

Child Protection Policy

The Third Story, Inc.

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"But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believes in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea...See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." Matthew 18:6, 10

1. Introduction

Our highest priority is to offer children a safe place where they can grow in a supportive environment. Without establishing a place of refuge we **cannot** share the gospel. It is a tragedy when a child falls into the hands of an abuser, but when the abuse takes place on holy ground (a church or ministry setting) the trauma destroys the victim at a spiritual level. The outcome is devastating.

Volunteers must commit to the following statements:

- We will ensure the safety and protection of all children (youth under the age of 18) involved in our programs. The welfare of our children is paramount.
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse.
- All volunteers and staff (paid/unpaid) working with children enrolled in the program have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate person. All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly.

Child Abuse Definitions

Child Abuse is mistreatment or neglect of a child resulting in injury or harm, and may take one or more of the following forms:

Physical: any purposeful physical force or action that results, or could result, in injury to a child.

Emotional: a pattern of destructive behavior or verbal attacks by an adult on a child. It can include rejecting, terrorizing, ignoring, isolating, or exploiting a child.

Neglect: failure to provide for a child's basic needs: food, clothing, adequate shelter, supervision and medical care. It also includes failure to protect a child or seek help when a child is in danger.

Sexual: any sexual contact or sexual interaction with a child. It includes sexual touching (clothed or unclothed) of genitals or intimate parts (breast, groin, inner thighs and buttocks), penetration and oral contact. Sexual abuse also includes non-touching sexual behavior (including making a child watch sexual acts, exposing a child to pornography, lewd behavior or speech directed at a child, indecent exposure).

2. Screening and Training

The Third Story, Inc. recognizes that anyone may have the potential to abuse children. We will take reasonable steps to ensure that unsuitable people are prevented from working with our children.

- All volunteers/staff will complete a Third Story **Application**. The application will elicit information about an applicant's past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record.
- A criminal **background check** will be run on every volunteer and staff member.
- Two confidential **references** will be contacted via phone or email interview.
- Evidence of identity can be requested (passport or driving license with photo).
- All volunteers are required to attend a **Child Protection Training Seminar** and thoroughly read through and commit to abide by our Child Protection Policy.
- Attendance of **training sessions** (covering positive discipline and site safety procedures) is required.
- Individuals interested in the ministry are welcome to visit the site and observe the ministry. They must stay with another volunteer at all times and never be alone with the children. After the initial visit they must go through the application and training process if they would like to continue volunteer work with the ministry.

When a child is abused on Holy Ground...

- ❖ Loss of faith
- ❖ Loss of self-esteem
- ❖ Loss of support network
- ❖ Fragmentation of self
- ❖ Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- ❖ Severe spiritual trauma
- ❖ Shattered trust

“[Abuse]...takes a child who **knows nothing**
and makes them **believe nothing.**”

-Maya Angelou

3. Education

Fact or Fiction?

1. In urban neighborhoods some girls become sexually active before the age of 12
2. Child sexual abuse always involves physical contact with children.
3. Most child molesters are male
4. Child molesters are usually strangers
5. The incidence of child sexual abuse is often higher in the Christian community than in non-religious communities.
6. Only a small percentage of victims are male
7. 1 out of every 5 children are solicited sexually on the internet
8. Nearly 50% of all reported sexual assaults occur to children younger than age 18.
9. Child sexual abuse is a criminal offense in all 50 states
10. A child molester who has experienced a religious conversion no longer presents a threat to children
11. Some child molesters have up to 500 victims in a lifetime
12. Churches have in the past been supportive of victims of child sexual abuse
13. $\frac{3}{4}$ of sexual predators are younger than 35 years old.
14. Victims of sexual abuse suffer no long term effects.

(all odd numbers are true statements, even numbers are false)

4. Inside Predators

The Third Story will **never** tolerate any staff member or volunteer who abuses or shows any form of unkindness to the children in our care. Because of the vulnerability of our population we expect our volunteers to avoid any form of sarcasm, teasing or aggression when interacting with anyone (staff, volunteer or child) while in a ministry setting.

We will protect our children by doing whatever it takes to offer them both safety and advocacy. We will not inadvertently revictimize vulnerable children by forcing them into situations that might trigger feelings of helplessness and fear. **Please be aware that an act that seems acceptable can be traumatic for a child that has a history of chaos and abuse.** Always think before you act.

- The Third Story will NOT accept staff or volunteers who are or have ever been violent or sexual offenders.
- Any suspicion that a child has been abused by a volunteer or staff member should be immediately reported to the Director of Third Story or a Board Member (if the allegation concerns a staff member) who will take the necessary steps to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other children who may be at risk.
- The Third Story will (with its agents) immediately begin the process of bringing clarity to the situation. During this investigative period, you will not be allowed to continue in your ministry capacity and will be asked to not have any contact with children and families from the neighborhood. This is not a policy that marks you as guilty but rather a step The Third Story takes to protect all parties involved.
- The guardian of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from Child Protective Services and local law enforcement.
- The allegation will be thoroughly investigated. If deemed necessary Child Protective Services will be called or the local police. If an accusation appears valid all further communication will take place through The Third Story's insurance company.

We are aware that in an at-risk population there is a rare possibility of false reports (from children or family members) and we will take special caution to protect our volunteers and bring truth to each and every situation. If you are following policy, you will have safeguards in place. If any of the following occur, you should report this immediately to staff and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed:

- if you accidentally hurt a child
- if a child appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- if a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

5. Outside Predators

Not only is it vital that we give perpetrators no access to our children but we must also realize the reality that some of our kids have already endured abuse in their community and homes.

Warning Signs of Child Abuse

This list offers possible indications of abuse, but any of them could be a symptom of something else.

In parents and caregivers:

- Consistent berating or ridiculing of a child.
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Secretiveness
- Unsafe House
- Poor or no adult supervision

In children:

- Changes in personality or temperament, particularly towards rage, depression or withdrawal
- Consistent bruises on the head or face of a child (without plausible explanation)
- Marks on the abdomen or back of a child of any age
- Unexplained aches and pains or development of bladder problems, bowel problems or other abdominal problems
- Persistent crying or recurring nausea and irritability in a child. These might indicate head trauma
- Sexualized talk or action
- Persistent fear and insecurities
- Unwillingness to go home (escalating poor behavior when it is time to leave)
- Continual injuries that indicate improper supervision
- Complaints about bottom pain and refusing to sit down on one's bottom
- Touching other children inappropriately

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

1. *Immediately, after any suspicion, share the situation with staff. **Do not wait.** It is the staff's responsibility to report abuse.*
2. *In the rare case that you are in a situation where the staff is not available, call the Social Service Crisis line 720-944-3000. You may make your report anonymously.*

6. Ministry Policies

Educate Children through Example and Empowerment

- Create a place of trust where children can speak up.
- Compassionately address all instances of inappropriate language or behavior
- Be an excellent role model. Neither alcohol nor any substance that may impair your abilities will be consumed prior to or during your time with any youth associated with the program. Keep a guard on your tongue at all times. If you are connected to a child on social media these guidelines apply online.

Practice Nurturing Behavior Management

- Lay down boundaries for behavior before the activity begins.
- Create high expectations for behavior. Out of control kids are a danger to others
- Never grab a child.
- We document any instances of severe behavioral disruption.

Advocate

- Always put the welfare of the children first.
- Pay Attention. Always take action on any allegation made by a child.
- A child who sexually acts out will be dismissed from the program.
- Don't put a child who has been hurt in a situation that might be frightening to them or dangerous to you
- Always share any concerns you have concerning a child to an appropriate authority

Set Safe Boundaries and Use Appropriate Touch

- Physical affection should be initiated by the child and appropriate to the age of the child. Side hugs (not frontal), high fives and a pat on the shoulder are all appropriate forms of touch.
- It is not appropriate for a male volunteer to have a child in his lap. It is not appropriate for a female to have a child over the age 5 in her lap.
- No child will walk to the bathroom by themselves. An adult will always accompany each child and wait outside the door. If a younger child needs help a female volunteer may assist them but the door must remain open.
- Do not engage in rough or dangerous play (e.g. *wrestling, tickling, chasing* [unless in the structured Street Church Group Game] and *shoulder/piggyback rides*).
- Do not allow or engage in any form of touching that is or may be perceived as sexual.
- Never "playfully" hit or tease a child or do anything that can be seen to them as a prelude to violence.
- Avoid excessive appropriate touch. Maintain appropriate physical boundaries
- The children are **not your peers**. Do not share your problems or any intimate details of your life with them. Maintain appropriate emotional boundaries.

Create Community – Keep Everything in the Light

- **Never be alone with a child.** Ever.
- Always **check in with a parent/guardian** when picking up/dropping off children.
- Gifts should be given in community.
- We have no secrets here. If a child asks you to keep a secret tell them that you can't do that but that you will hold what they say "safe".

7. Communication Policy

(including, but not limited to, phone calls, text, social media and email)

1. Do not make a non-face-to-face connection with a child of the opposite sex
2. If you connect with a child on a social media site please be aware that they can see all your posts, pictures and comments (unless you block them) – you are choosing to extend the scope of your mentoring relationship
3. Do not use a child's name or identifying information in any kind of social media posting
4. Do not post pictures of children on social media or online photo pages unless you have the parent's permission
5. If you do have parental permission to post, please - no names in the caption and no tagging of **anyone** in the picture

Please turn your cell phone off (or put your ringer on vibrate) while inside the church. If you must take a call or answer a text, please let the director know and then quickly take your call or return your text out in the hall.

8. Site Safety

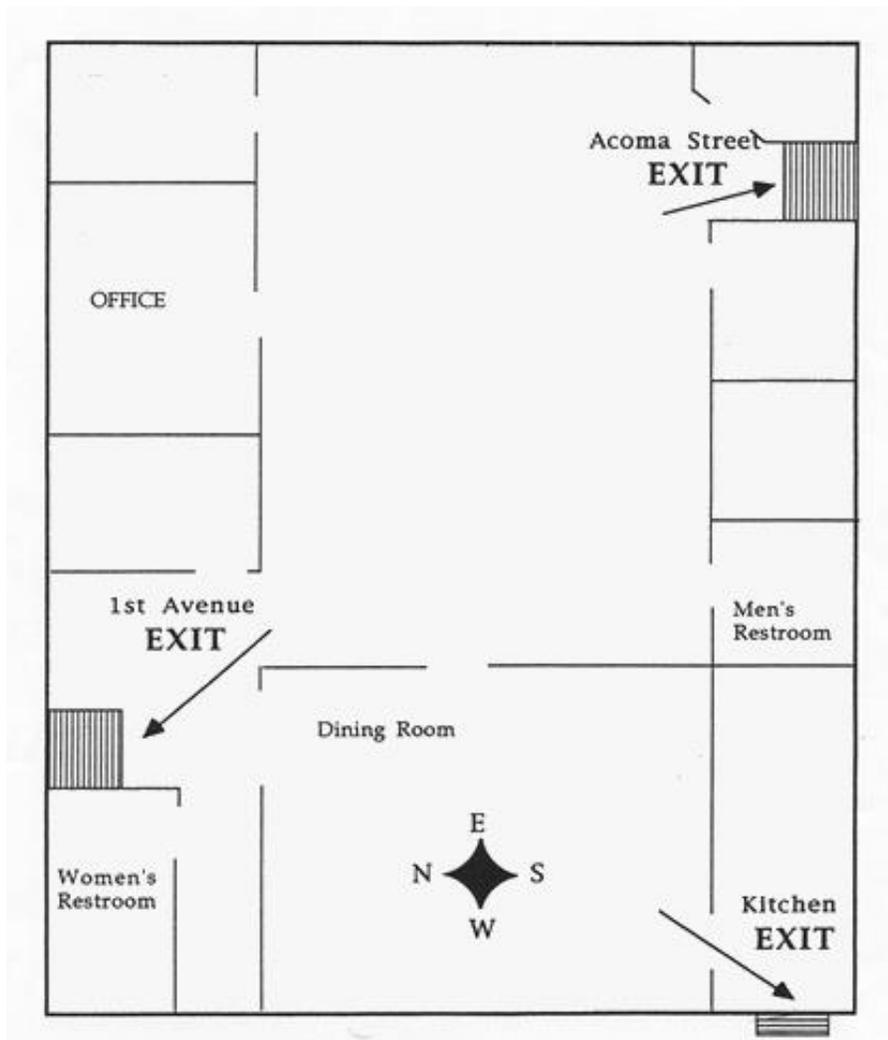
While at the site and on our way to and from the site we are wholly responsible for the children's safety. We must put the children's welfare first and do everything in our power to ensure their physical wellbeing.

1. When children arrive they will be walked, by an adult, to the activity room. (For Street Church only: the adult will then proceed to check their names off the attendance list that hangs on the wall by the door. This will ensure that we know how many kids are in our care.)
2. When vehicles arrive at the church children should get out "sidewalk" side – not "street side". If this is not possible an adult will safely guide the children across the street, taking care to hold the hand of any younger children. The same procedure will be followed when taking children home.
3. Children are not to be in the kitchen unless:
 - they have been chosen to be a "kitchen helper" and are being supervised by the kitchen staff
 - they need to use the restroom and are with an adult
 - they are with an adult getting supplies
 - they are a Student Helper
4. Children should only use the kitchen bathroom and always have an adult accompany them. The adult will wait outside the door.
5. Children must stay in the designated activity areas and always be with an adult. Example: children must remain in the dining room during Street Church; children should stay in either the study room or dining room during tutoring. Children are never allowed to wander unaccompanied through the church.
6. When playing outside in the parking lot there will be one adult monitoring the parking lot entrance and keeping kids out of the street
7. When playing with balls outside make sure to throw the ball away from the overhead wires. Play in the east section of the lot.
8. Be aware of non-volunteer adults entering the church. ALWAYS alert staff to a stranger's presence.
9. The lower glass door, entering the dining room will remain closed during all activities
10. It is wonderful to have fun with the kids but our first priority is protecting and caring for the children that have been entrusted to us.

Emergency Policies

1. In case of emergency (fire, gas leak, etc.) please evacuate the building as quickly as possible
2. Know the location of all **three** exits. If the exit closest to you is blocked, use one of the other exits. Go over these exits beforehand with your student or small group
3. Leave quickly and quietly with your Whiz Kids Student/Street Church Small Group. If there is smoke, remember that cleaner air is lower, at knee level.
4. Stay with your Whiz Kids Student/Street Church Small Group outside. Move down the sidewalk away from the building.
5. We will congregate in the parking lot on the north-east corner of 1st and Acoma (diagonally across the street from the church).
6. During Whiz Kids Tutoring - tutors are responsible for their students and the Coordinator will count to see that all tutors and students are present
7. During Street Church – team leaders are responsible for their small group and the Director will count to see that all staff and children are present
8. Return to the building through the 1st Avenue entrance when the all clear is given.

Be aware of where fire extinguishers are



9. Transportation Policies

1. When **driving** there will be **two** adults at all times in each vehicle. The volunteer who is not driving will sit in the passenger's seat. All children must sit in the back seat (to prevent airbag injuries)
2. All children must be seated in a seat during the entire ride and they must buckle up in a properly fitting seatbelt. Do not start the vehicle until all children are buckled in. If the vehicle is full and the route has not been completed the driver must return to the church and unload before the route is continued. No double buckling.
3. Children 7 years old and younger must use a booster seat.
4. All children you transport must have a current, signed permission slip
5. The non-driver will do a "walk-around" the car or van before the vehicle pulls out.
6. There will be **no radio** on in the car or van
7. Drivers will **not use a cell phone** while their vehicle is in motion.
8. If there is physical fighting or inappropriate behavior the driver will pull over until the problem is resolved. Each participant receives a first warning. Another occurrence and the child will be taken home and suspended for a week
9. **Children will be walked to and from their homes by a volunteer.** The volunteer must make sure a responsible adult is home.
10. **When you pick-up/drop-off a child you must always make face to face contact with the parent** (or the responsible adult at home).
11. Kids will be dropped off at home unless the parent has specifically asked us to drop the child at a relative's house. We are not able to drop kids off at a friend's house (even if a parent gives us permission).
12. Do not enter a child's house unless you are with another volunteer and there are no children left in the car. Children should never be left unattended in the car or van.

All drivers must fill out a Driver's Application and have a copy of their current license and auto insurance on file.

1. When **walking** there will be at least **two** volunteers (three if the number of children exceeds eight) on each walking route. All the above rules (excluding those that apply directly to driving) should be followed when picking up/dropping off walkers.
2. Walking groups must stay together. One volunteer will take the lead while the second volunteer remains at the back of the group.
3. Children age six and under must be holding the hand of an adult or older child.

Summary of the Child Protection Policy

The Third Story, Inc.

Each volunteer working with The Third Story will receive a copy of **The Third Story Child Protection Policy** (a 13 page booklet outlining and detailing The Third Story's safety policies). This policy is also available for download at <http://www.thethirdstory.org/wsm/Child-Protection-Policy.pdf>. It is the volunteer's responsibility to read the entire policy thoroughly and abide by the information therein.

In order to protect the youth in our care from abuse and our workers from false accusations we will strictly adhere to the following policies:

1. All volunteers will complete an application, provide references and undergo a criminal background check prior to joining our staff (paid or volunteer).
2. All volunteer must read, understand and sign a statement agreeing to follow the policies and procedures concerning Child Protection as prescribed by The Third Story, Inc.
3. At least two volunteers (over the age of 18) will be present at all sponsored activities. For activities with children 12 and under at least one of these adults must be a woman.
5. All rooms used by adults and minors together will be accessible (no locked doors) and have open visibility (a window in the door or the door left open). Supervisory personnel will make random visits to each meeting area and be available throughout the activity time to deal with any problems that arise.
6. While in a ministry setting an adult must never be alone with a child. Even when picking up a child in a private vehicle, there must be another adult present.
7. When taking a child to the bathroom a volunteer will wait for the child outside the door.
8. A volunteer who suspects that a child has been abused or is being abused must report the possible abuse to supervisory personnel immediately (within 24 hours). This includes suspicion or proof of any improper behavior between a volunteer/staff and a child. The supervisory personnel will take the necessary actions and report to the appropriate authorities. It is the job of the supervisory personnel - not the volunteer - to deal with the situation from this point on. You may report to one or all of the following:
 - Amy Beth Barlow 303-946-1787
 - Scot Marion 303-915-6047 (Third Story Board of Directors)
9. If a volunteer chooses to do an activity with a child outside of planned Third Story programming the activity is the volunteer's responsibility and not under the jurisdiction of The Third Story. The volunteer needs to make the child's parent or caregiver aware that the activity is not sponsored by The Third Story. We strongly encourage volunteers to abide by the following criterion for the safety of themselves and the children:
 - Obtain parental permission for each occasion
 - Leave your contact information with the caregiver
 - Always go with another adult
10. A volunteer must always check in with a child's caregiver when picking up and dropping off the child at his or her home.

Volunteer/Staff Screening

Is there anything that would call into question your being entrusted with the supervision, guidance and care of children or young people? Yes No

If yes, please explain below:

Have you ever been accused or convicted of child abuse or a crime involving actual or attempted sexual molestation of a minor? Yes No

If yes, please explain below:

Have you thoroughly read The Third Story's Child Protection Policy? Yes

Do you have questions concerning any of the information, rules or procedures? Yes No

If yes, please explain below:

Do you agree to never be alone with a child while working with The Third Story? Yes

Do you agree to always check in with a parent/guardian when transporting children to and from ministry activities? Yes

Do you agree to abide by The Third Story's Child Protection Policy? Yes

Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____ Date _____