

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Policies to Protect Children in the Care of Employees and Volunteers

Introduction

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (“MBTS”) has implemented the following Policies to ensure a healthy and safe environment for the children who are under the care of our employees and volunteers as part of the free childcare that is provided for the Midwestern Women’s Institute (“MWI”) while mothers are in class or attending MWI Connect events or other MBTS events. These Policies are not intended to diminish the development of meaningful relationships between the MBTS’ employees and volunteers and the children in their care but rather to provide clear and concise practices that will both protect children and foster a safe environment for everyone.

Code of Conduct

The following Code of Conduct provides the MBTS employees and volunteers (collectively, “Personnel”) with a clear mandate of the MBTS’ expectations regarding behavior around children. All MBTS Personnel who supervise children as part of MBTS or MWI’s provision of childcare must agree to abide by the Code of Conduct described herein.

1. Personnel agree to prevent all types of abuse and neglect to children involved in the MBTS or MWI activities and events.
2. Personnel agree to fully comply with the Policies to Protect Children in the Care of Employees and Volunteers (“the Policies”) described below.
3. In the event that Personnel observe any form of inappropriate behavior involving children, Personnel agree to report their observations to the MBTS leaders [**please insert name(s)**] immediately.
4. Personnel understand their responsibility to protect children in their care, and agree to report immediately any known or suspected abuse or neglect to the appropriate MBTS leader [**please insert name(s)**].
5. Personnel agree to read the Policies in their entirety and to abide by the Policies in all Personnel interactions with children.
6. All Personnel must sign and date the Policies prior to participating in the activities involving the supervision of children.

Policies to Protect Children in the Care of Employees and Volunteers

These Policies are intended to provide Personnel with clear guidelines regarding conduct that protects all children in the care of Personnel. All Personnel are required to read and understand these Policies prior to the start of any activity or event involving children as part of the MWI’s childcare program.

A. Criminal Background Screening

- a. All Personnel, age 18 and older shall authorize MBTS and/or MWI to initiate a criminal background investigation prior to the start of any provision of childcare or other programs involving children at MBTS or the MWI. The criminal background investigation will result in a report of prior criminal activity, including but not limited to, driving and traffic citations, placement on sex offender registries, arrest and conviction records, and juvenile delinquency proceedings, consistent with applicable federal, state, and local laws.
- b. The information generated by the investigation shall be carefully evaluated by MBTS or the MWI to determine whether the particular person is appropriate to supervise children.
- c. In the event that something on the criminal background report indicates that an individual would be inappropriate to supervise children, the individual will be provided a copy of the report and all other documents required by the Fair Credit Reporting Act.
- d. If Personnel is under the age of 18, MBTS or MWI will obtain reference letters from the person's pastor(s), teachers and/or employers prior to allowing the individual to care for or supervise children.

B. Interactions Between Personnel and Children

- a. Personnel, whether an adult or minor volunteer or employee, are prohibited from being alone with a child or groups of children where other Personnel or MBTS or MWI employees or leaders cannot observe them.
- b. Personnel over the age of 18 are required to supervise Personnel under the age of 18, and at least one adult employee or volunteer must be physically present at every event or activity.
- c. Personnel are prohibited from driving a child or group of children in personal vehicles unless at least one other adult leader, employee, or volunteer is present in the vehicle at all times and each child's parent has provided written consent.
- d. Personnel are prohibited from certain types of physical contact with children. Absolutely no sexual contact between Personnel and children is permitted. Physical touching of children should be kept to a minimum, and certain types of touching will be considered inappropriate and in violation of these Policies. For an illustrative list of both appropriate and inappropriate forms of physical contact, see Appendix A.

- e. Personnel are prohibited from swearing, using derogatory, insensitive, or inappropriate language, whether directly in the presence of children or not. Personnel shall make reasonable efforts to ensure others in the presence of children to not use foul or inappropriate language.
- f. Personnel are prohibited from the use, possession, distribution, or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs while involved with MBTS or MWI activities. Personnel shall not provide alcohol or illegal drugs of any type to children in their care.
- g. Personnel are prohibited from possessing, distributing, accessing, viewing, or using any sexually oriented or pornographic materials, publications, internet websites, movies, films, or in any other medium.
- h. Personnel shall not dress, undress, bathe, or shower in the presence of children, nor shall Personnel permit children to dress, undress, bathe, or shower in the presence of anyone while in the care of Personnel.
- i. Personnel are prohibited from using physical punishment or discipline, including but not limited to, spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, biting, grabbing, kicking, punching, or any other physically abusive form of punishment. Physical force may only be used to stop a behavior that may cause immediate harm to the child.

C. Monitoring and Reporting Behavior

- a. Personnel shall remain vigilant in the presence of children, and make all efforts to ensure each child's physical, mental, and emotional well-being at all times.
- b. In the event that Personnel observe inappropriate behaviors or behaviors that would violate these Policies, Personnel shall immediately report their observations to MBTS or MWI leadership.
- c. Minor Personnel who observe or suspect abuse of a child may first report the abuse to one of the adult employees, unless the employees are suspected of or observed causing the abuse. In such circumstances, minor Personnel shall immediately notify MBTS or MWI leadership.
- d. All Personnel are required to report known or suspected child abuse to the appropriate state authorities. Reports may be made anonymously; however, a failure to report may be a crime.

D. Ensuring a Safe Environment

- a. Personnel shall keep children in their direct line of sight at all times, unless the child is using the restroom, in which case Personnel must afford the child sufficient privacy to avoid violating these Policies. No employee or volunteer shall be alone in a restroom with a child or children.
- b. While off-site on field trips or for meals with children, Personnel shall follow these procedures for ensuring the safety of children. In the event that children must cross streets or face other potentially dangerous conditions, Personnel shall take all reasonable measures to protect children from harm.
- c. Personnel shall abide by these procedures and these Policies for the transportation of children in their care. Personnel shall abide by all traffic laws and take all necessary precautions to ensure the safety of the children.

APPENDIX A

To assist Personnel in creating and sustaining a healthy, nurturing environment for all children in their care, the following guidelines are provided as examples of both appropriate and inappropriate displays of affection. This guideline is not intended to list all types of affection that are considered appropriate or inappropriate, but rather is meant as a helpful guide.

Appropriate Forms of Affection/Touching:

- Brief hugs;
- Pats on the shoulders or back;
- Handshakes, fist-bumps, and “High-fives”;
- Verbal praise;
- Placing arms around shoulders;
- Holding hands while walking with small children;
- Sitting beside small children;
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children;
- Holding hands during prayer;
- Pats on the head if culturally appropriate;
- Touching a child’s face, hands, arms, or shoulders

Inappropriate Forms of Affection/Touching:

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces/hugs;
- Kissing of any kind;
- Holding children over three years old on the lap;
- Touching bottoms, chests, or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers;
- Showing affection in isolated areas outside of the view of others;
- Occupying a bed or other private area with a child;
- Touching the knees or legs of a child;
- Wrestling or tickling;
- Piggyback rides;
- Massages;
- Any form of unwanted touching;
- Any comments relating to physique or body development;
- Giving gifts or money to children;

I have read and understand all of the above Policies and agree to abide by them at all times.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Printed Name: _____