



I. INTRODUCTION

To help protect children, Grace Community Church (GCC) has adopted the following Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy. All GCC staff and Next Gen volunteers shall implement these guidelines to help prevent sexual abuse against minors. The following includes the Purpose and Definitions for this policy, the outlines of protection and prevention measures, and shall be accompanied with an acknowledgement letter from all new volunteers in the Next Gen Ministry.

II. PURPOSE

These procedures are designed to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse in order to:

1. Provide a safe and secure environment for children, youth, adults, members, volunteers, visitors, and paid staff.
2. Assist GCC in evaluating a person's suitability to supervise, oversee, and/or exert control over the activities of children and youth.
3. Satisfy the concerns of parents and staff members with a screening process for paid staff and volunteers.
4. Provide a system to respond to alleged victims of sexual abuse and their families, as well as the alleged perpetrator.
5. Reduce the possibility of false accusations of sexual abuse made against volunteers and paid staff.

III. DEFINITIONS

The following terms used herein and are defined as follows:

1. **Staff:** Any pastor, minister, preacher, cleric, or employee who is paid by GCC.
2. **Children/Youth/Minor:** Any person who has not reached his/her 18th birthday or the age of majority as defined by state law.
3. **Adult:** Any person who has reached his/her 18th birthday or as defined by state law.

4. **Volunteer:** Means any unpaid person engaged in or involved in activities and who is entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors or adults.
5. **Administrators:** Any persons, including clergy, who are in charge of HR administration functions, the operating Board of the Church (Elder Team), or who oversees the compliance of organizational policies.
6. **Mandated Reporters:** As required by California law, the individuals identified as administrators and employees required to complete and comply with mandated reporting training and guidelines. This includes all volunteers who supervise youth within the guidelines of a "regular volunteer" as identified by California Legislation AB-506, which for GCC are identified as those who volunteer in any capacity for the Next Gen Ministry, including programming for the Kids Ministry, Youth Ministry, and programming around families.

A. EMPLOYEE AND VOLUNTEER SCREENING PROCEDURES

The following screening procedures are to be used with paid staff and volunteers who are entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors. All information collected shall be maintained in confidence.

1. **Application Process:** Any paid staff and volunteers who will work with a minor must complete a Grace Community Church Employment Application and/or the Volunteer Application. The release statement attached to either application must be signed by the individual completing the application to apply for and qualify for service.
2. **Review Process:** All statements made in the application will be reviewed, making note of specific attention to any gaps in time and irregular employment patterns or unexplained absence. GCC staff will take reasonable steps to verify or follow up on any concerning information.
3. **Personal Contact and Interviewing:** All staff and volunteers applying to work with and directly supervise minors will meet with GCC staff for face-to-face interaction and interviewing during their application process. Any detrimental information that is uncovered during the screening process will be discussed with the applicant directly by the appropriate supervising GCC staff. In the event the applicant is ultimately hired or accepted as a volunteer, the reasons for overriding the discovered information will be documented clearly and maintained in a personnel file.
4. **List of References:** References listed on an application for employment or volunteer services will be contacted until the hiring GCC staff feels the applicant is suitable for the position they are applying for. All important notes from contacted references will be recorded and maintained in a personnel file.

5. **Live scanning:** GCC will conduct a live scan for all paid staff and volunteers as defined under California Statute AB-506, which includes but is not limited to, those who are entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors. All live scan requests will be submitted for state and federal clearance and will include the option for live arrest reporting updates.
6. **Mandated Reporting and Training:** All GCC staff, administrators, Elder Team members, and volunteers entrusted with the care and supervision of minors will complete mandated reporter training every two years.
7. **Signature:** All volunteers will be required to have reviewed, sign off on, and agree to the terms within the Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy, including acknowledgement of their role as a mandated reporter as defined by California statutes.
8. **Disqualification:** No person may be entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or may directly oversee and/or exert control or oversight over minors who has been convicted of the offenses outlined below, been on a probated sentence or received deferred adjudication for any offense outlined below, or has presently pending any criminal charges for any offense outlined below until a determination of guilt or innocence has been made, including any person who is presently on deferred adjudication. The following offenses disqualify a person from care, supervision, control, or oversight of minors:
 - a. Any offense against minors as defined by state law;
 - b. A misdemeanor or felony offense as defined by state law that is classified as sexual assault, indecency with a minor or adult, assault of a minor or adult, injury to a minor or adult, abandoning or endangering a minor, sexual performance with a minor or adult, possessing or promoting child pornography, enticing a minor, bigamy, incest, drug-related offenses, domestic violence, and or;
 - c. A prior criminal history of an offense against minors.

B. SUPERVISION PROCEDURES

1. **Two Adult Rules:** To the greatest extent possible, GCC will provide the presence of two unrelated mandated reporters when ministry activities and programming involve contact with, or supervising, minors. In the event that two adult mandated reporters are not available, GCC may supplement one adult mandated report with a roaming staff member who regularly oversees the programming for that ministry department.
2. **One-on-One Mentoring:** While adult workers shall avoid being alone with minors, a limited exception may be permitted for spiritual discipling and mentoring of a youth. Any one-on-one interaction must take place in a location where the adult worker and the youth are both visible to others. Any planned one-on-one meetings must be approved by a ministry leader or the appropriate GCC pastoral staff. The duration and frequency of

one-on-one meetings must have recorded approval from the minor's parent or guardian and shall not exceed more than sixty minute sessions at a time.

C. CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT IDENTIFICATION TRAINING

1. Child abuse and neglect, as defined in CANRA, includes: physical abuse, sexual abuse (including both sexual assault and sexual exploitation), willful cruelty or unjustified punishment, unlawful corporal punishment or injury, and neglect (including both acts and omissions). An administrator, employee, or regular volunteer of GCC shall individually complete training in child abuse and neglect identification and reporting. This California specific training will cover types of abuse and neglect, what the law requires of mandated reporters, how to spot evidence of child abuse, examples of different types of abuse, how to report abuse, what happens after a report is filed, and much more.
2. This training, which covers the requirements of being a mandated reporter, must be completed prior to any employment or volunteering at GCC in the Next Gen Ministry. GCC staff will direct all new staff and volunteers where to complete this training.
3. Any CARNA or mandated reporter training completed for an outside agency will not count towards the requirement needed to be a staff or volunteer at GCC.
4. Mandated reporting training must be completed every two years for all employees and Next Gen Ministry volunteers. Employees must completed the "General Training" and volunteers must complete the "Volunteer" training as designated at the site listed below: <https://account.mandatedreporterca.com/courses>

D. CHECK-IN AND CHECK-OUT PROCEDURES

1. All volunteers working in the Next Gen Ministry will arrive at least 30 minutes before all regular weekday and weekend programming. This time will be used to cover important updates, the ministry plan for the day, and to check-in with the GCC staff lead.
2. Any staff or volunteer assigned with the position that directly supervises and/or monitors minors will remain at this post until the appropriate parent or guardian has arrived for pick-up. No minors will be released unless an adult with the proper check-out is physically present to receive the child.
3. All regular weekday and weekend programming for Next Gen Ministry will have a check-in computer station connected to the GCC Planning Center Online (PCO) database and all minors attending that programming must complete the PCO check-in process.

E. BEHAVIORAL GUIDELINES AND PERSONAL BOUNDARIES

1. No substances, including but limited to alcoholic beverages, tobacco, drugs, contraband, or anything that is prohibited by law will be given to minors.
2. All events that are co-educational will be staffed with both male and female adult chaperones.
3. Whenever possible, paid staff or volunteers will not be alone in a room with a minor one-on-one.
4. Staff and volunteers will never transport a minor alone and must be accompanied by an adult or other students during the duration of the transportation.
5. Volunteers and paid staff shall not abuse minors in any way, including but not limited to physical abuse, verbal/mental abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or the use of corporal punishment as a means of administering discipline to a minor.
6. If you recognize an inappropriate relationship developing between a minor and adult, maintain clear professional boundaries and refer the minor to another individual with supervisory authority (inappropriate attachments/infatuation).
7. Volunteers and paid staff who are adults should not communicate directly with minors through social media or text without the knowledge and consent of a parent/guardian.
8. Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room, unless in the case of an emergency or security risk as outlined in GCC's Emergency Action Plan.

F. REPORTING, RESPONDING, AND INVESTIGATING ABUSE

1. In the event that a GCC staff or Next Gen Ministry volunteer has **reasonable suspicion** that abuse of a child has occurred, as outlined by CARNA guidelines, they must contact their county child welfare department (1-800-400-0902) or local law enforcement (530-879-3731), immediately. GCC staff and volunteers should **never** attempt to investigate claims of abuse themselves as this can be seen as an obstruction of justice.
2. In the event that a suspected abuse is reported, a written report must then be sent within 36 hours by fax or electronically (if available) to the contracted agency. Written reports must be submitted on the California Suspected Child Abuse Form 8572. This form can be found at the link below:
https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/childabuse/ss_8572.pdf
3. GCC will respond promptly to investigate any accusation of sexual abuse. Each situation will be fully investigated first through civil authorities, a consultation with qualified legal counsel, and then by ministry leaders if deemed necessary. Ministry staff and volunteers will not interfere with a pending law enforcement investigation, communicate information with the press, or attempt to contact any involved parties without express direction law enforcement and legal counsel.
4. After a report is filed, the county child welfare department or local law enforcement agency investigates the allegations. These agencies are also required to cross report suspected child abuse or neglect cases to each other. The county child welfare department or law enforcement agency investigation will result in one of three outcomes.
 - a. Unfounded report – the report is false, or does not involve abuse, such as an accidental injury
 - b. Substantiated report – it is determined that child abuse has occurred
 - c. Inconclusive report – there is insufficient evidence to determine whether or not abuse has occurred
5. GCC staff and volunteers who are the subject of an investigation will be removed from their position pending completion of the investigation and may be fully compensated while away. GCC will permanently remove any staff or volunteers from their ministerial duties within the organization if they are found guilty of abuse or molestation. Legal counsel will be contacted in the case of sought termination of GCC staff.
6. The GCC Elder Team, ministry leaders, staff, and volunteers will cooperate fully with law enforcement or governmental agencies investigating abuse and neglect. The leadership of this ministry will seek legal counsel as soon as possible after we receive notice of

possible abuse or molestation within the organization and a report will be provided to the GCC insurance carrier. Advice from legal counsel will be the basis GCC's response to the allegations.

7. One individual, either the Senior Pastor, a member of the Elder Team, a ministry lead, or a hired attorney will be the designated GCC spokesperson to handle all inquiries from news media. The designated GCC spokesperson will be the only person to convey information concerning the situation. The framing of what is spoken to the public should always align with GCC's mission statement and values, messaging GCC is a church on mission for Christ.

G. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

1. Appropriate physical touch shall only be a response to a minor's need for comforting, encouragement, or affection. It should not be based on the adult's emotional needs. Staff and volunteers or employees shall never force affection on any minor and shall generally be limited to side hugs and contact with the child's hand, shoulder, or upper back.
2. A child's verbal or nonverbal hesitancy, disdain, or "no" should always be respected. If a child pulls away, even with another adult present, the staff and volunteer will abstain from all physical touch immediately.
3. When holding toddler or preschool-aged children on your lap, staff and volunteers shall not hold them up against their chest. If possible, the child shall sit toward their knees so their buttocks are not in contact with your torso or sit sideways across a lap.
4. Physical touch must always be in the presence of another adult staff or volunteers, must be brief in nature, and shall never include touching sensitive areas, including the breasts. Any inappropriate physical contact noticed by GCC staff or volunteers must be reported immediately to the appropriate GCC staff member or ministry lead.

H. RESTROOM POLICY

1. Children five years of age and younger should utilize a classroom restroom, if one is available. If a classroom restroom is not available, staff and volunteers should escort a group of children to the restroom, never taking a child to the bathroom alone.
2. Staff and volunteers shall check the restroom first to make sure that it is empty, then allow the children inside. Staff and volunteers shall remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the restroom door and see if the child requires assistance. Staff and volunteers should prop open the restroom door and leave the stall door open as he/she assists the child. When all children are finished, the group will be escorted back to the classroom together. For children over the age of five, at least one

adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female should take girls.

3. For the protection of all, staff and volunteers shall never be alone with a child in a restroom with the door closed and shall never be in a closed restroom stall with a child. Parents are encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

I. ADMINISTERING MEDICATION

1. It is the policy of GCC not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to minors under our care and supervision. Medications should be administered by a parent or guardian only. Exceptions may be granted at the request of parents and guardians whose children contain potentially life-threatening conditions, such as asthma or severe allergic reactions. Exceptions are not guaranteed and parents and guardians must disclose the condition of their children first to the GCC staff member and ministry lead that will be overseeing the programming their child will be attending.

J. INJURIES OR ILLNESS

1. Staff and volunteers who become aware of an injury to a minor will take steps to ensure that proper medical attention is given to the minor immediately. The staff or volunteer shall provide continued monitoring of the minor until they feel well enough. The individual's parents or guardians should be notified of the injury when they pick up the injured person.
2. Any injury that may require medical treatment beyond simple first aid should be given immediate attention. The parents or guardians of the injured person should be notified immediately, along with the ministry worker's coordinator or supervisor. If warranted by the injury, emergency medical personnel should be called.
3. Persons who are ill (with a fever, or a communicable disease that can be transmitted by cough or by touch) should be discouraged from participating in ministry activities until they are showing signs of good health.

I. TEENAGE VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF

1. Teenage volunteers must be at least 14 years old to serve within a small group in the Kids Ministry, and must be at least 18 years old and one year removed from high school to serve in the Youth Ministry.
2. Teenage staff and volunteers under the age of eighteen cannot be live scanned but will be screened as specified above with an application, references, face-to-face interview

and given all appropriate training. All teenage staff applying for a job with GCC must complete a work permit with the appropriate school district before hire.

3. Teenage workers must be under the supervision of two mandated reporters and must never be left alone with children.

J. SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND ELECTRONIC MESSAGING

1. In today's climate of increased interaction and communication over the internet, youth and children you work with (and/or the parents and guardians of the youth and children you work with) have a likely chance of being exposed to your personal social media accounts. If you blog, tweet, post on TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, or other social media platforms, the youth and children you interact with on a weekly basis will follow your accounts.
2. GCC staff and volunteers should always be mindful of communicating with minors within respectable and appropriate timeframes of the day. Contacting or messaging a minor should be avoided outside the timeframes of 6:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m. If a conversation with a minor ever becomes inappropriate or appears to be surrounding sensitive subjects, appropriate staff, parents and/or guardians should be notified immediately, and electronic messages should be kept for records.
3. When using social media for personal or professional use, staff and volunteers shall always adhere the following guidelines:
 - a. All content posted by staff and volunteers in an official capacity shall be true to the values and mission statement of GCC, never putting forward content that misrepresents the church.
 - b. Staff and volunteers will refrain from posting pictures of themselves in revealing clothes, in inappropriate situations, or participating in activities that would be against Grace's covenant or could set a poor example for youth and children on their personal accounts.
 - c. When using social media or electronic communication, staff and volunteers shall refrain from sharing another individuals' sensitive or confidential information without the express permission of that individual. These include personal contact information, photographs, financial transactions, medical history, personal testimony, or any explicit information not intended for other individuals.
 - d. Staff and volunteers shall not post, share, or message information that is illegal, obscene, harassing, abusive, inappropriate, or otherwise directed hateful towards an individual or organization.