

NBMC Children's Safety Policies and Procedures

Child Protection Policy

At North Baltimore Mennonite Church we seek to create an environment of hospitality for all persons, including children and adults, which is free of abuse and harassment and encourages respect, equality and growth in Christ. Sexual misconduct by those participating in the church community interferes with the mission of North Baltimore Mennonite Church, which stands firmly in opposition to the sin of misconduct or abuse in any form. Misuse of power in the form of sexual abuse or harassment will not be tolerated and is actively prevented. The following policy is a guideline for all activities and programs sponsored by North Baltimore Mennonite Church, and it is designed to safeguard the most vulnerable in our congregation, especially our children. The administration of this policy is the responsibility of the Christian Education Chair, the pastor, and one member of the Elder Group.

Staff and Volunteer Requirements

The NBMC Children's Safety policy requires that all staff and volunteers who work with children will be over the age of 18 and will have attended NBMC regularly for at least 6 months. A clear background check will be required prior to working with the children and youth, which will be renewed every 3 years at minimum. These requirements apply to all positions including but not limited to Sunday School teachers, Children's Church teachers, Nursery volunteers, and Youth volunteers. All volunteers must also complete an annual "Registration of Church Workers" form.

Background Checks Policy

Background checks will be conducted by the Church Administrator on a bi-yearly basis in August for preparation of the beginning of the Sunday School year in the fall and in January in preparation for the spring terms. There will be a two-person accountability process for all background checks. The Church Administrator will initiate the process and the Christian Education Chair will validate that a clear background check has been received and recorded. All records of background checks will be maintained in the church management software.

General Procedures and Guidelines for Child Abuse Prevention

In order to actively create an environment that is safe, transparent, and accountable, the following procedures will be followed for church services, programs, and special events.

- Utilize a Team Approach
 - Adult Volunteers

- When possible two registered adult volunteers are expected to be present or in line of sight during any church activity involving minors
 - When only one Adult is present in a classroom, for example during Sunday School, Children's Church or Nursery, another approved adult volunteer must be present **next door** and available to assist as needed.
 - Children's Church and Nursery will be held in adjacent rooms on the first floor to allow for close proximity to another approved adult volunteer.
 - Children's Church and other activities may be held in the basement when two adults are present.
- Jr Youth Volunteers and Senior Youth Volunteers
 - Junior Youth Helpers (10-13 years old) and Senior Youth Helpers (14-17 years old) may assist with Children's Church and Nursery with adult supervision, but do not count as one of the two adults and should never be left alone with a child or group of children.
 - Senior Youth Helpers (14-17 years old) may assist with organizing and leading youth group activities with adult supervision, but do not count as one of the two adults and should never be left alone with a child or group of children.
- Minimize One-on-one Situations
 - All interactions between children/youth and adults must be visible to others, preferably with more than one adult and more than one child present. If private conversation is required, it may occur out of earshot of others, but not out of sight. Activities will be observable and interruptible at all times.
 - If a child needs to use the bathroom, volunteers may walk them to the bathroom and stand outside the door during the use of the toilet. Volunteers may assist with hand washing afterwards with the bathroom door open. If the child needs further assistance, the volunteer must contact the child's parents to assist.
 - On all overnight events, a minimum of two approved adult volunteers will be in attendance. Non parental one-adult / one-child sleeping arrangements are prohibited, including sharing a bed in a room with other people.
 - We acknowledge that activities outside of the worship service time such as youth group events and jr youth mentor activities often take place with only 1 adult present and require good judgment to be used to minimize unsupervised or unobservable one on one interactions.
- Promote Safe Space-Use
 - All classrooms and other areas used by minors must have a window in the door or the door must be left open during use if this does not pose a safety risk.
 - Children and Youth may not congregate in the basement without adult supervision during the worship service.
 - In times when Children and Youth are in the basement without direct supervision, there should be no fewer than 3 children present (no one-on-one scenarios).
 - Doors to classrooms should remain open with the overhead lights on.

- Follow an “Open Door” Policy
 - Parents and caregivers are welcome to be present with their children anywhere, any time during Sunday School, children’s church, nursery and all other children/youth activities.

- Reporting Protocol
 - Incidents of suspected abuse should be reported to the Christian Education Chair, a member of the Elders or the Pastor who will then refer the issue to relevant appropriate authorities and the ACC Conference Minister.
 - Incidents of suspected abuse can also be reported directly to appropriate authorities.