

A. General Purpose Statement

Shiloh Mennonite Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children associated with Shiloh from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

Shiloh reserves the right to revise, terminate, or change any of this policy, with or without notice. Additionally, because it is impossible to anticipate every situation that may develop, Shiloh reserves its right to address a situation in a manner different from that described in this policy, if in Shiloh's discretion, the circumstances call for such a change.

B. Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms "child" or "children" include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term "worker" includes both paid and volunteer persons who work with children.

C. Selection of Workers

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

1. Youth & Children's Ministry Screening Process

The Children's Ministry Team (CMT) may request an interview with any persons seeking to volunteer their time with Shiloh's children ministry programs, but all potential volunteers must complete, sign, and return a screening form supplied by the CMT. All necessary confidential information will be maintained in confidence on file at Shiloh.

2. Six Month Rule*

No person shall be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with minors until s/he has been regularly attending Shiloh for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership team and the CMT allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

**This requirement may be waived at the sole discretion of the CMT and Leadership Team.*

3. Criminal Background Check

Shiloh requires all children's ministry workers (volunteer and paid staff) to undergo a criminal background check, which searches child abuse and sex offender registries and criminal history. If an individual declines a background check, s/he will be unable to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the screening form may also be considered a disqualifying event.

D. Policies

All work with children shall be planned in a way that minimizes risks as far as possible. This includes being visible to other adults when working with children. All staff is expected to interact with children in a mature, capable, safe, caring and responsible manner, with a high level of accountability. All adult staff is responsible for giving and accepting feedback from others in order to maintain our high level of professionalism and integrity in interaction with children.

1. Discipline

It is the policy of Shiloh not to administer any type of discipline, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. When a child misbehaves, an adult may use redirection and/or verbal means to guide the child's behavior. If this does not work, the child shall be taken to his or her parent for further action.

2. Monitoring Child-to-Child Behavior

Interactions between children that are considered abuse or inappropriate behavior (e.g. bullying, physical and sexual assault) are prohibited.

3. Restroom Guidelines

Children five years of age and younger --Workers will escort one child or more to the public restrooms on the main floor lobby. They should go in a group when possible. The workers should remain outside the stall in the restroom and then escort the children back to the classroom. **If a child requires assistance, the workers should contact the child's parents to assist their child in the restroom.** If a parent is unavailable (i.e. vacation Bible school), either obtain prior permission or use the two-adult rule as a guideline.

Children over the age of five --at least one adult children's ministry worker should escort children to the restroom. Each worker should then remain outside the stall door, (if same gender as child) or outside the restroom door (if different gender than child), and then escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, **workers should never use the hallway restroom beside the nursery, and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child.** Parents should be strongly encouraged to have their children visit the restroom prior to each class.

4. Diaper Changing Guidelines

Children in the nursery will have their diaper changed, as needed, by the designated nursery coordinator for that Sunday. **For the protection of all, workers should never be alone with a child while changing a diaper.**

5. Touch

The following signs of affection are generally appropriate within specific contexts: verbal praise, side hugs, or shoulder 'to' shoulder hugs. Appropriate forms of affection for smaller children include touching their hands, faces, shoulders and arms, arms around their shoulders, hugs, or holding them when others are present (when culturally appropriate).

6. Two Adult Rule

There must always be two adults present when supervising one or more students. This rule is designed for the safety of adults as well as minors, and is required across all ministry areas with few exceptions (see guidelines for this case below). Compliance to the two-adult rule includes the following:

- a. Two adults present when supervising one or more students
- b. The adults should be in sight of each other at all times

Exceptions to the Two-Adult Rule

Guidelines for exceptions to the two adult rule follow this intent—that even when only one leader is present, the actions of that leader are known and visible to others. This is accomplished by the adult choosing to be in visible and public locations, and by communication with other ministry staff.

An adult in a supervisory role should periodically monitor the enforcement of this policy.

7. Verbal Interaction

Words shall be used to support and encourage a child, such as praise, positive reinforcement, and positive jokes.

8. Medical Supplies

A fully stocked first-aid kit will be available in the church building.

E. Child Abuse

Child abuse is against the law, as well as a violation of human conscience and dignity. Every state in the United States of America has laws against the abuse of children. Moreover, because the identification of child abuse in every form is vital to its prevention and its treatment, each state has enacted mandated reporting statutes. Any suspicions of child abuse should be reported to Shiloh's Leadership Team within 24 hours.

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

1. **Physical Abuse:** Any act that results in a non-accidental physical injury.
2. **Emotional Abuse:** Defined by a pattern of repeated behavior that impairs or risks impairing a child's functioning or physical, mental, moral or spiritual development.
3. **Sexual Abuse:** The involvement of a child in sexual activity with an adult or another child.
4. **Neglect:** The failure to provide the child with basic needs of food, clothing, warmth and shelter, medical and dental care, cleanliness, education, and appropriate supervision reasonably available to the family or caregivers.

G. Allegations of abuse

The identification of child abuse in every form is vital to its prevention and its treatment, each state has enacted mandated reporting statutes. Any suspicions of child abuse should be reported to Shiloh's Leadership Team within 24 hours.

1. When a child discloses abuse or child abuse is suspected, Child Protective Services (United States: 1-800-4ACHILD, **Madison County Children Services** [740-852-4770], or the police (911) will be notified by the Shiloh Leadership Team.
2. If there is uncertainty as to whether a situation requires reporting, it will be referred to the senior pastor, a children's ministry coordinator, or other church leader knowledgeable in the area of child abuse. The alleged offender will be removed immediately from all responsibilities involving contact with children until the conclusion of the investigation. All parents whose children may have come into contact with the alleged offender will be notified within 48 hours that allegations have been made and reported to the authorities.
3. When child abuse allegations have been made, pastoral care will be offered to all involved, by the senior pastor and/or other leadership team member.

H. Sexual Offenders

1. Any individual who is known to have been convicted of a child sexual offense must not be allowed any unsupervised contact with children and may not be involved in children's or youth ministry (formal or informal).
2. All parents of children and youth must be notified if there is a registered sex offender attending church at the time this information becomes known. New families to the church must be notified of this information within two months of beginning to attend church.
3. In full disclosure, if a known registered sex offender attends or expresses intent to attend Shiloh, h/she shall be informed that the Shiloh congregation will be notified of his/her past criminal history.

I. Training

Shiloh will provide training on this child protection policy and sexual awareness training to all new workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes on an annual basis for those that work specifically with children. All workers are encouraged to attend the annual training.