



# Grove Avenue Baptist Church Safe and Secure Ministry Policy

## **PURPOSE:**

To establish the policy and procedures for reducing the risk of child sexual abuse at Grove Avenue Baptist Church. We are committed to protecting preschoolers, children, and youth of our church from any form of abuse. Grove Avenue Baptist Church has a zero-tolerance policy that prohibits any act of sexual, emotional or physical abuse. This zero-tolerance policy requires all Grove Avenue employees and volunteers to immediately report any occurrence (or suspected occurrence) of child abuse to a member of our staff.

**Dear Grove Avenue Volunteer or Staff Member,**

Welcome to Grove Avenue Baptist Church!

At Grove Avenue Baptist Church, we take our responsibility to care for children very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which children can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for volunteers and staff members. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment to protect children, you, and the mission of Grove Avenue Baptist Church. The following procedures have been adopted and will be diligently enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

*Grove Avenue Baptist Church Leadership*



# GROVE AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH

## Policy & Procedure for Preschool, GroveKids, and Student Ministry

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## **Overview of Grove Avenue Baptist Church Safety System**

Because we desire to protect children involved in our ministry, Grove Avenue Baptist Church requires all staff members and volunteers working with preschool, children, students, or any other vulnerable population, to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placements begin.

### **STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training**

Grove Avenue Baptist Church policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a supervisor or a member of the Grove Avenue Baptist Church Safety Committee. Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in ‘grooming’ a child for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child’s trust (and the trust of the child’s parent or ‘gatekeeper’), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, Grove Avenue Baptist Church requires all staff members and volunteers to complete sexual abuse awareness training. This training will be renewed every three years.

### **STEP TWO: Screening Process**

Staff members and volunteers working or serving with children are required to complete Grove Avenue Baptist Church’s Screening Process, which includes:

- an Employment Application (employees only);
- a Safety Application (employees and volunteers);
- a face-to-face interview (employees and volunteers); and
- references to be checked (employees and volunteers).

#### **\* Volunteer Qualifications**

1. All volunteers should be regular attendees of the church for at least six months before being appointed to any leadership positions in preschool, children or youth ministry.
2. All volunteer workers must be 18 years of age or older unless working under the supervision of an adult who has met the qualifications in these policies.
3. The Preschool Director, Director of GroveKids, and Student Pastor, have the authority to waive the 6-month guideline, to serve as a volunteer, if the individual has completed our safe and secure training and background checks are exemplary.
4. Youth volunteers who are working with younger children are required to attend a safe and secure training and fill in the appropriate youth forms, including a parental acknowledgement form.

### **STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures**

Staff members and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

### **STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check**

Grove Avenue Baptist Church requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in Grove Avenue Baptist Church preschool, children, or student activities undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon the ministry position, differing levels or intensity of criminal background check may be required.

## **Child Safety Policy**

### **ABUSE TOLERANCE**

Grove Avenue Baptist Church has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at Grove Avenue Baptist Church to act in the best interest of all children in every program.

In the event a staff member or volunteer observes any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse or neglect (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is that individual's responsibility to immediately report their observations to a supervisor, the Department Director or Pastor, or the Executive Pastor.

### **REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS**

Grove Avenue Baptist Church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse or neglect will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to Child Protective Services, or another appropriate agency.

Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a child for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to an immediate supervisor, the Department Director or Pastor, or the Executive Pastor.

To maintain a safe environment for all children and youth, all persons must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, admission, or situation which endangers or threatens children.

When an incident is reported, the incident should be kept confidential. A mere allegation of improper behavior by a volunteer will not be treated as an actual occurrence pending the completion of the investigation, and the church will take steps necessary to protect the integrity of the volunteer involved.

## **Reporting Abuse, Suspicions of Abuse, or Policy Violations**

### **REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY**

All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to an immediate supervisor in the ministry area, the Department Director or Pastor, or the Executive Pastor.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION**

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in Grove Avenue Baptist Church preschool, children, or student ministry. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have violated this policy may be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming involving children or students at Grove Avenue Baptist Church. If the person is an employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from Grove Avenue Baptist Church.

Failure to report a policy violation is grounds for termination of an employee. Volunteers who fail to report a policy violation may be restricted from participation in any future activities involving children or students at Grove Avenue Baptist Church.

### **REPORTING ABUSE WITNESSED AT GROVE AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH OR AT A GROVE AVENUE EVENT**

In the event, anyone personally witnesses an occurrence in violation of this policy, that person will be asked to complete an Incident Report. All efforts at handling the incident should be documented. Anyone witnessing such an occurrence should consider the following recommendations as to how such a situation should be handled to ensure the security of the child and to protect against physical, emotional, or psychological injury to all persons involved:

1. All incidents shall be reported immediately to the ministry head if available, or to the adult leader in charge of the event or activity.
2. Personally, secure the safety of child, children, or youth.
3. Do not leave the child while reporting the incident.
4. Do not personally confront the alleged or accused violator of the policy unless imminent injury or damage is present.
5. The ministry head or another pastor will report the incident to the parents or guardians of the victim(s).
6. The incident must be reported by the staff member to the Executive Pastor within 24 hours of the staff member being made aware of the incident.

7. The parents must be notified by the staff member within 24 hours of the staff member being made aware of the incident.
8. The ministry head and/or the Executive Pastor must immediately report the incident to the church insurance company, and the church attorney.
9. The ministry head and/or the Executive Pastor will notify the proper civil authorities, as directed by the insurance company & church attorney.
10. The accused should not be confronted until the safety of the child or youth is secured, and only upon advisement by the church attorney.
11. A prepared statement to the press and to the congregation should only be made by the Executive Pastor as advised by the church attorney
12. A duly authorized representative of GABC will be responsible for all communication on behalf of the church.

### **REPORTING GUIDELINES IF A CHILD CONFIDES ABUSE TO A VOLUNTEER**

Once an accusation has been reported to a staff member, that staff member will report this to the Executive Pastor (and the Senior Pastor as directed by the Executive Pastor). From there, the staff member and executive leadership will discuss any further steps such as notifying police or other government agencies, parents, etc. The person who first received the accusation of abuse may then be asked to make an official report to the police or other government agency under the direction of the church leadership.

1. The decisions regarding further assessment of any danger, seeking consultation, notification of parents/custody holders, and any further necessary services will be based on the decision of the Executive Pastor in consultation with the Senior Pastor.
2. The Senior Pastor should handle all press communication related to any sexual molestation or abuse. All questions and inquiries should be referred to this individual.
3. In the event a child or youth reports alleged abusive conduct, regardless of where the conduct occurred, (at church, offsite church event, or non-church event.) the person initially contacted by the child must complete a written Incident Report which should include, as much as possible, the precise wording of the child.
4. In the event a child makes an accusation of abuse or neglect occurring in the child's home, the person initially contacted will report to the ministry head for deposition of the matter.

### **RESPONSE TO THE ACCUSER**

1. Allegations should be taken seriously, and emotional support given to the accuser. The care and safety of the accuser is the priority.
2. All efforts should be made to reach out to the accuser and the accuser's family, extending whatever pastoral and professional resources may be needed.

#### RESPONSE TO THE ACCUSED

1. Treat the accused with dignity and support. He/she will be relieved of his/her duties until the investigation is finished.
2. Pastoral and/or professional resources should likewise be extended to the accused.

#### **ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES**

Grove Avenue Baptist Church staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Church policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from their Ministry positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Executive Pastor and/or the Church Council.

### **Grove Avenue Baptist Church Safety Committee**

#### **SAFETY COMMITTEE**

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children, Grove Avenue Baptist Church will appoint and maintain a Safety Committee on each campus, which will meet once each quarter.

#### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The purpose of the Safety Committee is to enable Grove Avenue Baptist Church Preschool, GroveKids, and Student Ministries to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

#### **COMPOSITION**

The Safety Committee on each campus will be comprised of the following members:

1. Executive Pastor
2. Preschool Director
3. Children's Director
  
4. Student Minister
5. Any designee of the church council.

#### **MEETINGS**

The Executive Pastor will chair the meeting of the Safety Committee on a quarterly basis to discuss risk management practices and updates. The Safety Committee will also meet on an emergency basis upon the recommendation of a member or following the report of any incident or allegation.



## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Safety Committee will be charged with the following duties:

1. Applying existing Grove Avenue Baptist Church policies and procedures related to preschool, children, and students, safety and risk management issues.
2. Monitoring all preschool, children, and students' programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
3. Making recommendations to the Grove Avenue Baptist Church Council regarding safety issues.

## **Building Safety**

The Preschool Director, GroveKids Director, and Student Pastor will be responsible for ensuring that the building is monitored during Sunday classes or programming. This will include unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers and children in children's classrooms.

No child will ever be left unattended in the Church Building or on the children's playground during children's ministry programming or classes. Preschool, GroveKids, and Student Ministry staff members or volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in any room or building. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single child, that staff member or volunteer will take the child to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: if a child is the last in a class to be picked up by a parent, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present.)

After every programming event, staff members and volunteers must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

On the children's playground, staff members and volunteers are to circulate, watching children during play periods, giving attention to the areas not easily seen from all viewpoints. (Example: under slides, in corners, behind structures).

Any two children together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area of the playground.

During services, minors are not allowed to wander around the campus. If you see a minor who is not in an appropriate place, please approach them or contact a staff member. We will take the child to their class or to their parent.

If you see an adult wandering around the building, please ask if you can help them find their way. Otherwise, for security purposes, we do not permit people to wander around the children or preschool hallways.

## WORKER TO CHILD RATIOS

Grove Avenue Baptist Church is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Children's Ministries programs. Accordingly, the following worker to child **minimum ratios** will be observed:

Program	Workers	Children
Nursery	2	8
Preschool, 2 and 3 years old	2	12
Preschool, 4 and 5 years old	2	18
Elementary	2	20
VBS	2	20
Students	2	29
Students	3	30+

If a worker is 'out of ratio' it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the program supervisor or the Preschool Director, GroveKids Director, Student Pastor. Supervisors will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately bring worker to children ratios into compliance with Church policy.

## YOUTH VOLUNTEERS IN PRESCHOOL AND GROVEKIDS

A high school youth may serve as the second volunteer after completing our safe and secure training.

1. High School Youth Volunteer Applicants (any volunteer under the age of 18) need to complete both the adult application and the high school youth volunteer agreement which must be signed by the parents. This ensures parents understand the requirements and commitment expected of their youth volunteer.
2. Middle School Volunteers can only serve under the direct supervision of an adult. Middle School Volunteers need to have completed the youth volunteer agreement and have read over our middle school modified policies. Middle School Volunteers will not count toward the necessary classroom worker ratio. (Modified policies only contain classroom monitoring and safety guidelines)

## EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

One adult is present and is volunteering in a classroom with a window and IS NEVER ALONE IN THE ROOM WITH ONE CHILD. i.e. sickness, late volunteer, short period until second volunteer located.

## DISCIPLINE

It is our policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children. **No form of physical discipline is acceptable.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, biting or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. In employing this procedure, staff members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines:

It is the desire of the Grove Avenue Ministry staff to reach all children and students with the love and grace of God found in the transforming power of Jesus Christ. We never wish any

child to miss out on an opportunity to experience the Word of God. When encountering a child with unacceptable behavior, please use this step-by-step process to ensure all children are given the safest environment to do so.

1. Request, Reseat, Remove Discipline Procedure

- A. Request: Once you see that a child is being a disruption to the service, event, or ministry environment, wait 2 minutes to give them an opportunity to correct. If they are still being a disruption, in a loving manner ask them to get back in line, with the right behavior. Tell them specifically what they need to improve.
  - B. ReSeat: After you have requested that they not be a distraction, then politely invite them to come and sit with you. Be cautious to not treat this like a punishment but an opportunity to be relational with them. Don't be stern, be relational.
  - C. ReMove: If the child continues to be a distraction once they have been removed then politely ask them to join you outside the room (if possible). Be careful not to treat this as a "trip to the Principal's office". Use this time as a relational opportunity to pour into their lives and point them to Jesus. You now have the opening to have a one on one discipling opportunity with them.
2. Directly following the full implementation of Request, ReSeat, Remove; complete a Ministry Incident Report, ensure the Director/Pastor of that ministry is informed so that they may have a direct conversation with the parent(s) of the child, with documentation.
3. "It is not the desire of the Ministry Staff to suspend a child at any time. We will put forth every effort to work with you the parent, in reinforcing the proper behavior God desires in your child. Instilling proper behavior first and foremost I with you the parent; the church will serve as a support agent to help instill the values you have set forth. We can work diligently together to help develop a well-mannered child of God."
4. If after the third behavioral Incident Report and direct conversation with the parents, the child's behavior does not improve, the child will be suspended from the ministry environment for one experience. After returning, if the child continues to exhibit unacceptable behavior the child will be suspended for three experiences. The child and the parents will meet with the Director/Pastor of the respective ministry. If after a third time the child's behavior does not improve, the Safety Committee will determine what an appropriate length of time would be before the child will be allowed to return to the environment.

List of possible unacceptable behavior: (including but not limited to)

Aggressiveness toward other children, students, and adults; including hitting, kicking, spitting, pinching, biting, throwing objects at others, deliberately damaging property, use of unacceptable behavior, repeatedly ignoring instruction, and in general showing rebellious behavior and disregard for ministry rules.

## BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINE

### *Nursery children*

Because nursery children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies:

#### **Diapering**

- 1) Only female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.
- 2) Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.
- 3) Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
- 4) Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in nursery will be recorded on the registration cards ("Seth Adams has a medicine in the bag for rash.")
- 5) Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
- 6) Children should be changed on changing stations only.

#### **Toilet training**

- 1) No child will be forced to toilet train.
- 2) Only female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children of either sex.
- 3) When children are taken into bathrooms the door will be left partially open.
- 4) Young children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
- 5) Parents should be consulted on each child's progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with volunteers or staff members. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery will be recorded on the registration card ("Georgia can use the toilet, but she needs to be reminded – ask her if she needs to go.").
- 6) Children should be verbally assisted where possible. If physical assistance is necessary, another staff member or volunteer should be present, when possible.
- 7) "Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child. Children should be promptly be provided clean diapers or underwear and clothing. Extra clothing and diapers are available in the children's area, if the parent has not furnished a clothing change.

### *School age children*

School age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. Children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities. Staff members and volunteers should never take a lone child to the restroom.

If a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another worker to accompany him/her. If another worker is not available to accompany, he/she should go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. If the child requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom

stall. Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer.

### **Special needs**

Parents will offer instruction to staff members or volunteers to change the diapers of special needs individuals. After the age of 4, parents or legal guardians will change all special needs individuals.

### **INTOXICANTS**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drug while in any church facility, while traveling with children, or while working with or supervising children during any church program or activity.

### **MEDICATION**

A staff member or volunteer may not administer medication to any child while serving in Children's Ministry.

### **NUDITY**

Staff members and volunteers serving in Preschool, GroveKids, or Student Ministry should never be nude in the presence of children in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes during a pool party, weekend or overnight retreat, etc.), the staff member or volunteer leading the event will submit a plan to the GroveKids Director, or Student Pastor, concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

### **ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN OR STUDENTS**

Staff members and volunteers should never conduct one-to-one, unobserved meetings or interaction with children while participating in GroveKids or Student Ministry activities or programs. Another trained, screened adult should always be present.

1. We recognize that meeting the emotional needs of children or students may occasionally require staff/volunteer leaders to minister to them on an individual basis. Staff/volunteer leaders should observe the following guidelines when planning to hold a counseling session, discipleship session, or any one-to-one meeting with a child or youth. Staff members and volunteer leaders should conduct one-to-one meetings with an individual student at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed unless prior approval is obtained from a Student Ministry Staff Member.
2. If a closed-door meeting must occur with a student, this should be done in a room/office with a window at the church (never in a private residence) and the staff/volunteer member must inform a staff member and ensure the door remains unlocked.
3. Any ongoing meetings with students (such as counseling, one-on-one discipleship, etc.) should be discussed with a Student Ministry Staff Member for approval.
4. Staff/volunteer leaders are not permitted to date students in the student ministry.

## **ONLINE INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS**

As many of our students now communicate through phones, social media, and other forms of technology, it is important that our staff/volunteer leaders maintain healthy boundaries with students that are “above reproach.” Specifically, staff members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines when it comes to communicating with students over technology:

1. Staff members and volunteer leaders should never one-on-one DM “direct message” with students of the opposite sex. Leaders should also be cautious to avoid ongoing, in-depth message chains with students of the same gender. These online chats should be used to encourage students and to make connections but not for extended dialogue which may blur the lines between leader and friend for students.
2. Staff members and volunteer leaders should avoid talking about anything of a sexual nature when talking with students over social media/texts/etc. Even over the phone, staff and leaders should proceed with caution.
3. Staff members and volunteer leaders should be cautious about what they post on their personal social media websites if any of their followers/friends are minors. Our personal lives should be a good model for students, so leaders should be cautious with posts.
4. For communicating with students by text, volunteer leaders should never send a private (non-group) text to a student of the opposite gender. Staff members may occasionally text a student of the opposite gender for reasons such as: remind them about an event, rehearsal, meeting, or ongoing ministry task (with interns, student leaders, etc.). All staff and volunteer leaders should still be cautious when communicating with students of the same gender and avoid ongoing, in-depth conversations over texts.
5. It is recommended that staff and volunteer leaders not follow/friend students on social media they do not already know and have an established relationship with. Even for students that staff/volunteer leaders do know, it is recommended that they allow students to initiate the friend/follow request.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children:

1. Children should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child or student in transport.
2. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children and students while in vehicles.

3. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving Church vans, or vehicles owned or rented by Grove Avenue Baptist Church, unless in an emergency. Using a phone only for GPS is acceptable.
4. No drivers under age 21 may drive Church-owned or rented vehicles. Drivers must have one adult in vehicle who is 25 or older.

### **PARENTAL CONTACT**

Parents who leave a child in the care of Grove Church staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if a child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Grove programs.

### **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their child's program will be required to complete the Church's volunteer application and screening process.

### **PHYSICAL CONTACT**

Grove Avenue Baptist Church is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, Grove Avenue Baptist Church has implemented a 'physical contact policy' that promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting children. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by those working in Grove programs:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and preschoolers are important for children's development; and are generally suitable in the church setting. As a child matures so should the nature of contact. Side hugs for elementary age and older children. No child in elementary school or older should ever be on a volunteer's lap.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to an immediate supervisor, the Preschool Director, GroveKids Director, Student Pastor, or the Executive Pastor.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child or student, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children, students or staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
5. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers must always foster trust. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
6. Do not force physical contact, touch or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.

7. Staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse must be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor, the Preschool Director, GroveKids Director, Student Pastor, or the Executive Pastor.

### **SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS**

Staff members and volunteer leaders are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with students and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any student in the program. However, it is expected that from time to time students ministry discussions and lessons may address issues related to purity, dating, sex and human sexuality. In addition, we are aware that students may have questions/struggles in this area and desire to confide in a trusted adult leader for guidance. Considering that, here are some guidelines to follow:

1. Staff and volunteer leaders are not to discuss anything of a sexual nature with students of the opposite gender. The only exception to this is up-front large group teaching from God's Word on this subject. Staff and leaders should proceed with great caution and be sure to teach with sensitivity and from a biblical perspective.
2. It is recommended that when possible, adults have another adult present when talking with students about sensitive issues concerning biblical definitions of sex (such as in a small group setting). Staff and volunteer Leaders are asked to convey to students the biblical views on these topics.
3. If a student's questions or comments on a sexual matter become too detailed or explicit in a group setting, the leader should use discretion and set up another time to meet with this student.
4. For volunteer leaders who set up a time to meet with a student about sexual matters, they are asked to first inform a student ministry staff member
5. If there is a question as to whether your conversation could possibly be interpreted as a "sexually oriented conversation," you are required to treat the conversation as if it is unquestionably a sexually oriented conversation and follow this policy accordingly. Then, clarify the question with a Ministry Staff Member.

### **SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from possessing (or transmitting to a child) any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children in their care.

### **TOBACCO USE**

Grove Avenue Baptist Church requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in church facilities, while in the presence of children or their parents, or during church activities or programs. Grove Avenue Baptist Church is a tobacco-free facility.



## **VERBAL INTERACTIONS**

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and minors should be positive and uplifting. Staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to children or students in a way that is or could be construed by a reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

## **RELEASE OF ELEMENTARY AGE CHILDREN AND YOUNGER**

At any time that a child has been entrusted to Preschool Ministry or GroveKids Ministry staff members or volunteers, the Church incurs responsibility for the safety and welfare of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.

It is presumed a person who drops off a child has authority to pick up that child.

### **Dismissal Procedures**

1. When check-in is in use (Sunday Morning, AWANA, Summer Activities) the check-in policy for pick up is to be utilized. This means that the individual picking the preschooler or child up must have the guardian nametag.
2. If an individual does not have a guardian nametag, please direct the individual to the ministry director for permission to pick that child up.
3. AWANA clubbers must be picked up in their room by a parent or responsible adult. They will not be released to sibling without prior parental consent.

## **SUPERVISION**

Staff members and volunteers in Preschool, GroveKids, and Students, are expected to provide adequate supervision for children in their care while working in church programs.