



REDEEMING GRACE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Policy Handbook for the Protection of Minors

[Adopted January 1, 2015]

RGBC will continue to operate under the Policy Handbook for the Protection of Minors of our parent church, Leonardtown Baptist Church, as they existed at the time of the establishment of RGBC on Jan 1, 2015, until such time as these policies can be revised and rewritten.

Welcome to the Student Ministries of Redeeming Grace Baptist Church. It is our goal to create a safe and loving environment in which the children and youth entrusted to our care are able to learn about the character of God, discover biblical truth, and learn what it means to follow Jesus Christ.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide policies and procedures for RGBC and its caregivers. These policies and procedures may be changed from time to time by vote of the congregation of RGBC. This handbook is also designed to familiarize parents with our childcare procedures and our protection policies for minors. The date of this edition of this document is given above. Please contact the church office at 240-450-2890 or office@rgbcmd.org to verify you possess the current form of this document.

The specifications contained in this handbook apply to the operation of all Student Ministries and any setting where childcare is provided in the context of an official church activity. "Student Ministries," for the purposes of this policy, refers to activities and programs for children aged 0 to 17 years old including, but not limited to:

Nursery,
Children's Bible Fellowships (CBFs),
Junior Church,
The Hands Puppet Ministry,
Youth Ministry, and
Youth Bible Fellowships (YBFs).

**If you have any questions or comments, please contact
Trey Mangan, Elder: trey.mangan@rgbcmd.org / 240-450-2890**



Policy Handbook for the Protection of Minors

[Adopted June 13, 2014]

Welcome to the Student Ministries of Leonardtown Baptist Church. It is our goal to create a safe and loving environment in which the children and youth entrusted to our care are able to learn about the character of God, discover biblical truth, and learn what it means to follow Jesus Christ.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide policies and procedures for LBC and its caregivers. These policies and procedures may be changed from time to time by vote of the congregation of LBC. This handbook is also designed to familiarize parents with our childcare procedures and our protection policies for minors. The date of this edition of this document is given above. Please contact the church office at 301-475-2131 or office@lbcmd.org to verify you possess the current form of this document.

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Nursery,
Children's Bible Fellowships (CBFs),
Junior Church,
Awana Clubs,
Home School Fellowship,
Jubilate Children's Choir,
Higher Calling,
The Hands Puppet Ministry,
Rev'd Up Youth Ministry, and
Youth Bible Fellowships (YBFs).

If you have any questions or comments, please contact
Allen Acker, Associate Pastor for Students: allen.acker@lbcmd.org / 301-475-2131

Mission

The Children's Ministries of Leonardtown Baptist Church are committed to helping parents disciple their children to:

- Seek the Lord in Worship
- Study God's Word Together
- Serve God's People
- Share Jesus with Everyone

The Youth Ministries of Leonardtown Baptist Church exist to help every youth become lifelong disciples of Jesus Christ who:

- Seek the Lord in Worship
- Study the Word in Small Group Fellowship
- Serve the Body of Christ
- Share Christ with the World

Caregiver Expectations

All Student Ministry caregivers share a particular responsibility for:

- Loving the children as Christ loves them
- Setting an example of proper Christian conduct in the way we live our lives
- Ministering to the children
- Understanding that the care of children is not a right, but a privilege; and this privilege embodies responsibilities to God for ministering to and caring for the children

Minor Protection Policy

The primary concern of this document is that the children be safe while they are in our care. To this end we:

- Screen all caregivers.
- Require training for all caregivers.
- Utilize an identification system for children aged kindergarten and younger.
- Employ scheduling procedures and caregiver/child ratios that optimize safety.
- Equip each room with a first aid kit.
- Educate our caregivers about recognizing child abuse and how to report any suspected abuse to church officials and/or to appropriate governmental authorities consistent with applicable laws.
- Adhere to a healthy child policy for admittance to any Student Ministry activity or event.

"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."

—Matthew 18:6 ESV

Protecting the Minors Before They Arrive

Ensuring a safe environment begins long before ministry activities are held. Every applicant who wishes to serve in any Student Ministry is required to go through a screening process and attend caregiver training.

Screening Procedure

To ensure safe and quality care, LBC has established several criteria that all caregivers must meet in order to work with our minors:

- All caregivers must be members in good standing of LBC and at least six months shall have elapsed between their pastoral membership interview and the approval of their application for service in Student Ministry. The only exceptions to this membership requirement will be:
 - Trained Awana leaders who are members in good standing with a local evangelical church, with a letter of recommendation from a pastor at their home church, for the purpose of serving as a club leader or helper during Awana only.
 - Parent/guardian leaders of the LBC Home School Fellowship for the purposes of serving as a caregiver during Home School Fellowship only.
- The minimum time period of six months may be waived for individuals with a prior history of membership in good standing of LBC who renew that membership upon return to the area once the other requirements (training, background and reference checks) have been completed.
- All adult caregivers (18 and older) must complete the caregiver application, be interviewed by the pastor responsible for the ministry team involved, and have all reference checks and background checks satisfactorily completed. The applicant may bring a guest (such as a spouse) to the pastoral interview.
- All student leader caregivers (13-17 years old) must complete the applicable portions of the caregiver application and be interviewed by the pastor responsible for the ministry team involved. No reference checks or background checks will be necessary. A parent may be present for the pastoral interview.
- Caregivers are to be approved by the applicable ministry leader in consultation with the pastor overseeing the ministry team involved.

All records of these screening procedures will be kept securely along with the original application. The pastor who conducts the application interview will be the only person to view these records unless that pastor chooses to consult with the other pastor. In those specific cases, the other pastor will be granted confidential access to these records for the purpose of advising the pastor responsible for conducting the screening procedure.

Training

All caregivers (13 and older) must attend Caregiver Policies training before they are allowed to work with the children. The portion of training that will focus on identifying potential abuse will be given only to adults (18 and older). All caregivers who complete both the screening procedures and the Caregiver Policies training will be referred to as “qualified caregivers”.

Additional training sessions will be scheduled for existing caregivers to update them on policies and procedures. Parents with questions about caregiver training are welcome to attend these sessions.

Protecting the Minors While They Are In Our Care

Hall Monitors

The Hall Monitor is a qualified caregiver whose duties are not limited to any one classroom.

Hall Monitors generally move about the hallways during scheduled session times to observe any unusual activity and be of service to the other caregivers (e.g., locating parents or substituting temporarily for another caregiver.) The Hall Monitor and each classroom are equipped with a communication system to facilitate communication. A Hall Monitor is on duty during the regularly scheduled meetings of the church (e.g., Sunday morning CBFs, Sunday evening Awana, Wednesday evening Jubilate.) The ministry leader may serve as a Hall Monitor.

Arrival and Departure

Caregivers should be ready to accept children 15 minutes prior to the start of any session, so that parents have enough time to transition their children before the session begins.

Parents are encouraged to pick up their children immediately after the conclusion of the session. In the event that a child is not picked up within 15 minutes of the end of the session, caregivers will ask the Hall Monitor or the ministry leader to locate the parents.

Special Procedures for Young Children (Kindergarten aged and below)

Any parent/guardian who would like his/her child (Kindergarten aged and below) to participate in a Student Ministry program will sign the child into the appropriate classroom, nursery, or activity when he/she arrives, granting permission for the child to participate in that LBC event or program. The parent/guardian should also use this opportunity to note any allergies or special needs the child may have. For more details on our procedures for caring for children with allergies, please see the “Snacks and Food” section below. A standard sign-in form will be used for each of LBC’s Children’s Ministries requiring sign-in.

Parental Authentication Identification System

In order to protect the children in our care, each child (Kindergarten aged and below) must be signed into his/her class by a parent/guardian or guardian. Upon signing the child in, the parent/guardian and the child will each receive an identifier (a label, wristband, or other means of identification) as part of a two-part identification system. These identifiers will be used to confirm that each child is picked up by the appropriate parent/guardian or their authorized representative.

Parent/guardians who bring unrelated children as guests to a program or activity will be treated as the parent/guardian of the guest child in regard to all aspects of this policy handbook while they are participating in the program or activity.

At the end of the session when the parent/guardian comes to pick up the child:

1. The parent/guardian will sign the child out.
2. The Student Ministry caregiver will bring the child to the door and remove the child’s identifier. If the child or parent/guardian is unknown to the caregiver, the caregiver will ensure that the parent/guardian and child’s identifiers match.

Ordinarily, only the parent/guardian who signed the child into the class and possesses the parent/guardian identifier will be permitted to retrieve the child. The only exceptions to this rule:

1. In the event of an emergency that would result in neither parent/guardian being available to sign out the child at the end of a session, the child will be released to the care of a pastor, deacon, or ministry leader of LBC.
2. A parent/guardian may make prior arrangements with the applicable ministry leader (Awana, Junior Church, or Jubilate, for example) or designate to allow for someone other than him/herself or his/her spouse to pick up the child at the end of a session.
3. Members of the church who sign in their children will have the option to initial a column on the sign in sheet that will grant permission to their spouse or an older sibling (who is at least 13 years old) to pick up their child in the event that the parent/guardian who signs in the child is unable to sign the child out.

General Procedures

Two Caregiver Rule

At least two qualified caregivers must be present in each classroom. At least one caregiver must be an adult (18 or older) member of LBC. Youth fulfilling the role of a qualified caregiver must be at least thirteen years of age and a member of LBC. Exceptions to this rule are limited to:

1. For Awana and Home School Fellowship, the caregivers need not be LBC members, as long as they are trained Awana Leaders or a Home School Parents, as described in the section on Screening Procedures above.
2. For adult Bible study groups (either on church property or off) that are held without corresponding Student Ministry programming, care for children under the age of 8 may be provided by at least one caregiver age 13 or older while parents are on-site. If all of the children present are age 8 and above no organized childcare is required (subject to the discretion of the parents involved).
3. For youth activities (Middle and High School), there must be at least two teenagers present when supervised by a single adult leader. One adult leader and one teenager should not be alone together, except for the purpose of counseling, as described below.
4. For unexpected absences involving a qualified caregiver, the ministry leader responsible for the ministry affected should make every effort to fill the need with another qualified caregiver. If one is not available, any LBC member, at least 13 years of age, may serve to assist the caregivers so long as at least 1 qualified caregiver is present. The Ministry Lead should also inform a pastor (or deacon if a pastor is not available) when a nonqualified caregiver is filling in for that session.

Child-to-Caregiver Ratios

In addition to always having two caregivers present, the following ratios are to be maintained during the regularly scheduled weekly meetings of the church:

- Children ages 0-2 one adult for every two-four children, depending on their ages
- Children ages 3-5 one adult for every eight children
- Children ages 6-12 one adult for every twelve children

For off-site travel, a ratio of one adult for every five participants is recommended.

The applicable ministry leader, the pastor responsible for ministry team involved or the Hall Monitor should be notified if more caregivers are needed in order to maintain these ratios. Any LBC member, at least 13 years of age, may serve to assist the caregivers so long as a minimum of 2 qualified caregivers are present.

If additional caregivers are not available to meet the desired child-to-caregiver ratios, the ministry leader may close the class to additional children for that session.

Open Door Policy

Any time a child (or children) are in the care of LBC caregivers at the church facility, the door to the classroom must remain open or else have an unobstructed window in the unlocked door.

Counseling

Any time one-on-one counseling is required for a child it will be performed by a caregiver in an easily accessible open area or in a room with an unobstructed window in the unlocked door and with another adult nearby. If another adult is not available or it is not possible to give proper counseling with another adult present, then another adult must have knowledge of the session.

Transportation

When LBC provides transportation for a Children's or Youth Ministry event using the church vans or privately owned vehicles, at least one caregiver and one other adult shall be in each vehicle when in transit. Waivers for travel related to local events may be issued when requested from the pastoral staff.

Social Media Guidelines

Please refrain from posting pictures and personal information of children under the age of 13 without parental consent on any social media sites. Any photos used for LBC purposes (website, promotional flyers, posters, etc.) should have parental consent. For a large organized church event that would involve children as the subject matter of the photos, verbal or written consent from the parent/guardian is needed. There is a statement on our registration form that informs parents and obtains their consent regarding photos of their children prior to being posted on the church's website or on social media.

Appropriate Discipline

All caregivers are responsible for providing a loving, respectful, and orderly atmosphere in which children can learn, play, and interact with others. This atmosphere should be maintained by preparing beforehand, proactively directing children towards acceptable activities, verbally encouraging positive behavior, and, when necessary, correcting or redirecting inappropriate behavior.

Acceptable means of redirecting inappropriate behavior include correcting the child verbally, withholding a certain privilege or activity for a brief time, or separating a child from the group for a brief time (particularly if his behavior is endangering or upsetting other children).

Caregivers and staff members should never yell at, spank, or hit a child. If the child's behavior is uncontrollable or the child does not respond to the discipline measures above, ask the Hall Monitor to call the parents. For further information regarding discipline please speak with the pastor responsible for Student Ministry.

Rest Room Procedure

2 Year Olds through Pre-K

Adults who accompany a child to the restroom should position themselves such that the child has a sense of privacy but where the adults are able to recognize if the child requires assistance. If assistance is needed, the stall door must stay open to remain visible for supervision. In most cases, the adults will be the same gender as the child, although this may not always be practical. It is advisable to take more than one child to the restroom at a time.

Kindergarten through Fifth Grade

For classes involving children ages kindergarten through 5th grade, if a child requests to use the restroom, the caregiver will select another child of the same gender to go with them to and from the restroom. If special assistance is required, or if another child of the same gender is not available, the caregiver should ask for the Hall Monitor to step in and relieve them to allow the caregiver to escort the child to the restroom. For third through fifth grade children, they may go to and from the restroom by themselves if no child of the same gender is available.

Middle School and High School

Students in the Middle School and High School class shall use the appropriate restroom on their own. No caregiver or other child should accompany him/her.

Food Service and Allergies

An important duty of the Student Ministries at LBC is to provide a safe and loving environment for the children entrusted to our care so that their parents may be fed spiritually without undue concern.

One of the ways we protect children is to limit the food and drink allowed in classrooms.

We covenant with parents to protect and nurture their children while they are in our care & so our vigilance is in proportion to the degree of the trust given us. We desire to be faithful to that charge.

Ongoing Care for Children with Allergies

Parents of children with allergies who attend regularly should talk with the applicable ministry leader about how to handle any unexpected allergic reactions. Allergy information for regularly attending children should be readily available in the classroom to the caregivers.

Serving Snacks

Caregivers should always check each child's identifier (a label, wristband, or other means of identification) before serving a snack. If the child is wearing an identifier that indicates an allergy, the caregiver **MUST** check the sign in book to determine the nature of the allergy.

If instructions are not clear, no food should be given to the child without clarification from the parent/guardian. The caregiver should send a Hall Monitor to clarify with the child's parent/guardian or guardian.

For all Children's Ministries, a snack "menu" listing any snacks that will be offered during that session will be clearly posted at the door to inform parents/guardians.

Administering Snacks and Food (by age group)

0-17 to Pre-Kindergarten

Basic snacks such as animal crackers or goldfish and water may be offered to the children in Pre-K and below.

If a child should not be given a snack of this nature, the parent/guardian should do the following:

- Verbally notify the team leader on duty
- Utilize an identifier for their child that indicates an allergy or exception to serving a snack to their child.
- Note the nature of the allergy and how to respond to an allergic reaction in the appropriate spot in the sign in book
- Parents MAY bring a suitable snack for their child if they are concerned about allergies. The snack MUST be clearly labeled in a container or bag for their child.

Kindergarten and above

Snacks of various kinds MAY regularly be offered as part of ministries that serve children Kindergarten age and above. Parents should verbally notify teachers upon check-in about the nature of any allergy or food limitations and note the information in the sign in book (if applicable).

Healthy Child Policy and Medical Procedures

In order to prevent the spread of communicable diseases among the children, four rules are in place concerning disease. Both parents and caregivers must be familiar with these policies.

1. Children with infectious diseases should be kept home until they are no longer contagious. If a child is exhibiting symptoms of illness such as fever, diarrhea, open skin lesions or blisters (as in chicken pox), or persistent nasal discharge, the parent/guardian should keep the child home.
2. Caregivers will use gloves and proper hygiene procedures to change diapers, wipe noses, and handle blood spills.
3. Hand washing or usage of anti-bacterial hand sanitizer must be a regular habit for both children and Caregivers.
4. Toys and equipment are washed and disinfected regularly. LBC is dedicated to preventing the spread of disease among the children.

Caregivers and the ministry leaders have the right to refuse a child on the basis of questionable symptoms. To prevent this, parents are asked to comply with the following guidelines. A child may should not participate in a class if and when any of the following exist:

- Fever (Note: Children should be free of a fever for 24 hours after a contagious disease before coming back to church.)
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Any symptom of childhood diseases such as scarlet fever, German measles, mumps,
- Chicken pox, or whooping cough
- Common cold – from onset through one week
- Sore throat
- Croup
- Any unexplained rash
- Any skin infection – boils, ringworm, impetigo
- Pink eye or other eye infection
- Thick green, yellow or constant nasal discharge
- Any other communicable disease

Children who appear ill during a class will be kept at the sign-in desk with a caregiver while the Hall Monitor locates the parents.

Parents should inform the applicable ministry leader if your child appears to have contracted an illness while attending a LBC event so that other parents may be notified if necessary.

Medication

Neither caregivers nor church staff are allowed to give any medication to any child during the regularly scheduled weekly meetings of the church. In the case of an overnight activity, written instructions and personal instruction shall be given to a staff member or caregiver as needed. If the possible need for emergency care is anticipated during any activity whether weekly or overnight (such as an Epi Pen), the child's parents shall provide training to all caregivers who staff that ministry on how to administer the emergency care if the parent/guardian cannot be reached in time.

Accidents and First Aid

All classrooms are equipped with basic first aid kits. Caregivers should be familiar with their contents and uses. In the event of life-threatening injury or illness, emergency medical services will be called first and the Hall Monitor will locate and inform the parents immediately. Caregivers will complete an Accident Report Form for all injuries. Forms can be obtained from the sign-in desk. Completed forms should be given to the Ministry Lead who will then discuss the incident with the Associate Pastor for Students.

Universal Precautions

Universal precautions are employed such that all human bodily fluids are treated as if they carried infectious diseases. Universal precautions are applicable in a church setting and should be utilized. The method is very effective for protecting both the children and caregivers in the church from illness. This is not to imply that any children or caregivers are carrying infectious diseases. By treating all bodily fluids as if they are infected, any infections or contaminants can be avoided at all times, providing a safer and healthier environment for caregivers and children alike. Important Points of Universal Precautions:

- Wash hands before and after any contact with bodily fluids, including wiping noses, changing diapers, cleaning vomit, and treating a blood spill.
- Always wear disposable gloves when dealing with any bodily fluids.
- Treat all soiled linen (i.e. sheets, clothing) as potential infectious agents.
- Remove toys that children have mouthed from the general play area. Set them in the container by the sink and wash.
- At the end of the session, disinfect the room with disinfectant spray.

Caring for Those with Special Needs

Equality of opportunity for all children is essential and it is important that children with special needs have the opportunity of learning about the Lord alongside their peers. For this reason, the special education needs of children will normally be met in the mainstream setting. If a child has special needs above and beyond this setting, the parents of this child should confer with the ministry lead for practical advice and support.

General Information

Lost and Found

Lost and Found at the Leonardtown Campus is located in the Ministry Team Resource Area in the foyer, next to the north-side doors. Lost and found items at the Callaway Campus will be with the First Impressions ministry team. All lost items will be placed there after services or ministry activities. Please check there if an item is left behind in one of the classrooms.

Minor Protection Leadership Team

The Minor Protection Leadership Team (MPLT) consists of the pastor overseeing the Student Ministries, and the ministry leaders for all Children's or Youth Ministries (from both LBC campuses, as applicable). The MPLT will be responsible to periodically review this policy and propose updates as necessary. All caregivers are encouraged to identify policies or procedures that may need to be improved, modified, or removed in the future.

Addressing Non-Compliance

Any caregiver who witnesses a violation of these Protection Policies, short of abuse, neglect, or molestation should first notify the person violating the policy and encourage compliance. If the person violating the policy refuses to comply, the member of the MPLT that leads the applicable ministry team should be notified immediately unless the non-compliance involves that ministry leader. In such cases, the caregiver should immediately notify the pastor who oversees Student Ministries or the Senior Pastor.

Responding to Suspected Abuse

All caregivers stand ready to receive information related to suspected child neglect, abuse, or molestation. They are committed to addressing all allegations in accordance with the LBC church covenant and the laws of the state of Maryland and St. Mary's County.

All caregivers must report suspected sexual or physical abuse of minors. A report conveying all relevant information regarding the suspected abuse shall be given immediately to the pastor who oversees the ministry team that provides the ministry activity and/or program through which the alleged abuse was discovered, who shall also have the obligation to insure that appropriate authorities are notified. The report should include the following: (i) the names of the alleged victim, the alleged wrongdoer and all witnesses; and (ii) a description of the facts surrounding the incident. In addition to the duty to report, any caregiver also has the right to report suspected abuse directly to the appropriate authorities responsible for receiving such reports. Nothing herein shall be deemed to limit an individual's obligation to report any child abuse or neglect to the proper public authorities. In St. Mary's County, such reports can be made to the Department of Social Services.

Accountability

"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:1-2 (ESV)

The objectives of LBC's efforts to protect our children, youth, and caregivers are three fold:

1. To preserve the security and innocence of our children,
2. To preserve the unity of the body of Christ through faithful accountability, and
3. Most importantly to preserve the precious and holy name of Jesus Christ, whom we represent to the world as his Bride.

When we as a church stumble in this area, we cause grave damage to our Lord's Great Commission purposes in our community and beyond. Certainly, God's eternal purposes will not ultimately be thwarted, but he has entrusted us with the stewardship of His Holy Word and His Church. By God's grace and with His help, LBC must be wise and faithful defenders of His kingdom.