of Scripture known to children with a special emphasis on the Gospel (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Romans 1:16-17). By showing children the heart of God through Old and New Testament stories, we have the privilege of being part of God's work in their hearts to set their hope in Him (Psalm 78:5-7).
- Praying for the children and relying on the Holy Spirit to regenerate their hearts through the faithful teaching of His Word (Romans 10:17; Ephesians 2:4-10).
- Living faithfully before the children and modeling for them how Christians are called to respond to God, interact with each other, and engage with the world around us (Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 11:1).

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEAM EXPECTATIONS

All teachers share a particular responsibility for:

- Loving the children as Christ loves them.
- Setting an example of proper Christian conduct in the way we live our lives.
- Teaching Biblical truths to the children.
- Understanding that we are responsible to God for ministering to and caring for the children.

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Our first concern is that the children be safe while they are in our care. To this end we:

- Screen all teachers.
- Perform background checks on any person caring for the children at any time.
- Require teacher training.

- Use parent authentication identification system.
- Employ scheduling procedures and teacher/child ratios that match Virginia state standards.
- Equip each room with a first aid kit.
- Educate our teachers about recognizing child abuse and encourage them to report any known or suspected abuse to church officials and/or to appropriate governmental authorities consistent with applicable laws.
- Adhere to a healthy child policy for admittance to children's ministry.
- Ensure each room has at least two teachers at all times.
- Train all teachers on emergency responses.

Parameters for the Child Protection Policy

This Child Protection Policy applies to children (from birth to kindergarten) who are voluntarily placed by parents under the responsibility of the church for the church's worship services or specific children's ministry-related church-sponsored activities (meetings held at the church with accompanying children's ministry). Any form of abuse, harm, neglect or other problems related to children at home, school, or in any Bible study, activity, Community Group, or venue not directly related to children's ministry at HRF is not covered by this policy.

Please see Appendices I and II for further information on HRF's policy on Neglect, Abuse Prevention, Reporting and Response.

PROTECTING THE CHILDREN BEFORE THEY ARRIVE

MINISTRY TEAM SCREENING PROCESS

To ensure safe and quality care, HRF has established several criteria that all teachers must meet in order to work with our children:

- Members in good standing at HRF.
- Eighteen years or older.
- Have completed the application for ministry.
- All reference checks must be satisfactorily completed. Criminal record checks and other appropriate screening checks may be completed, subject to the discretion of the Deacon of Children's Ministry. All completed records of screening procedures will be kept securely along with the original application.
- Approved by the Deacon of Children's Ministry in consultation with the elders.
- Review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating that he/she has read and understood the material and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

MINISTRY TEAM TRAINING

All teachers must receive children's ministry training before they are allowed to work with the children. All teachers must make efforts to attend additional training sessions that will be scheduled periodically for existing teachers to update them on policies and procedures. Parents with questions about children's ministry training are welcome to attend these sessions.

PROTECTING THE CHILDREN AS THEY ARRIVE AND DEPART

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Teachers must remain at the children's ministry event until the last child has been picked up by a parent or until they are relieved by another teacher. Parents are encouraged to pick up their children immediately after the conclusion of an event. In the event that a child is not picked up within 10 minutes of the end of the event, teachers will ask the Deacon of Children's Ministry to locate the parents.

SIGNING A CHILD INTO CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Any parent who would like his/her child to participate in a children's ministry event will sign the child into the appropriate classroom or activity when he/she arrives, granting permission for the child to participate in that HRF event. This will authorize HRF to secure medical services for the child in the event of accident or injury if the parents or legal guardians are unavailable. The parent should also use this opportunity to note any allergies or special needs the child may have. For details on our procedures for caring for children with allergies, please see the "Food and Drink" section below.

Deacons, elders, and the check-in team members have the right to refuse any child at check-in. Some reasons might include potential illness, behavior that endangers other children, a classroom being closed because of the adult-to-child ratio, or anything else that might impair our ability to maintain a safe and secure environment for the child.

PARENTAL AUTHENTICATION IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM

In order to protect the children in our care, each child must be signed into his/her class by a parent or guardian. Upon signing the child in, the parent/guardian and the child will each receive a label with a family-specific identification code. This number is used to match the parent/guardian to the child.

At the end of the session when the parent/guardian comes to pick up the child:

1. The teacher will check the numbers on child's label with the numbers on the parent's label to ensure they match.
2. Teachers will remove and destroy the child's label before the child leaves the classroom.

Ordinarily, only the parents/guardians are authorized to pick up the child. The following are exceptions to this rule:

1. In the event of an emergency that would result in neither parent/guardian being available to sign out the child at the end of an event, the child will be released to the Deacon of Children's Ministry.
2. At check-in, a parent may notify the Deacon of Children's Ministry or the classroom teacher to allow for someone other than him/herself or his/her spouse to pick up the child at the end of a session. That person must have the parent's label at the time of pick up.

Divorce, Separation or Custody Visitation

In a situation where the parents are divorced or separated, the teachers should only release the child to the parent who brought this child to check-in. If the other parent or anyone else attempts to check-out the child, the teacher should immediately contact the Deacon of Children's Ministry. If a parent presents a court order for a child, the police must also be present and we are to release the child to police custody. In any of these circumstances, the teacher should immediately contact the Deacon of Children's Ministry.

PROTECTING THE CHILDREN WHILE THEY ARE IN OUR CARE

TWO TEACHER RULE

At least two teachers must be present in each classroom at all times. Youth are welcome to assist (subject to the approval and direction of the Deacon of Children's Ministry), but they are always in addition to and supervised by the two teachers.

Two male teachers may not serve together without a female teacher also being present. The only exception to this rule is when a male floater temporarily substitutes for a female teacher who is taking children to the restroom.

A single teacher may only take a child out of the classroom for a compelling reason, such as to use the bathroom or in cases of illness, emergency, or evacuation.

CHILD-TO-TEACHER RATIOS

Hampton Roads Fellowship will adhere to established limits for child-to-teacher ratios and room capacities in order to protect the safety of the children and ensure the best experience for both children and teachers. Once all classrooms in a child's age group are full, parents will not be able to check-in their child.

- Baby/Toddler Room (children under 2): 8 children per 2 teachers
- Younger Preschool (2-3.5 year olds): 12 children per 2 teachers
- Older Preschool (3.5 year olds - Kindergarten): 14 children per 2 teachers
- Special Care Team: 1 student per 1 teacher

CLOSING A ROOM

Because we only have one Sunday morning service, the elders are especially careful about how much time members spend away from regular preaching. If we have consistent, month after month, lack of teachers, our elders may suggest that we close a particular room for a time.

Our elders have decided that this action is best for the spiritual welfare of the teachers to keep them from missing excessive amounts of corporate worship. We want to support our parents, but not at the expense of over-taxing and under-feeding of the rest of the body. Our elders have developed an order of priority for classrooms, making care for infants and toddlers during the Sunday morning service the top priority.

RESTROOM PROCEDURE

At check-in and drop-off, parents should let the teachers know if their child is potty training. In the event that a child needs to use the restroom, the child will use the bathroom attached to their classroom or directly outside of their classroom; a female teacher will assist if a child needs help. If a child's father is serving in his child's classroom, he may help his own child with his/her bathroom needs. All children in the Orange Room will go to the hallway restroom together. Teachers will ensure the bathroom is clear of all other people before children enter. Doorstops will be utilized to ensure children using the bathroom are able to be heard at all times. No more than two children will be in the bathroom at any time, with the rest of the children waiting quietly in the hallway. The children and the teachers must wash their hands with soap and water (or anti-bacterial hand sanitizer) before returning to the classroom after a visit to the bathroom.

APPROPRIATE DISCIPLINE

All teachers are responsible for providing a loving, respectful, and orderly atmosphere in which children can learn, play, and interact with others. This atmosphere should be maintained by preparing beforehand, proactively directing children towards acceptable activities, verbally encouraging positive behavior, and, when necessary, correcting or redirecting inappropriate behavior.

Acceptable means of redirecting inappropriate behavior include correcting the child verbally, withholding a certain privilege or activity for a brief time, or separating a child from the group for a brief time (particularly if his or her behavior is endangering or upsetting other children).

Teachers should never yell, humiliate, spank, or hit a child. If behavior is uncontrollable or the child does not respond to the discipline measures above, the parents may be called.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

A parent should be notified by the teacher or Deacon of Children's Ministry in the event that the child is completely inconsolable (after at least ten minutes of care), is ill or injured, has a severe disciplinary problem, or is a danger to him/herself or other children.

PHYSICAL TOUCH POLICY

While appropriate physical contact with children can be an effective means of aiding in communication, redirecting attention, calming restlessness, or showing godly love and care, it can

also be misinterpreted. Particularly in our interaction with children, we want to be blameless and above reproach. The following will help teachers to avoid any compromise or concerns in this area.

- Always remain in open sight of other adults.
- Appropriate touch is positive physical contact that nurtures children and develops a sense of emotional security in their interactions with adults. Appropriate touch is applied to meet the needs of children and not the adults.
- Appropriate physical contact will vary according to the age of the child. What is appropriate for nursery children (holding, rocking, sitting on laps, etc.) will not be appropriate for grade school children.
- Inappropriate touch involves, but is not limited to coercion or other forms of physical contact which exploits the child's lack of knowledge, satisfies adult physical needs at the expense of the child, violates laws against sexual or physical contact between adult and child, and any attempt to modify a child's behavior with physical force.
- Only women can take children to the restroom and change diapers.
- Sitting on laps is only appropriate for ages 0 to 3.
- Teachers should refrain from rough-housing, wrestling, shoulder or piggy-back rides, rubbing, massaging, or any physical activity that might make a child feel unsafe or uncomfortable.
- Only touch children in "safe" areas and for a brief time. "Safe" areas generally include hands, arms, shoulders, upper back, or gentle pats on the top of the head. Never touch a child on or near any region that is private or personal, unless when necessary while assisting in a diaper change or restroom visit.
- Never touch a child out of frustration or anger. Physical discipline is not an appropriate means of correcting someone else's child.

ACCIDENTS AND FIRST AID

All classrooms have access to a basic first aid kit. Teachers should be familiar with their contents and uses. In the event of a life-threatening injury or illness, the teacher will call emergency medical services first and the teacher or Deacon of Children's Ministry will locate and inform the parents immediately.

Teachers will complete a Children's Ministry Incident Report for all injuries, whether major or minor. All head injuries and any injuries involving blood should be documented in an Incident Report. If the child merely has a very minor scrape or cut, a teacher can administer a band aid and an Incident Report is not necessary. For all other injuries, the teacher will contact the parents to administer any first aid they deem necessary. When a teacher completes an Incident Report, they will contact the Deacon of Children's Ministry to sign and make copies of the report for the parents.

FOOD AND DRINK POLICY

The primary mission of the Children's Ministry at HRF is to provide a safe and loving environment for the children entrusted to our care so that their parents may be fed spiritually without undue concern.

One of the ways we protect children is to limit the food and drink allowed in classrooms for all age groups. Other than the church-provided snacks, teachers will not provide any other food to children even with parental consent, with the exception of milk for infants. Teachers also may not bring food or drink with them when they serve. Special arrangements will be made with the Deacon of Children's Ministry for children with allergies that do not allow them to eat the snack provided.

Why do we do this?

The nature of children's ministry is very hectic and dynamic so we cannot guarantee that:

- A child's bag will be properly marked at all times.
- The teacher will reach into the correct bag.
- Another child won't grab the food or drink and eat it.
- A child won't share his/her food or drink with other children.

Also, we limit food intake to prevent the need to perform unnecessary medical aid to children in any case of choking or an allergic reaction.

So what do we do?

If a parent wants to feed their infant or their child something other than the snack provided, that parent may come and check out their child, feed him/her outside the room and then return him/her to the classroom.

ADMINISTERING SNACKS AND FOOD

Baby/Toddler Room

A snack will be offered. We will give milk to an infant if the parent brings it in a labeled bottle.

Younger Preschool Room

A snack and water will be offered to the children.

If a child should not be given a snack, the parent should verbally notify the check-in team member at check-in and will note the nature of how to respond to an allergic reaction. This information will be entered with the child's name in our electronic database and their allergies will be listed on their name tag when printed off.

Teachers may offer properly-labeled sippy cups or water bottles containing only water, as provided by the parents upon signing the child in.

SERVING SNACKS

Teachers should always check each child's identification label before serving a snack. If the child is noted to have an allergy, the teacher must check with both the Deacon of Children's Ministry and

the child's electronic profile to determine the nature of the allergy. If instructions are not clear, no food should be given to the child without clarification from the parent/guardian.

If a teacher will be touching any child's food, the teacher will wear sanitary gloves.

HEALTHY CHILD POLICY

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE POLICY

In order to prevent the spread of communicable diseases among the children, rules are in place concerning illness. Both parents and teachers must be familiar with these policies.

- Children with infectious diseases should be kept home until they are no longer contagious. If a child is exhibiting symptoms of illness such as fever, diarrhea, open skin lesions or blisters (as in chicken pox), or persistent nasal discharge, the parent should keep the child home.
- Teachers will use latex gloves and proper hygiene procedures to change diapers, wipe in the restroom, wipe noses, and handle blood spills.
- Hand washing or usage of antibacterial hand sanitizer must be a regular habit for both children and teachers.
- Toys and equipment are cleaned and disinfected regularly.
- Teachers have the right to refuse a child on the basis of questionable symptoms. To prevent this, parents are asked to comply with the following guidelines:

A child should not participate in a class if any of the following exist:

- Fever (A child should be free of a fever for 24 hours before coming to church.)
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Any symptom of childhood diseases such as scarlet fever, German measles, mumps, chicken pox, or whooping cough
- Common cold – from onset through one week
- Sore throat
- Croup
- Any unexplained rash
- Any skin infection – boils, ringworm, impetigo
- Pink eye or other eye infection
- Thick green, yellow or constant nasal discharge

- Any communicable disease

If a child appears ill during an event, the parent will be notified to pick up their child immediately.

Please inform the Deacon of Children's Ministry if your child appears to have contracted an illness while attending an HRF event so that other parents may be notified if necessary.

Neither teachers nor the Deacon of Children's Ministry are allowed to give any medication to any child.

UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

Universal precautions are employed when exposed to any human bodily fluids. All human bodily fluids are treated as if they could be carriers of infection. Universal precautions are applicable in a nursery setting and should be utilized. The method is very effective in protecting both children and teachers from illness. By treating all bodily fluids as if they are sources of infection, infections or contaminants can be avoided, providing a safer and healthier environment for teachers and children alike.

Important Points of Universal Precautions:

- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after any contact with bodily fluids, including wiping a nose, wiping a child in the restroom, changing a diaper, cleaning vomit, and treating a blood spill.
- Always wear disposable gloves when dealing with any bodily fluids.
- Treat all soiled linens (i.e. sheets, clothing) as potential sources of infection.
- Remove toys that children have mouthed from the general play area. Set them in the baskets in the room and clean them after the children have left.
- At the end of the event, disinfect surfaces in the room with disinfectant spray.

CHILDREN'S AREA SAFETY & SECURITY

Only parents, teachers, church staff, elders, and children are allowed in the Children's Ministry area during children's ministry events. All other adults (including any other church members) will be asked to leave. If there are any questions or concerns associated with a stranger in the area, the Deacon of Children's Ministry should be notified immediately to question the stranger.

SECURITY AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Emergency Situations

In emergency situations, if appropriate, the teacher will call 911 to secure help. The teacher will also contact the Deacon of Children's Ministry as quickly as possible. If possible, make the threat known to those in the worship service and summon elders and/or other teachers to the appropriate areas to assist with the emergency.

Fire Procedures

In the event of a fire, the teachers will get all the children out of the building and to the far back corner of the parking lot using the line ropes located in each classroom. Children in the Baby/Toddler room can be put in the cribs to be transported out of the building. A sign is located next to the door in each classroom indicating the appropriate exit for each room. When it is safe, a teacher should call 911 and alert the Deacon of Children's Ministry.

Parents should not report to the children's wing because they risk creating chaos and blocking the exit for children. Instead, parents will meet their children in the far back corner of the parking lot (next to 48th Street). Once the children have been evacuated, parents may check out their children from the far back corner of the parking lot.

Missing Child

If a child goes missing, the teacher will immediately contact the Deacon of Children's Ministry. The teachers and/or Deacon will first do a thorough check of the children's ministry wing to make sure the child is not in another room. If the child has not been found after about 5 minutes of searching, the child's parents will be contacted. Other people may be asked to help continue to search for the child until he/she is found. If the child is not found, the parents or the Deacon of Children's Ministry may call the police to secure further help.

Kidnapping

If a child is kidnapped, a teacher should immediately call 911 to secure help from the police and contact the child's parents and the Deacon of Children's Ministry.

A Live Threat

A live threat includes a shooting or some other type of live or imminent and serious security hazard.

Step 1: Teachers Secure the Children

- If it is safe to do so, the first course of action should be to evacuate the building. Refer to the evacuation procedures above.
- If running or evacuation is not a safe option, bring the children to hide in as safe a place as possible.
 - The best option for hiding is in the Red Room that has a full door with a deadbolt.
 - The next option is to hide in each classroom's adjoining bathroom or closet or along the wall, out of sight of the doorway.
- Close and lock the door of the classroom.
- Turn off the lights.
- Silence all electronic devices.
- Maintain silence.
- Have children lay or sit on the floor away from the door.

Step 2: Teachers Communicate the Danger

- When it is safe to do so, whoever sees or hears the live threat should notify the remaining teachers.
- A teacher will call 911. Give the following information: Location and the nature of the threat. If shots have been fired, tell police we have an “active shooter.”
- As soon as safely possible, the teacher will notify the Deacon of Children’s Ministry.

Step 3: Teachers Fight the Live Threat

- If neither running nor hiding is a safe option, as a last resort, when confronted by a shooter or some other danger, teachers in immediate danger should consider trying to disrupt or incapacitate the shooter by using aggressive force and items in their environment, such as a fire extinguisher or chairs.
- Under no circumstances will a child be allowed to confront the potential danger.

After the area has been made safe and secure by police, the Deacon of Children’s Ministry will communicate an “all clear” sign to anyone who is in lock-down mode.

Appendix I

Neglect & Abuse Policy

Definitions

Child neglect is failure, whether intentional or not, of the person responsible for the child's care to provide for the child's basic needs such as adequate food, clothing, medical and dental care, supervision, and/or proper education, or the failure to protect the child from harm.

Child abuse is any act or failure to act resulting in imminent risk or serious harm, death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual harm or exploitation of a child.

Sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child and an adult. This includes activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or child. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered to be forced whether or not the child consents to it.

Sexual abuse perpetrated by a child is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between children, with or without the consent of either child, when one child has power or perceived authority over the other child. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of either child.

Sexual exploitation includes forcing a child or soliciting a child for the purposes of prostitution; or using a child to videotape or photograph pornography.

Child sexual abuse is any form of sexual contact with a minor, non-touching sexual offenses, or sexual exploitation of a minor. This is criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they cannot be personally, socially, and developmentally ready.

Child spiritual abuse the use of spiritual authority (the Bible or church authority) to emotionally, physically, and/or sexually abuse a child.

Prevention

Hampton Roads Fellowship takes the protection against and the reporting of neglect and abuse very seriously. In an effort to prevent abuse and neglect, we:

- Educate and equip staff, deacons and teachers about neglect and abuse
- Adhere to the procedures and guidelines set out in this policy manual.
- Train and screen teachers prior to contact with any children. Screening includes filling out an application, getting feedback from references, and performing a criminal background check.
- Repeat criminal background checks for teachers every three years.

REPORTING OF NEGLECT & ABUSE

Point of Contact for Reporting

Anyone who suspects, witnesses, or has any reason to believe that a child has been or is likely to be neglected and/or harmed or threatened with abuse in any form should contact the Deacon of Children's Ministry, who will consult with the elders. This reporting includes questionable behavior (overly flirtatious behavior, shoulder massages or other intimate acts, etc.) and/or possible offenses (teachers observing actual abuse or possible evidence of abuse, like abrasions, bruises, lacerations, etc.).

Guidelines for Mandatory and Permissive Reporters

In reporting of neglect or abuse to the authorities, it is important to distinguish between mandatory and permissive reporters. A mandatory reporter may include social workers, teachers and other school personnel, physicians and other healthcare workers, mental health professionals, childcare providers, law enforcement officers, and domestic violence workers. Permissive reporters include anyone who is not a mandatory reporter, which is the majority of HRF's teachers.

The church has a moral and ethical obligation to report any neglect and abuse, so if a person suspects, witnesses, or has knowledge of neglect or abuse, the person must talk to the Deacon of Children's Ministry.

If the person who suspects, witnesses, or has knowledge of neglect or abuse is a mandatory reporter, he/she must follow the guidelines and laws set out for mandatory reporters. He/she must fulfill his/her obligations to the law, including reporting to Child Protective Services or the police. At no time will the mandatory reporter be prohibited from reporting, even if their consultation with staff or leadership in the church results in a disagreement. If you are a mandatory reporter, it is important that you know whether you must report only in the context of your professional duties or whether the obligation to report also applies when you're away from your professional duties or functioning as a volunteer at our church.

If the person who suspects, witnesses, or has knowledge of neglect or abuse is a permissive reporter, they should contact the Deacon of Children's Ministry. Because permissive reporters do not have professional training or experience in recognizing abuse, and because some teachers have less experience with children, they are required to report first to the Deacon of Children's Ministry. If reporting to Child Protective Services or police is deemed necessary by the Deacon of Children's Ministry or elders, then this person who suspects or witnessed the neglect or abuse must report it. At all times, this person will be required to fulfill their obligations to the law.

The church will not tolerate any retaliation against a reporter who has a reasonable suspicion of neglect or abuse.

If a teacher suspects, witnesses, or has knowledge of neglect or abuse, the teacher will fill out the HRF Abuse Reporting Form (found in Appendix I of this document).

If a teacher observes an incident that may be abusive, they will immediately intervene to protect the child. The teacher will quickly follow-up with the Deacon of Children's Ministry; write out a report about the incident; and act in accordance with all reporting laws. The teacher should keep an

ongoing log of the suspected person's behavior and anything else that is relevant concerning the person or the child or their relationship.

The Deacon of Children's Ministry will follow up with any child who is allegedly neglected or abused. All conversations with the child will be done in a location where another teacher can see and/or hear the conversation. The Deacon of Children's Ministry will talk with the child to find out how the injury happened, but will be careful of the level of detail he/she pursues. Asking for too much detail might be harmful for a child as it causes them to relive the abusive experience. If the child is describing what might be abuse, the objective is to obtain very general information that may help substantiate or alleviate the suspicion. The child will be asked open-ended questions to get them to relay the event in their own words. The Deacon of Children's Ministry will be careful to not suggest answers to the child and will be sensitive to the fact that the child will be scared to tell the story, sometimes out of fear that it will upset adults or will not be believed. The child will not be asked to undress in order to show bruises or injuries that are not visible. The Deacon of Children's Ministry will fill out the HRF Abuse Reporting Form (found in Appendix I of this document).

RESPONSE TO NEGLECT & ABUSE

HRF will ensure that a caring response is always provided to any suspicion or witnessing of neglect or abuse. Every allegation of neglect or abuse will be taken seriously. Proper guidelines for handling such complaints will be followed diligently and exhaustively. The victim(s) and victim's family will be cared for by the church in whatever way is available. Situations will be handled forthrightly with due respect for all parties' privacy and confidentiality.

Who Should be Notified? The church will seek professional assistance when deemed appropriate by the Deacon of Children's Ministry and elders. Notification will be limited to those who need to know about the allegation and to those who can provide assistance in responding to neglect or abuse. The church may:

- Report suspicions or firsthand accounts or any knowledge of abuse to civil authorities. Full cooperation must be given to civil authorities.
- Notify an insurance agent, denominational leaders, or any other outside officials.
- Notify and consult with a church attorney.

How Will HRF Respond to Allegations, Admission or Criminal Conviction?

Allegations of neglect or abuse or admission of child abuse by staff, elder, deacon, teacher, helper, or any member of HRF, or criminal conviction of abuse should:

- Be reported to the elders. This disclosure of abuse is to be done regardless of the source of the information and should be conveyed to the elders within 24 hours of the allegation being made or the admission of child abuse or criminal conviction.
- Immediately result in removal of the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender from any activity or program involving children;
- Result in immediate ineligibility of the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender from being granted approval to participate in any activity or program involving children.

The elders of HRF will decide on other appropriate responses to allegations, self-admission of guilt, or criminal conviction, some of which may include:

- Contacting police or CPS.
- Notifying staff, deacons and any teachers.
- Reporting allegations, self-admission or criminal conviction to the congregation during our Member's Meeting.
- Barring the individual from any activities or church events with children or the children's wings of the church building.
- Designating an HRF member who will accompany the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender at all times while he or she is in the church building. The alleged perpetrator will be notified of this requirement immediately after allegations are made known to staff or elders.
- Disciplining (removal from membership) of the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender in a members' meeting by the congregation.
- Barring the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender from any and all church property.
- Suspension or termination of a paid staff member or volunteer position.
- Acknowledging to another organization about allegations against or termination of staff, an elder, deacon, teacher, or any member for misconduct or abuse against children.

If the Deacon of Children's Ministry or elders learn from CPS or police that allegations of neglect or abuse are being investigated or criminal charges have been filed, the elders should:

- Be careful to not interfere with the investigation by police or CPS.
- Prevent contact between the accused and the accuser at HRF events, if appropriate.
- Consider removing the accused from HRF events involving children.
- Appoint the Deacon of Children's Ministry or an elder to be a liaison with CPS and the police.

If an adult alleges that an incident of neglect or abuse happened when he/she was a child at an HRF event, then:

- The Deacon of Children's Ministry or an elder should hire a trained mental health professional (preferably who is not associated with the church) who can provide the individual with an assessment. The individual will have to provide consent for such an interview and to have the assessment released to the church.
- If the accused is no longer a part of HRF, then the Deacon of Children's Ministry should consult with the elders and legal counsel to determine the legal and moral need to report to police or CPS and any other organization that the accused may have been a part of since his/her departure from HRF.

- Even if government officials are no longer bound to investigate due to a statute of limitations, HRF should respond to all allegations with the care and diligence traced out in this policy manual.

Confidentiality

The church, as well as mandatory or permissive reporters, will maintain confidentiality to the extent that it deems appropriate for the care of its members and consistent with applicable law. Allegations and suspicion should be reported only to the persons specified in this policy manual.

Response to Media

If appropriate, the HRF Elders will respond to the media. Normally, one elder will be designated to speak to the media on behalf of the church. A written statement should be distributed at the time of media disclosure. Great care should be taken to disclose only facts and not suspicion. Disclosed facts might include the nature of the abuse allegation and when the alleged abuse happened. Great care should be taken to protect the identity of all parties involved (the alleged abuser and victim). Alerting the media lets the alleged victim know that allegations will be taken seriously and gives other vulnerable members of the community a chance to be protected.

Response to Child Pornography

If an elder, staff member, deacon, teacher, helper or any member of HRF is suspected of or admits to viewing, producing or distributing child pornography:

- He or she will be immediately removed from all children's ministry related events or activities.
- Allegations or self-admission will be immediately reported to the Deacon of Children's Ministry and elders.
- Appropriate response steps will be outlined and implemented by the Deacon of Children's Ministry and elders.

Sexual Offenders in the Church

When An Alleged or Convicted Sexual Offender Attends HRF or an HRF Related Activity

If the elders or Deacon of Children's Ministry learn in advance that an alleged or convicted sexual offender is wanting to attend a service, the elders and Deacon of Children's Ministry will have to decide whether or not to admit him/her. Admission of the offender will be based on factors such as extent of prior convictions, and his or her willingness to follow guidelines set out by this policy. This is not a comprehensive list of admission criteria. The Deacon of Children's Ministry (or a designated member of HRF) will contact the offender letting him or her know that he or she must be accompanied at all times while on church property.

If an alleged or convicted sexual offender participates in any HRF related activity or public service that has the possibility of children being present:

- The Deacon of Children's Ministry and all teachers will be notified.

- The elders will assign a member or staff, who will accompany the alleged perpetrator or criminal offender at all times while he or she is on church property.
- He or she will not be allowed in the children's ministry wings of the building.

When An Alleged or Convicted Sexual Offender Attends Regularly

If he/she chooses to attend HRF regularly:

- The elders will be notified.
- The congregation will be notified in a members' meeting.
- The sexual offender should provide the elders with the name of his/her probation officer.
- The Deacon of Children's Ministry will contact the probation officer and find out 1) more about the underlying offense (offenders tend to minimize their offenses); and 2) the specific terms of the probation in order to make sure the offender stays in compliance while at the church.
- The Deacon of Children's Ministry will check the offender's name on the National Sex Offender Registry annually to make sure there have been no additional convicted sexual offenses.

When A Sexual Offender Seeks Membership

If a sexual offender seeks membership at HRF, the Elders retain the right to refuse membership. If the elders offer membership to an offender, it will be conditional on his or her agreement to:

- Verify the history of offenses, convictions, and adjudication of sexual offenses and disclose them to the HRF elders.
- The Deacon of Children's Ministry doing a thorough criminal background check. If the information provided by the offender differs from the information given by the probation officer or gathered by the Deacon of Children's Ministry, that will be grounds for denying membership.
- Disclosure of information to HRF parents and the congregation. The information released to the church is at the discretion of the elders. A letter detailing this information will be sent directly to all member parents.
- Refrain from any form of communication (including phone, texting, email, social media or any type of technology), social fellowship, physical contact, mentoring, babysitting, or coaching with children or youth.
- Refrain from participating in any events or activities related to children or youth both inside and outside of the church.
- Continue to be accompanied by a member at all times while he or she is on church property or in attendance at any church related event that has the possibility of children being present.

- A warning that the church will report any suspected activity to civil authorities.
- A warning that any violation of the code of conduct (including allegations or suspicion of abusive behavior) can result in discipline and banning from the church facilities or any church related events and activities.
- Any other restrictions that the elders determine.
- Sign a written document that details all of these items, plus anything else that the elders deem important to include.

APPENDIX II

Abuse Reporting Form

Instructions: If a teacher, staff, deacon, elder, or member suspect, hear about, or observe signs or symptoms of neglect or abuse, please: (1) Talk immediately with the Deacon of Children’s Ministry; and (2) document any relevant information on this form. Do not go back and interview the child; fill this form out based on whatever information has already been obtained.

Today’s Date: _____

Check all that apply: Deacon of Children’s Ministry Notified Elder Notified

Name of Child: _____

Name of Parent/Guardian: _____

Name of Person Reporting: _____

Phone Number of Person Reporting: _____

Signs or symptoms of abuse observed:

Bruises or injuries that are visible:

What the child said about the incident/abuse:

Who the child implicated:

Emotions expressed by the child:

Summary of the conversation with the child:

Anything else that is relevant:

STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AGREEMENT

- I have received and read a copy of the Hampton Roads Fellowship Child Protection Policy and understand the importance of the material in the manual. I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving at Hampton Roads Fellowship.
- I understand that changes may be made from time to time in the policies and procedures contained in this handbook without prior written or oral notice.
- I acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this handbook in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between me and Hampton Roads Fellowship. If applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no monetary compensation for hours worked.
- I understand it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which may be created and distributed.

Signature

Date

Printed Name