

Children First
Volunteer Screening Program



HARRISBURG
BAPTIST CHURCH

Volunteer Handbook

In the spring of 2006, the security committee of Harrisburg Baptist Church was asked to develop a volunteer screening program that would provide continued protection for our children and their teachers.

The security committee included the following members:

Rob Rieves – *Chairman*
Jack Clark
Darren Hudson
Rodney Oliver

Also working with the security committee were:

Tim Alexander
Paul Backstrom
Shelley Farmer
Glenn Ross
Patti Robey

We are grateful to these men and women for their commitment to our children and our church.

In keeping with our long history of caring for those whom God has entrusted to us, Harrisburg Baptist Church will continue to strive to provide a safe and secure environment for the Christian teaching and nurturing of our children.

Harrisburg Baptist Church Day School will operate under the regulations Governing Licensure of Child Care Facilities through the Mississippi State Department of Health.

Strategy

1. Strive to provide a safe and secure environment for all children (ages birth through 17 years of age.)
2. Strive to protect children from the possibility of physical or sexual abuse or molestation.
3. Reduce the possibility of false accusations against volunteers.
4. Educate and train our volunteers to identify and guard against child abuse.

The *Children First* Board

The Children First Board shall consist of the Department Ministers of the preschool, children's, and youth divisions, the Minister of Education, Chairman of Security, a church member and deacon to be named at the discretion of the Chairman of Deacons. In addition it is recommended that the Children First Board appoint or consult with at least one lay person, with the appropriate expertise, to advise the board in matters of child abuse or neglect. The Children First Board may, as deemed appropriate, add additional persons to this board.

The purpose of this board is to:

1. Monitor compliance with the Children First Program.
2. Periodically review and recommend changes in the Children First Program of the Church.

Policies

A person volunteering for HBC activities and working with children under the age of 18 must complete the following requirements in order to become a cleared person:

Be a regularly attending member of Harrisburg Baptist Church or a member of a Sunday School class at Harrisburg Baptist Church for at least six consecutive months.

1. Complete a Volunteer Application Packet.
- 2.
3. Submit to a criminal background check.
- 4.
5. Complete the interview process.
- 6.
7. Have personal references checked.
- 8.
9. Be at least 18 years old.

Those who have complied with items 2 through 6 above, will be permitted to volunteer but will not satisfy the Two Cleared Person Rule until the successful completion of item 1 also. See the Two Cleared Person Rule on the next page.

10.

Training and Education

The Children First Board shall be responsible for overseeing the training of all church volunteers in recognizing and preventing child abuse. All church volunteers will be strongly encouraged to attend. Training should be offered at least once each year.

Reporting an Observed or Suspected Incident of Abuse or Neglect

A volunteer who is engaged in any activity conducted on the Church premises or under the supervision of the Church and has cause to believe that a child or youth's physical or mental health has been or may be adversely affected by child abuse or neglect, should immediately report his/her suspicion to the appropriate age level staff member. At no time shall any person, either staff or volunteer, attempt to conduct a detailed investigation or interrogation of a child beyond that information necessary to cause such a person to have reason to believe that a child has been abused or neglected.

Incident of Abuse or Neglect

Upon notification, Harrisburg Baptist Church shall suspend any person accused of child abuse or neglect from all Church related duties involving children until such time as the accusations(s) of abuse or neglect are resolved. The determination will be at the sole discretion of the Children First Board.

Two Cleared Person Rule

It is the position of Harrisburg Baptist Church that at all regularly scheduled events, a reasonable effort will be made to provide a minimum of two cleared adults at the activities of minor children. At the discretion of the age level staff member or their designee, non-cleared persons may assist the two **cleared persons**, on a one-time only basis, as needed.

Only a **Cleared Person** may supervise Preschool children in the restroom.

Special Event Volunteer

Special Event Volunteers are those persons who on certain occasions, assist Cleared Volunteer workers but are not intending to become a Cleared Volunteer. To qualify as a Special Event Volunteer, one must complete a Special Event Application form and be recommended by at least one Harrisburg Baptist Church member. The Pastor, Minister of Education or age level staff member shall approve those events when a Special Event Volunteer may be utilized. Furthermore, a Special Event Volunteer does not satisfy the Two Cleared Person Rule.

Frequency of Criminal Background Check

Follow-up criminal background checks will be conducted at the discretion of the Children First Board. Follow-up criminal background checks will be conducted no less than once every five years.

Observation of Children

Church activities for children should be scheduled in areas visible to someone outside the room. Such visibility will be maintained by leaving curtains and blinds open on hallway windows and if necessary, leaving the door open. Reasonable exceptions to this rule may be made by the staff member in charge of the division in which the child is participating.

Parental Permission

Parental Permission is required for all children, sixth grade and under, to attend church sponsored off-campus events and other events as designated by the Pastor, Minister of Education, and age level staff member or their designee.

Auto Safety

Persons who will drive church vans or privately owned vehicles for conducting church business or transporting children on a regular basis must complete an "Auto Safety" form, maintain a valid Mississippi driver's license, provide proof of insurance in such amounts as may be required by the church and comply with all church transportation policies.

Screening Process

Who is screened?

Since all Ministers and Church Staff currently undergo a similar criminal background and reference check, this screening requirement applies to all those who come in contact with minor children (those 17 years or younger) and are not currently subject to the employment screening process.

All volunteers must be at least 18 years of age. However, youth, 17 years & under, will be permitted to assist in group activities. These youth aides do not satisfy the Two Cleared Person Rule. Therefore, youth aides may not supervise a child or children alone.

Harrisburg Baptist Church will make every effort to enlist volunteers who work primarily with children and youth from within the Church's membership. In the event that qualified and interested applicants are unavailable, the Church will then seek qualified applicants of like minded faith who are active members of other churches in the community. (Examples: Boy Scouts & Recreational activities)

ALL INFORMATION ACQUIRED DURING THE SCREENING PROCESS WILL BE TREATED AS CONFIDENTIAL AND WILL NOT BE DISCLOSED TO OTHERS OUTSIDE THE CHILDREN FIRST BOARD.

Appeal Process

Any person who applies and is not cleared, or any volunteer who is suspended for any reason, has the right to appeal as set forth in the Appeal Process. This information is available through the appropriate age level church staff member.