

SAFE MINISTRY GUIDELINES

PRESCHOOL, KIDS & STUDENT MINISTRIES



STEVENS STREET
BAPTIST CHURCH

STATEMENT OF NEED FOR POLICY

Relationships among people are at the foundation of Christian ministry and as such are central to the life of the church. Defining healthy and safe relationships through policies and codes of conduct is not meant in any way to undermine the strength and importance of personal interaction in our ministries. Rather, it is to assist in more clearly defining behaviors and practices that allow the church to more fully demonstrate its love and compassion for children and students in sincere and genuine relationships.

The safety and well-being of children and youth is of utmost importance. We recognize our responsibility of endeavoring to protect children and youth while they are involved in church-sponsored activities.

Therefore, based on our strong commitment to providing a church environment for children and youth that is loving and safe, we have established these policies and procedures whose purpose is to:

Protect children and youth from potentially abusive opportunities while they are involved in church-sponsored activities.

Protect volunteers from unfounded allegations of child abuse.

Protect Stevens Street Baptist Church by minimizing the extent of legal risk and liability as a result of child abuse issues.

SAFE MINISTRY GUIDELINES

Thank you for taking the time to read this important document, which includes the following:

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VOLUNTEER ENLISTMENT AND SCREENING

This enlistment and screening procedure will apply to any person who serves with minors as a part of Stevens Street Baptist Church. All applications, references, and other information are kept confidential and in a secure environment. The background check processes are handled through Protect My Ministry, a secure online service used by hundreds of churches and faith-based organizations. There are several steps in the process:

1. **Application:** Adults (18 and older) must complete the Volunteer Application, provide personal references, and consent to a background check.
2. **Reference Checks:** The application requires that two personal references to be provided by the applicant. Stevens Street staff will contact these references to verify that the applicant is a good fit for serving with minors.
3. **Interview:** Everyone who serves with minors will meet with a ministry leader for a personal interview.
4. **Background Check:** Using the information provided through the form, Protect My Ministry conducts the background check including the National Criminal Database Search and National Sex Offender Search, which is then reviewed by the Stevens Street staff. A background check will be ran every two years for all volunteer leaders.
5. **Training:** All new volunteers receive basic policy and procedure training. If a training meeting is not available immediately, a copy of the policy and procedure manual will be given to the volunteer for review prior to serving. The volunteer may also meet with a ministry leader to review this information.
6. **Revocation:** Stevens Street staff reserves the right to revoke any volunteer's ability to serve with minors with or without notice at any time for any reason or without cause.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

Stevens Street's screening procedure helps identify whether or not an individual has anything in his/her background that would pose any danger to minors. Applicants are encouraged to share anything that may show up on the background check with the ministry leader prior to completing the application.

If a person had an addiction to alcohol or drugs in their past, we require they have been clean from the addiction for at least one full year.

Individuals who have been arrested for, charged with, are on deferred adjudication or regular probation for, or have been convicted of sexually-oriented or sex-related crimes, either misdemeanor or felony, cannot serve in any area of ministry with minors.

Convictions or issues must be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by Stevens Street staff. Decisions for serving will be solely at the discretion of Stevens Street staff.

STUDENTS SERVING WITH MINORS

Students may serve with the Preschool or Kids Ministry at Stevens Street beginning in the 7th grade only as an assistant leader. If at any time the student is no longer helpful to the adult leaders in the room, we may revoke the right for that student to serve at any time for any reason.

Students 13-17 years old will undergo a volunteer application process similar to the adult process, which requires parental permission and reference checks. These additional guidelines apply to students:

1. Students must follow the instruction and leadership of adult leaders at all times.
2. There must be at least a five year age difference between the age of the child or student volunteer and the age of children they are serving.
3. Students must be 16 years old to serve with children under 2 years old.
4. Students should not bring unapproved friends to volunteer with them.
5. Students should not escort children to the bathroom alone.
6. Students may not change diapers in the nursery.

GUIDELINES REGARDING PAID CHILD-CARE PERSONNEL

Individuals who are asked to serve as paid child-care personnel for extended stay care for Worship Ministry or other special events are required to complete the same screening process as other volunteers in the preschool, kids, and student ministries. They will adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Childcare personnel will follow all procedures for volunteer leaders.
2. The Childcare Coordinator or other Stevens Street staff will oversee all scheduling and placement of personnel.
3. Only approved childcare personnel can serve in this role.

POLICY AGAINST CHILD ABUSE

Stevens Street will make every effort to ensure that all minors are safe from any kind of abuse while in our care. We train our volunteers on how to recognize abuse and report it properly. The following information is from the Tennessee Department of Children's Services.

Definition of Abuse: Child abuse happens when a person exerts his or her power over a child in ways that harm and/or exploit the child. Generally, child abuse is categorized in five primary forms: physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, psychological harm, and emotional abuse.

Types of Abuse:

- *Physical Abuse:* Non-accidental trauma or physical injury of a child, or failure to protect a child from harm.
- *Neglect:* Failure to provide for a child's physical survival needs to the extent that there is harm, or risk of harm, to the child's health or safety.
- *Sexual Abuse:* When a child is involved in intentional sexual acts that produce sexual arousal and/or gratification for the perpetrator, or sexual behaviors/situations in which there is a sexual component.
- *Psychological Harm:* A repeated pattern of caregiver behavior or extreme incident(s) that convey to children that they are worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted, or endangered. May include both abusive acts against a child and failure to act.
- *Emotional Abuse:* Mental or emotional injury to a child or youth that results in an observable and material impairment in the child or youth's growth, development, or psychological functioning.

Possible Indicators of Abuse and Neglect:

- The child has repeated injuries that are not properly treated or adequately explained.
- The child begins acting in unusual ways, ranging from disruptive and aggressive to passive and withdrawn.
- The child acts as a parent toward his or her brothers and sisters or even toward their own parents.
- The child may have disturbed sleep (nightmares, bed wetting, fear of sleeping alone, and needing a nightlight).
- The child loses his/her appetite, overeats, or may report being hungry.
- There is a sudden drop in school grades or participation in activities.
- The child may act in ways that are developmentally inappropriate, such as sexual behavior that is not normal for his/her age group.
- The child may report abusive or neglectful acts.

Note: The above signs can indicate something is wrong but do not necessarily indicate abuse or neglect.

REPORTING PROCEDURES

Everyone in Tennessee is a mandated reporter under state law. Any person with reasonable cause to believe a child is being abused or neglected must, under the law, immediately report to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services or to local law enforcement. The reporter can remain anonymous. Stevens Street staff will assist in filing the report.

Tennessee law mandates reporting by any person who has knowledge of physical or mental harm to a child if: (1) the nature of the harm reasonably indicates it was caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect; or (2) on the basis of available information, the harm reasonably appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect.

Tennessee law also mandates reporting by any person who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been sexually abused, regardless of whether it appears the child has sustained an injury as a result of the abuse. The Tennessee mandatory reporting laws define a child as a person under 18 years of age.

Stevens Street's Responsibility and Response: Volunteers should contact the Stevens Street staff member over the area in which they are serving to report abuse, suspected abuse, and/or any other potential abuse, questionable behavior, and/or concerns.

Stevens Street will immediately follow up on reports of abuse or suspected abuse. Appropriate action will be taken, including contacting authorities, if necessary, and assisting in filing a report with the Tennessee Department of Children's Services. Stevens Street will not deny, minimize, or blame any individual involved in allegations. Stevens Street staff will minister to all involved, and will cooperate with authorities.

Guidelines for Volunteers

- Reports of child abuse should be made promptly, thoroughly, and taken seriously.
- In addition to contacting the appropriate Law Enforcement, please immediately contact the Stevens Street staff. It is important that we protect any other area of ministry that might be affected.
- Treat any incident of abuse and all information about it with strict confidentiality and privacy.
- Do not discuss it with anyone else except law enforcement and the appropriate church leadership. The situation should not be the subject of gossip or discussed with friends or others until law enforcement has completed their investigation.
- Discuss your concerns, observations, or information you receive with the Stevens Street staff of the area in which you are serving.

VOLUNTEER & CHILD PROTECTION

Stevens Street desires to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of everyone involved in ministry with and for children and students. The following policies are set up to protect minors, volunteers, and the church. As a precaution and to ensure strict accountability from one adult to another, these policies must be followed:

TWO-ADULT POLICY

The two-adult rule states that there must always be two adults present when supervising one or more children/students. This rule is designed for the safety of the adults as well as the minors, and is required across all ministry areas with few exceptions. The purpose of the two-adult rule is to ensure that the actions of any one leader are known to at least one other leader and to support leaders in ministry.

Compliance with the two-adult rule includes the following:

- There must always be two adults present when supervising one or more children/students.
- Adult means a person 18 years or older. A teenager serving does not count towards the rule.
- Married individuals are not to serve alone someone from the opposite sex (other than their spouse) in a classroom setting.

BATHROOM POLICY

Babies: Only female volunteers 18+ years of age are allowed to change the diaper or training underwear of any child 0-3 years (or older in specific situations).

Diaper Policy:

- Diapers are only to be changed on the changing stations.
- Never leave a child unattended while on the changing station.
- Perform new diaper checks routinely.
- Wash hands thoroughly after each diaper change.

Young Children: Volunteers should help young children use the restroom only if the child is three years or younger. If a child is three years or younger, the volunteers should leave the outer door of the restroom open at all times.

Children: If a child is over the age of three, a class should go to the restroom together with volunteers accompanying the children. Check the restroom before child/children enter and then wait outside.

Students: Students may go to the restroom without adult supervision.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Private conversations should be in public settings where others can observe but not hear.
- Leaders are prohibited from possessing any sexually-oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) on property or in the presence of children or youth.
- Physical punishment is prohibited for discipline of children and students, including but not limited to spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force.
- Physical force may only be used to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the individual or to a child, youth, or others.
- Discipline actions should be positive in nature — redirecting the behavior, giving acceptable choices, and using positive language.
- All classroom doors must have a window to allow views at all times into the rooms. A door should never be closed with one adult and one child in the room by themselves.
- Childproof gates are provided for younger preschool classrooms to prevent children from leaving the classroom unattended.
- When a Preschool child is being picked-up from class, volunteers must check the child name tag code with the parent/guardian tag code. ***No parent tag, means no pick-up!***

APPROPRIATE TOUCH

Appropriate touch is part of a healthy ministry. These are the guidelines for when, where, and how to use appropriate touch. Using good judgment, the following are examples of appropriate touch:

- An arm around the shoulder
- Walking hand in hand with small children
- Carrying small children (no piggy back rides or carrying elementary-aged children)
- Short congratulatory or greeting side hugs
- Brief, assuring pat on the back or shoulder
- Handshakes and high-fives

INAPPROPRIATE TOUCH

The guidelines for actions you ***should never*** take as a volunteer are listed below.

- Never touch a child in anger or disgust.
- Never touch a child in any manner that may be construed as sexually suggestive.
- Never touch a child between the belly button and the shins.
- Never touch a child's private parts (with exception of diaper changes).
- Children over the age of Pre-K should not sit in the laps of volunteers.
- Playing rough with children or letting children play rough with each other is not appropriate. The safety of everyone is of utmost importance.

SOCIAL MEDIA & PHOTOS

Volunteers should not post pictures of children on social media. Stevens Street staff are the only approved people to take photos in the classroom and post these on the Internet. Furthermore, the posting of a picture can only occur on a Stevens Street branded social media account or website. This is for legal reasons protecting the church and the children. Some parents do not wish for their children to be photographed.

PLAYGROUND GUIDELINES

Extra care and attention should be made when taking children outside to play. All volunteers should follow the following guidelines:

- Maintain visual contact on the children at all times.
- Do not prop open an exterior door for re-entry into the building. Please take the secure swipe card from the classroom with you to use at the playground door.
- Avoid just sitting back and conversing with other adults. Take this opportunity to connect with the kids.
- Do not take kids outside after dark to the playground.
- Take attendance or a head-count before returning to the classroom.

EXTRACURRICULAR CHURCH-SPONSORED ACTIVITIES/EVENTS

The Stevens Street staff must approve all extracurricular activities. Special attention will be given to planning and carrying out church-sponsored activities that involve children and/or students, on or off church property. Adequate adult supervision, appropriate separation of sexes, and other precautions will be taken. Adult chaperons must be Stevens Street staff or volunteers who have completed the Enlistment and Screening Process. On overnight events, sleeping arrangements will be made to avoid one adult and one child being in a room alone except for family members. Minors participating in overnight church-sponsored activities will be required to furnish a parent or guardian consent.

Transportation Note: Only approved adults age 25+ are allowed to drive church or personal vehicles to transport minors. No one adult should transport a single child.

MISSING CHILD PROCEDURE

A missing child (anyone under the age of 18) is a serious matter. The steps below describe the process for volunteer leaders, staff members, and the security team at Stevens Street Baptist Church. In the case of a missing teenager, the steps may be consolidated to rely more on information from family/friends or personal electronic devices.

1. The volunteer leader that **first notices** the child missing should take 1-2 minutes to search the nearby area for the child. This person may need to notify another volunteer leader to help with the search or help with their classroom responsibility.
2. If after a 2 minute search the child has not been located, the volunteer leader needs to use the pager on the classroom wall (or text message if pager not available) to **notify the staff member** over that ministry.
3. Once the staff member is at the classroom, they will assess the situation to continue to search for the child and **notify via walkie-talkie the security team of a "Code Orange"** and the classroom or ministry location.
4. Security team volunteers will come to the location given by the staff member and help with the search. They will also send out a **text to all security team members** of "Code Orange" with the name and age of the child.
5. The security team will help to expand the search and **lockdown all exterior doors**.
6. The security team leader will **notify the Executive Pastor** in order to include the rest of the staff of the ongoing situation.
7. A text message will be sent to the **parent/guardian** of the child to meet the staff member at a certain location to be notified of the situation. If no response is received within 3 minutes, the staff member or security team member will physically locate the parent/guardian.
8. As the news is delivered to the parent/guardian by the staff member, a designated leader or staff member **will remain with the parent/guardian** as the search continues.
9. If the search is still ongoing at this point, the **staff member will contact law enforcement (911)**.
10. The security team will deploy additional members to begin searching the **exterior of the property** until law enforcement arrives.
11. Volunteer leaders, staff members, or security team **should not** announce publicly the situation.
12. A **written statement** should be prepared by the overseeing staff member before he/she leaves the property. Copies should be given to the Executive Pastor and law enforcement.

Special Note: In the case of a found "**missing child**," the volunteer leader, staff member, or security team member will wait with the child at the nearest check-in desk or common area until the parent/guardian has been reunited with the child.

VOLUNTEER LEADER EXPECTATIONS

We praise the Lord for your call to assume a volunteer leadership role. Our prayer is for God to use you in a mighty way for his Kingdom. Below are the minimum expectations for anyone who occupies a role of leading, teaching, or serving in various positions in the church such as (but not limited to): deacons, Life Group leaders, mission team leaders, leaders of preschool/kids/students, committee members, ministry team leaders, worship ministry leaders, etc.

BASIC EXPECTATIONS

- Be a member of the church.
- Pursue holiness, godliness, and the fruit of the Spirit. (*Galatians 5:22-23, 1 Peter 1:15-16*).
- Abstain from sinful behaviors prohibited in Scripture (*Galatians 5:19-21, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Colossians 3:5-9, 2 Timothy 3:1-4*).
- Live, believe, and teach in agreement with the church's doctrinal positions.
- Protect the unity of the church in word, attitude, and deed (*Philippians 2:1-11*).
- Be teachable, humble, and open to instruction.
- Faithful to attend worship and be active in the life of the church (*Hebrews 10:25*).
- Faithful to support the church financially as led by the Holy Spirit (*Malachi 3:6-12, 2 Corinthians 9:6-15, 1 Timothy 6:6-19*).
- Attend a Life Group or be actively pursuing discipleship and accountability with others.
- Resolve conflicts with others according to Scripture and with a Christ-like spirit (*Matthew 18:15-20, Galatians 6:1-2*).
- Live out the principles of the Gospel in your relationships, marriage, and home life (*Ephesians 5:22-6:4*).
- Reject divorce as an option for ending marriage as taught by Jesus (*Matthew 5:27-32, Matthew 19:3-9*).
- Exercise wisdom concerning issues that may ruin credibility with people in the church by not taking actions that will affect a Christian witness, the ability to lead others, or cause others to stumble (*1 Corinthians 8:12-13, Romans 14:13-23*).

If a leader does not reflect these expectations, it will be the responsibility of the pastoral leadership to shepherd them in a way that redirects their life towards Christ. If after a process of accountability, a person demonstrates an unteachable spirit or an unwillingness to fulfill the above expectations, the person will be asked to step down from their leadership position.

MINISTRY LEADER APPLICATION

Contact Information:

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Street: _____ City, Zip: _____

Cell #: _____ Cell Provider: _____

Home #: _____ Best Time to Contact: _____

Email: _____

Emergency Contact & Info: _____

Work Status:

____ Part-Time ____ Full-Time ____ Student ____ Other

Occupation & Work Contact Info: _____

Marital Status:

____ Single ____ Married / Spouse Name: _____

Spiritual Information:

In the space below (or on a separate page), please write your testimony of how you became a Christian and were baptized. Include dates if possible.

How long have you been a member at Stevens Street? _____

Do you have accountability in your life? How?

List below or on the back of this page, the date and activities of other ministry experiences you have had at Stevens Street or another church/organization.

Legal Information:

Have you ever been arrested and/or convicted of a crime? If yes, explain.

YES or No

Have you ever been the subject of a founded complaint of child abuse or neglect within or outside the State of Tennessee?

In Tennessee: YES or No Outside of Tennessee: YES or No

Has any formal or informal charge, finding, or complaint ever been made that you engaged in child abuse or inappropriate sexual behavior with minors? If yes, please explain.

YES or No

Is there any circumstance about you or your background that would call into question the advisability of entrusting you with the supervision, guidance, and care of children? If yes, please explain.

YES or No

Giving false or misleading information may lead to non-selection or dismissal as a volunteer. I affirm that the information given above is true, complete and correct. I understand that the information is subject to confirmation, and I agree that I will amend my answers to this questionnaire if the information provided herein becomes inaccurate or untrue in the future.

_____ ***I have fully read and studied the Safe Ministry Guidelines concerning child protection, volunteer guidelines, leader expectations, etc.***

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Reference Information:

Thank you for taking time to complete this application. Please provide the below contact information for two individuals to serve as references.

Reference #1 (Stevens Street Member)

Reference #2 (Not from Stevens Street)

Name: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Email: _____

Relationship: _____

Relationship: _____

CONFIDENTIAL: BACKGROUND CHECK AUTHORIZATION FORM

Print Name: _____
(First) (Middle) (Last)

Former Name(s) and Dates Used: _____

Current Address Since: _____
(Mo/Yr) (Street) (City) (Zip/State)

Previous Address Since: _____
(Mo/Yr) (Street) (City) (Zip/State)

Previous Address Since: _____
(Mo/Yr) (Street) (City) (Zip/State)

Social Security Number: _____ DOB: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Email: _____

Drivers License Number/State: _____

Gender: Male Female Ethnicity/Race: _____

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I hereby authorize Stevens Street Baptist Church and its designated agents and representatives to conduct a comprehensive review of my background for employment and/or volunteer purposes. I understand that the scope of the consumer report/investigative consumer report may include, but is not limited to the following areas: verification of social security number; current and previous residences; and civil and criminal history records from any criminal justice agency in any or all federal, state, and county jurisdictions.

I further authorize any individual, company, firm, corporation, or public agency (including the Social Security Administration and law enforcement agencies) to divulge any and all information, verbal or written pertaining to me, to Stevens Street Baptist Church or its agents. I further authorize the complete release of any records or data pertaining to me, which the individual, company, firm, corporation, or public agency may have, to include information or data received from other sources. Stevens Street Baptist Church and its designated agents and representatives shall maintain all information received from this authorization in a confidential manner in order to protect the applicant's personal information, including, but not limited to, addresses, social security numbers, and dates of birth.

I further authorize Stevens Street Baptist Church and its designated agents and representatives to resubmit a background check every two years or as deemed necessary.

Signature: _____ Date: _____