

Kingwood Church of Christ

Child Protection Policy

Introduction:

The disturbing and traumatic rise of child abuse across our nation has touched all areas of society. As a result, the Kingwood Church of Christ has enacted the following policy that is applicable to all members who work with children or youth, no matter what the environment or activity. This policy reflects Kingwood Church of Christ's commitment to providing a safe, positive environment for all children, youth, teachers, and volunteers who participate in any church-sponsored class, activity, or event.

Purpose:

The goal of this policy is to prevent abuse, molestation, and exploitation of both children and youth, as well as to protect those workers and volunteers. Young victims have little or no power to stop or prevent abuse, so voices other than theirs must speak for them. Adoption of these provisions will enable Kingwood Church of Christ to provide as safe and secure environment as possible for both members of our church family and our guests.

Terminology Used In This Document:

Adult: anyone 18 years of age or older.

Baby: anyone 0-36 months of age.

Child or Children: 5th grade and under.

Church Security Team: The elders will pre-designate a group that will implement, monitor, and enforce the Child Protection Policy, as well as other security matters pertaining to our congregation and church facilities.

Church Sponsored/Planned Event On or Off Campus: any classes, devotionals, activities, trips, etc. that involve children or youth and that are planned and/or sponsored under the auspices of the Kingwood Church of Christ.

Child Protection Policy (CPP): Each member of Kingwood Church of Christ with children or youth in any capacity shall receive a copy of this document and shall be asked/urged to attend a security training class. They will also be asked/urged to sign a document affirming that that they have read and understand the training and document.

FRT: The "First Responder Team" is responsible for the security of the members of Kingwood Church of Christ during regularly scheduled worship services and Children classes. This team will be the first to determine and react to any emergency or crisis situation.

Member: a person who has been formally introduced to the church as an enrolled member.

Parent/Guardian: the legal parent and/or guardian of a child or youth, or the adult who brings the child or youth to a church sponsored/planned event, on or off campus.

Shepherd: defined in the Kingwood Church of Christ Church By-Laws.

Worker: any person, sixteen years of age or older, who serves as a volunteer and/or paid worker.

Youth: anyone in grades 6-12th grade.

Youth Worker: any youth who has been appropriately trained and volunteers in the Children's Ministry

Screening Procedures:

To establish a safe and equitable care-giving environment, the Kingwood Church of Christ will conduct a screening process for any member interested in working with children or youth in any capacity. Any member seeking to work with children or youth, in any capacity, at Kingwood Church of Christ must comply with the following screening procedures.

Training Class: The screening procedure begins with the prospective worker(s) attending a training class. That session will include: training on the child protection policy, receiving a copy of the policy; reading through the policy and dating/signing an acknowledgement and understanding of the policy; completing an application, a criminal history check form, and policy agreement form. This training may also be accomplished through other training methods as they become available or through individual trainings between the volunteer and minister. At completion of required training and paperwork, appropriate documentation of completion of class will be provided to the individual as well as kept in a secure location in the church office. Certain positions will require the worker candidate to sign a release of information form authorizing former employers, co-workers, and educational facilities to comply with information request from the Kingwood Church of Christ or its authorized representative.

Application: Each member seeking to work with children or youth in any capacity during church planned/sponsored events on and off campus will be required to complete an application containing basic information. Only information considered vital to child safety standards at Kingwood Church of Christ will be sought/asked. The information gleaned from the application form will be deemed **confidential**.

Criminal History Check: Each member working with children or youth in any capacity during church planned/sponsored events on and off campus will undergo a criminal history check through an agency or a web-site service authorized to do so by Texas law. The criminal history check will be conducted at the church's expense, and results will be treated as **confidential**. Members are reminded that previous convictions, misdemeanors and felonies, as well as ongoing court cases, are public information and Kingwood Church of Christ cannot promise complete privacy relating to a criminal history. The Church Security Team will address any questionable matters deriving from the criminal history check. Any criminal history discovered on a worker/volunteer by the Kingwood Church of Christ or its authorized representatives which was not listed on the church application and/or criminal history check form by the worker/volunteer shall be grounds for immediate dismissal for cause.

Notes:

- ? Any applicant who has been convicted of either child abuse or physical abuse cannot engage in any function that might bring him/her into contact with children or youth.
- ? The Church Security Team retains the discretion to determine whether an applicant can work with children or youth.
- ? The elders will retain final discretion, are obligated and have the authority to approve or disapprove any applicant that has applied to work with children or youth.
- ? Any applicant who refuses to consent to the criminal history check will be disqualified from serving as either a volunteer worker or a paid staff member.
- ? Policy Agreement Form: Every member who attends a training class will be asked to sign and date a Policy Agreement Form to indicate that they have read, understand, and will abide by the CPP document while they are entrusted with the care of children and youth at Kingwood Church of Christ.

- ? Documentation: Once a member has completed the required training and background checks, documentation will be provided and they will be put on the official list of approved workers.
- ? Waiting Period: New members of Kingwood Church of Christ may be subject to a six-month waiting period before being placed in volunteer positions involving contact with children or youth. The waiting period may be waived at the minister's discretion. A letter of reference from the minister or director of children or youth programs at the last congregation attended will be required to waive the six-month rule. Without such letter, the waiting period will remain in effect.
- ? Special events: If a worker wishes to volunteer at a special event or program that includes a large number of approved workers, the application and waiting period will not be enforced. These workers will not be left alone with children, asked to take the child to the restroom or lead an activity. An example of such waiver occurs at Art Camp each year as many volunteers from the community serve as assistants in the classroom or kitchen.
- ? Workers File: A file will be maintained on each member that completes the above screening and procedures. The Church Security Team will hold all materials in a worker's file in confidence and in a locked container.
- ? Adult Survivors of Child Abuse: Members seeking to work with child or youth in any capacity and who themselves are adult survivors of child abuse may be asked to meet with a Minister prior to working in a ministry area involving children.

Youth Worker Requirements

- ? Must complete an application with parental permission.
- ? Must complete required volunteer training for the area in which the youth worker is applying to serve. For example, a youth worker would need to attend required King's Court training to serve in King's Court.
- ? 5th Grade and below may serve as youth workers as determined appropriate by parents and coordinators/lead teachers.

Supervision of children:

To achieve the goal of maximizing the safety and well being of children and youth at the Kingwood Church of Christ, the following supervision guidelines define the responsibilities for workers.

Classes:

A) All workers must complete the above process before having access to children/youth events.

B) All youth workers must complete appropriate training and will be included on the approved youth workers list at completion of training.

C) Each ministry program may determine the appropriate age for youth workers (for example: minimum worker age may be higher for infants than for preschoolers).

D) Two adults will be assigned to all classrooms. Youth workers may be helpers but do not count toward the two adult rule.

E) Every teacher should arrive at their assignment 10 minutes early, in order to accept children under these guidelines and greet visitors.

F) If two adults are not available for a classroom, the door will remain open or the class will be held in a classroom with windows in the doors.

G) Classes may decide to meet in locations other than their assigned classrooms. Parents should be notified one week in advance of a change of location and a sign should be posted during class giving late arrivals and visitors alternative class information. If the location is off campus, church transportation should be secured and used for the trip.

H) Every attempt should be made to follow appropriate worker/student guidelines. However, as these are only goals, flexibility is allowed. Children should not be turned away from an event/class but an attempt should be made to secure additional workers should the ratio be exceeded by more than 2 children.

I) Appropriate worker/student guidelines are as follows:

Program	Volunteers/Workers	Children/Student
Infants – 0 to 9 months	1	4
Toddlers – 10 – 23 months	1	6
Two Year Olds	1	8
Three Year Olds - Kindergarten	1	9
First - 5 th Grade	1	10

Events and Special Activities

A) Events involving children will need volunteers to help manage, serve, teach and supervise. The number of volunteers needed will differ depending on the nature of the event.

B) An adult volunteer should never place themselves in a situation where they are alone with a child. Situations will arise where a child may need to meet with an adult volunteer in a one on one situation. If such a situation arises, the volunteer should inform another adult of the location and with whom they are meeting. Such meetings should take place in a location in plain view of others.

C) Adult volunteers will not engage in inappropriate physical conduct with a children (See: “Proper Displays of Affection”)

Supervision of Youth (6th-12th grade):

To achieve the goal of maximizing the safety and well being of the youth of the Kingwood Church of Christ, the following supervision guidelines define the responsibilities for workers. All volunteers working with the youth must complete the above process and appropriate training before having access to youth events or classes.

Classes:

- A) Two adult teachers will be assigned to every class.
- B) Every teacher should arrive at their assignment 10 minutes early, in order to greet visitors and those arriving early and on time in order to have a prepared and orderly teaching environment.
- C) If two adults are not available for a classroom, the door should remain open or the class should be held in a classroom with windows in the doors.
- D) Every attempt should be made to follow appropriate volunteer guidelines. However, as these are only goals, flexibility is allowed. Youth should not be turned away from an event/class but an attempt should be made to secure additional workers.
- E) Classes may decide to meet in locations other than their assigned classrooms. Parents should be notified one week in advance of a change of location and a sign should be posted during class giving late arrivals and visitors alternative class information. If the location is off campus, church transportation should be secured and used for the trip.

Events and Special Activities:

- E) Each youth event will need volunteers to help manage, serve, teach and supervise. The number of volunteers needed will differ depending on the nature of the event.
- B) An adult volunteer should never place themselves in a situation where they are alone with a youth of the opposite sex. Situations will arise where a youth may need to meet with an adult volunteer in a one on one situation. If such a situation arises, the volunteer should inform another adult of the location and with whom they are meeting. Such meetings should take place in a location in plain view of others.
- F) Adult volunteers will not engage in inappropriate physical conduct with a youth (See: "Proper Displays of Affection")
- G) No adult volunteer is to date or be romantically involved with a youth.

Classroom Guidelines for Parents:

Description of Check-in/Check-out procedures used for children:

We make every effort to check-in/check-out children from all church sponsored events and classes. Each age and class area will have individual instructions regarding check-in/check-out. This procedure should be documented in the teacher training materials, published in any available parent's information and posted for visitors. Ministry needs and scheduling changes often and as such, methods of check-in/check-out change in order to accommodate our structure. Currently, we use several methods to track our children's attendance and to accomplish check-in/check-out:

- 1) Triple Part Nametags: The child wears a nametag and the parent keeps a portion of the tag. The tag is then traded for the children at pick-up. These are most often used in the nursery.
- 2) Dual permanent nametags: the child wears a tag and the parent takes a tag to trade in at pick-up.
- 3) Computerized check-in: parents check children into a computer system that prints dual disposable nametags with up-to-date information about allergies and medical concerns.
- 4) Sign-in sheets: parents sign in children at drop-off and the teacher checks to be sure all children are picked up by the appropriate parent.
- 5) Class roles are maintained for older classes, even when check-in/check-out is not required.

Check-in/Check-Out Guidelines:

- 1) All children in the nursery should be checked-in/checked-out with a dual or triple part nametag or other such similar system. They should only be released to an adult that has the matching nametag.
- 2) All preschool children should be checked-in/checked-out with a dual nametag system. Adults and older siblings may pick up the child, so it is essential that the parent keeps up with their nametag and report it missing immediately should it be misplaced.
- 3) If a nametag system is not available, each area must utilize a sign-in system.
- 4) Elementary children in 1st and 2nd grade should be picked-up by a parent or sibling from class. Elementary children in 3rd – 5th grade may be released after class as long as the parents have been notified and has given permission for the release of their children. Please communicate with all visitors the necessity to pick-up their child or to approve their dismissal from class into their own care by their teacher.

Once a child is released from a classroom under these guidelines, they are considered to be in the care of their parents or caregiver and the teacher will no longer be responsible for them.

Well Child Policy: All Children and Youth

Parents are asked to follow the following health guidelines to help insure the well-being of the other babies/children and to keep the nurseries and classrooms as germ-free as possible:

- ? No child who has fever, diarrhea or who has vomited within the previous twenty-four hours should be brought to the nursery or class.
- ? No child with excessive coughing, sneezing, or runny nose should be brought to the nursery or class.
- ? No child with any contagious virus or infection should be brought to the nursery or class.
- ? No child who has pink eye (even under treatment) should be brought into the nursery or class.

If a child needs medication while they are in the nursery or class, the parent is required to come and administer the medication.

Proper Display of Affection:

Physical touch is an important element in the communication of love and care. It is an essential part of the nurturing process that should be characteristic of ministry with students. Volunteers need to be aware of, and sensitive to, the special and differing needs and preferences of each individual. Physical contact should be age- and developmentally appropriate and is most appropriate when done publicly.

1. Appropriate Touch

The following guidelines are recommended as pure, genuine and positive displays of God's love:

- a. Meet children at their eye level by bending down or sitting.
- b. Listen to individuals with your ears, eyes, and heart.
- c. Hold the child's hand while listening or speaking to him or when walking to an activity.
- d. Putting an arm around the shoulder of an individual when comforting, quieting, or greeting is an appropriate way to hug. This side-to-side type of hug should only be done in public.
- e. A light touch to a hand, shoulder or back when encouraging is acceptable.
- f. Gently hold the shoulders or chin of a child when redirecting the child's behavior. This helps the child focus on what you are saying and is helpful to children who have Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder.
- g. Hold a preschool child who is crying.

2. Inappropriate Touch

The following types of touch must be avoided:

- a. Kissing a child or coaxing a child to kiss you.
- b. Extended hugging or tickling, or prolonged physical contact of any kind.
- c. Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit (exception: properly assisting a child in the rest room).
- d. Carrying an older child or sitting him or her on your lap.
- e. Being alone with a child.
- f. Giving a full contact, body-to-body hug.

Bathroom Policy:

It is often necessary for workers to assist young children to the restroom. Children's privacy should be maintained while helping the child to and from the restroom facility.

- 1) Workers should observe the nursery guidelines when changing diapers in our classes for three year olds and under. Workers should wear gloves and should make use of diaper changing stations. A child's diapers should be changed by and in the presence of approved workers (youth workers should not change diapers).
- 2) If a child is in an age group that requires him or her to be checked in/out of class, than that child should be escorted to the bathroom (3rd grade and under).
- 3) The worker should remain outside the bathroom door and should not enter a stall with a child or enter restrooms of the opposite sex.
- 4) The workers primary responsibility is ensuring that the child has a safe trip to and from the restroom facility in a timely manner.
- 5) When possible, two adults should be present if a worker must enter the restroom. If not possible, more than one child should be present.

Potty Training

Many preschoolers are potty training. Often, parents ask workers to help children as they develop their restroom skills. Workers should assist children in a caring manner. Workers should:

- 1) Escort the child to the restroom.
- 2) When possible have more than one adult present and leave the stall open so that the child is never alone with a worker. If a child wants the door closed, the worker should stand outside of the stall.
- 3) When another adult is not present, take at least two children to the restroom.
- 4) Encourage the child to accomplish as much of the bathroom tasks as possible on their own.
- 5) For young children, just beginning to potty train, be available to help the child wipe and dress.
- 6) Potty-trained children should not need help with these tasks. At pick-up, inform parents that their child has visited the restroom and may need to be checked for cleanliness.

Transportation:

Anyone transporting children or youth should refer to the guidelines or policies set by Kingwood Church of Christ F&A Committee.

Church Sponsored Babysitting

Trained youth workers or paid babysitters may supervise at church sponsored events or meetings. They should be under the supervision of a worker, director, or parent and that adult must be available on campus for the entire event. Appropriate child to worker ratios must be met.

Compliance:

Each member assigned to serve in the areas of children and/or youth ministry is responsible for implementing the provisions set forth in this policy during all church sponsored/planned events, either on or off campus. This policy further applies to all paid church personnel, regardless of whether or not they are specifically assigned to children or youth ministries. In order to be in compliance with this policy, everyone involved with children or youth must be familiar with, and agree to abide by this policy's provisions

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse:

Any allegation of child abuse arising from actions improperly taken or improperly not taken will be investigated immediately. Any such situations will be handled forthrightly, with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality, and with due process considerations.

Suspected or Observed Child Abuse: According to the definitions found in the Texas Family Code, Section 261.001, if a worker suspects or observes child abuse or neglect, the worker is legally compelled to report his/her observations or findings to the proper authorities according to Texas Family Code Section 261.101.

Allegations of Child Abuse: If a child, parent, or worker makes allegations of inappropriate conduct on the part of a volunteer worker or a paid church employee the following steps will be taken.

1. If the allegation is made against anyone other than paid church staff, the Children's Minister and/or Youth Minister will be notified. If the allegation is made against paid church staff, a Shepherd will be notified, as well as the congregation's legal counsel.
2. The Children's Minister, Youth Minister, and/or Shepherd will immediately notify the Church Security Team, and together they will determine a plan of action for the church to investigate the matter. (If a child made the allegation, the Children's and/or Youth Minister and/or Church Security Team will inform the parent of the allegation and the steps that will be taken to investigate.) The investigation will include interviewing the parents and, as appropriate, the victim, to obtain a simple statement of what happened.
3. If abuse is suspected, the Children's and/or Youth Minister and/or Church Security Team will then contact the accused, tell him or her of the allegation, and attempt to obtain a statement concerning the allegation. He or she will be informed of our obligation to report the situation to Child Protective Services and will be asked to suspend work with children and youth until an investigation has been completed. Both statements will be recorded in written form and kept on file, using the "Incident Statement Form". A report will be given to the Church Security Team and follow up action will be determined. The accused worker may well refuse to provide a written or verbal statement, and that is his/her legal prerogative [to avoid the possibility of criminal self-incrimination]. However, the church does retain the right to permanently dismiss either voluntary or paid staff members who opt not to participate in the non-criminal, i.e., non-governmental investigation.
4. If the investigation reveals that the allegation involves inappropriate conduct (but is not considered child abuse as prescribed by Texas law), the Children's and/or Youth Minister and Church Security Team will agree on a course of action. This action can range from counseling the accused and re-education about proper conduct for a first offense, to removal from the ministry for repeated offenses. The parents will be informed of the action before it is implemented. If the decision rendered is to not remove the accused, he/she will receive special monitoring to ensure that the original situation will be not be repeated.
5. If the allegation appears to be child abuse as prescribed by Texas law, the Children's and/or Youth Minister and/or Church Security Team will report the information to authorities under the child abuse reporting statute.
6. If a child, parent, or worker makes allegations of inappropriate conduct on the part of any adult who is **neither** a volunteer worker nor a paid church employee (a church member or visitor for example) the following steps will be taken:
 - a. Any Minister or Shepherd should be notified.

- b. The Minister and/or Shepherd will immediately notify the Church Security Team. Together they will determine the plan of action for investigation on the part of the church. (If the child made the allegation, the Minister and/or Church Security Team will then inform the parent of the allegation and the steps that will be taken to investigate.)
- c. The investigation will include an interview with the parents (and the child if appropriate) to get a simple statement of what happened.
- d. If abuse is suspected, the Minister and/or Church Security Team will then contact the accused, tell him or her of the allegation, and get a statement concerning the allegation. He or she will be informed of our obligation to report the situation to Child Protective Services. Both statements will be recorded in written form and kept on file.
- e. If the allegation appears to be one involving inappropriate conduct (but is not considered child abuse as prescribed by Texas law) the Minister and/or Church Security Team will inform the parents that the allegation does not appear to be child abuse, and that we will inform the person being accused of the allegation and tell them of the unacceptable nature of their behavior. We will then monitor the situation, and we will also tell the parents that they retain the right to make a report to Child Protective Services.
- f. If the allegation appears to be child abuse as prescribed by Texas law, the Minister and/or Church Security Team will report the information to authorities under the child abuse reporting statute.
- g. If a child alleges abuse to a volunteer worker about an incident that occurred in a non-church context, i.e., by a neighbor, parent, relative, or school employee, the worker will seek the counsel of the Children's Minister and/or Youth Minister on how to proceed. The matter may be resolved by notifying the child's parents or C.P.S. Once the allegation has been resolved, a final report will be prepared by the Children's Minister and/or Youth Minister and kept on file.
- h. If a child alleges abuse to a paid staff member about an incident that occurred in a non-church context, i.e., by a neighbor, parent, relative, or school employee, or if the employee observes or suspects abuse, the employee must notify his or her supervisor or Shepherd and Child Protective Services. Once the allegation has been resolved, a final report will be prepared by the employee's supervisor and kept on file.

Follow-up to Allegations, Accusations or Suspected Child Abuse: This policy emphasizes prevention as the primary safeguard for our children and youth. However, in the unlikely event that an allegation, accusation, or suspicion of abuse occurs, the church is committed to adopting a proactive stance in ministering to the victim, the victim's family, the accused, the family of the accused, and the congregation, as appropriate. Typically, follow-up will involve Shepherds and Ministers developing a course of action that provides follow through to the various individuals involved. The general approach will contain the following elements:

- ? The Shepherds will provide pastoral counsel and ministry to the emotional and spiritual needs of the victim and their family. This may include arrangements for professional therapy as required.
- ? The Shepherds will provide pastoral counsel and ministry to the spiritual needs of the accused and their family. This may include arrangements for professional treatment and therapy as required.

- ? As appropriate, the Shepherds will communicate with the congregation, while respecting the privacy of the individuals involved.
- ? Should investigation by authorities be required, the Shepherds and Ministers will cooperate fully with any investigation and legal actions that may result.
- ? As a result of their investigation and the conclusions they draw during that process, the Shepherds may act to exercise spiritual discipline on individuals found non-compliant and unrepentant.

Definitions from the Texas Family Code Section 261.001

“**Abuse**” is defined to include the following acts or omissions by a person: (A.) mental or emotional injury to a child that results in an observable and material impairment in the child’s growth, development, or psychological functioning; (B.) causing or permitting the child to be in a situation in which the child sustains a mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment in the child’s growth, development, or psychological functioning; (C.) physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child, or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the child, including an injury that is at variance with the history or explanation given and excluding an accident or reasonable discipline by a parent, guardian, or managing or possessory conservator that does not expose the child to a substantial risk of harm; (D.) failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent an action by another person that results in physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child; (E.) sexual conduct harmful to a child’s mental, emotional, or physical welfare, including conduct that constitutes that offense of indecency with a child under Section 21.11, Penal Code, sexual assault under Section 22.011, Penal Code, or aggravated sexual assault under Section 22.021, Penal Code; (F.) failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct harmful to a child; (G.) compelling or encouraging the child to engage in sexual conduct as defined by Section 43.01, Penal Code; (H.) casing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing the photographing, filming, or depicting of the child if the person knew or should have known that the resulting photograph, film, or depiction of the child is obscene as defined by Section 43.21, Penal Code, or pornographic; (I.) the current use by a person of a controlled substance as defined by Chapter 481, Health and Safety Code, in a manner or to the extent that the use results in physical, mental, or emotional injury to a child; (J.) causing, expressly permitting, or encouraging a child to use a controlled substance as defined by Chapter 481, Health and Safety Code; (K.) causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing a sexual performance by a child as defined by Section 43.25, Penal Code.

“**Neglect**” includes: (A.) the leaving of a child in a situation where the child would be exposed to a substantial risk of physical or mental harm, without arranging for necessary care for the child, and the demonstration of an intent not to return by a parent, guardian, or managing or possessory conservator of the child; (B.) the following acts or omissions by a person: (i.) placing a child in or failing to remove a child from a situation that a reasonable person would realize requires judgment or actions beyond the child’s level of maturity, physical condition, or mental abilities and that results in bodily injury or a substantial risk of immediate harm to the child; (ii.) failing to seek, obtain, or follow through with medical care for a child, with the failure resulting in or presenting a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or bodily injury or with the failure resulting in an observable and material impairment to the growth, development, or functioning of the child; (iii.) the failure to provide a child with food, clothing, or shelter necessary to sustain the life or health of the child, excluding failure caused primarily by financial inability unless relief services had been offered and refused; (iv.) placing a child in or failing to remove the child from a situation in which the child would be exposed to a substantial risk of sexual conduct harmful to the child; (v) placing a child in or failing to remove the child from a situation in

which the child would be exposed to acts or omissions that constitute abuse under subdivision (1)(e), (F), (G), (H) or (K) committed against another child; or (C.) the failure by the person responsible for a child's care, custody, or welfare to permit the child to return to the child's home without arranging for the necessary care for the child after the child has been absent from the home for any reason, including having been in residential placement or having run away.

Duty to Report – Texas Family Code Section 261.101: Persons required to report; time to report: (a.) A person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person shall immediately report as provided by this subchapter. (b.) If a professional has come to believe that a child has been abused or neglected or may be abused or neglected or that a child is a victim of an offense under Section 21.11, Penal Code, and the professional has cause to believe that the child has been abused as defined by Section 261.001 or 261.401, the professional shall make a report not later than the 48th hour after the hour the professional first suspects that the child had been or may be abused or neglected or is a victim of an offense under Section 21.11, Penal Code. A professional may not delegate to or rely on another person to make the report. In this subsection, “professional” means an individual who is licensed or certified the State or who is an employer of a facility licensed, certified, or operated by the State and who, in the normal course of official duties or duties for which a license or certification is required, has direct contact with children. The term includes teachers, nurses, doctors, day-care employees, employees of a clinic or health care facility that provides reproductive services, juvenile probation officers, and juvenile detention or correctional officers. (c.) The requirement to report under this section applies without exception to an individual whose personal communications may otherwise be privileged, including an attorney, a member of the clergy, a medical practitioner, a social worker, a mental health professional, and an employee of a clinic or health care facility that provides reproductive services. (d.) Unless waived in writing by the person making the report, the identity of an individual making a report under this chapter is confidential and may be disclosed only: (1.) as provided by Section 261.201; or (2.) to a law enforcement officer for the purposes of conducting a criminal investigation of the report.

Immunities – Texas Family Code Section 261.106: (a.) A person acting in good faith who reports or assists in the investigation of a report of alleged child abuse or neglect or who testifies or otherwise participates in a judicial proceeding arising from a report, petition, or investigation of alleged child abuse or neglect is immune from civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be incurred or imposed; (b.) Immunity from civil and criminal liability extends to an authorized volunteer of the department or a law enforcement officer who participates at the request of the department in an investigation of alleged or suspected abuse or neglect or in an action arising from an investigation if the person was acting in good faith and in the scope of the person's responsibilities; (c.) A person who reports the person's own abuse or neglect of a child or who acts in bad faith or with malicious purpose in reporting alleged child abuse or neglect is not immune from civil or criminal liability.

Failure to Report: Penalty 261.109: A person commits an offense if the person has cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect and knowingly fails to report as provided in this chapter. An offense under this section is a Class B misdemeanor.

Forms Commonly Used by the Kingwood Church:

Nursery/Pre-School/Children/Youth Worker Application: Used to receive the information required to approve individuals seeking to work in any capacity during church sponsored/planned events on or off campus with the children or youth ministries.

Criminal History Check Form: Used to receive the information and authorization required to complete a criminal background check on individuals 17 years of age and older, who applied to work in the children and/or youth ministries.

Youth Training Permission Form: Used to receive parental authorization required for individuals 15 years of age and younger seeking to work in any capacity with the children or youth ministries during church sponsored/planned events on or off campus.

Church Accident Report: Used to document and gather information relating to an accident occurring during any church sponsored/planned event on or off campus involving children or youth.

Church Incident Statement: Used to document statements and gather information relating to any incident occurring during any church sponsored/planned event on or off campus involving children or youth.

Church Policy Agreement Form: Used to document that the worker attended and understood a Child Protection Policy Training Class, has read and understands the Child Protection Policy, and will abide by the provisions set forth in the policy.