

**Living Hope Baptist Church**  
**Safe Children Policy**  
revised 10/2018

**Purpose:** Define “abuse”, establish safe, confidential reporting guidelines and set forth a step by step response plan.

**Scope:** All church staff, teachers, volunteers, teens who interact and work with children at Living Hope Baptist Church.

**Definitions:**

- **Child:** Anyone under 18 years of age.
  
- **Child Abuse:** For purposes of this policy, “child abuse” is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse includes the following:
  - **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
  - **Emotional abuse** – failure to provide a child with nurture, love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
  - **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, pornography and social media interactions with sexual content.
  - **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

**Preventions:**

- Individuals who work with children must complete the following:
  1. Be a member of Living Hope at least 6 months before working with children.
  2. Complete a LHBC Volunteer Application.
  3. Submit to Criminal Background check.
- The 2-volunteer rule: workers shall not be alone, one on one with a child in a room with a closed door. The two volunteers should be unrelated. If one volunteer is a minor, the other volunteer must be an unrelated church member.
- Children will not be left unsupervised behind closed doors.
- Areas used for counseling or children's' activities will have open doors or a window in the door.
- As resources allow, children’s spaces will be monitored by security camera.
- Church staff will check references and perform a criminal background check.

### **LHBC Response & Reporting Process:**

Any person who has a reasonable cause to suspect or has knowledge of abuse should report it.

In the event of any allegations of child abuse at Living Hope Baptist Church or at church sponsored functions the elders will immediately implement the following response plan.

1. The elders will secure the safety of the child and other children by relieving the accused of his or her duties.
2. Immediately report to Cass County Child Protective Services (701) 241-5747.
3. If any allegation of child abuse is brought against any church member, staff or volunteer any member with knowledge of the abuse will contact one of the elders immediately.
4. Any accused church member, staff or volunteer will be treated with dignity and support. The accused must be notified of the suspension of duties until after the investigation clears or substantiates the allegations. If the accused is a paid employee, the Church Council will give specific guidance for continuance of compensation during the period of investigation.
5. In the event of media inquiries, the pastor and/or the church council should consult with the Dakota Baptist Convention and our attorney for guidance.
6. The church will safeguard the confidentiality and privacy of all involved, especially the victims and their families.
7. Any internal church discussions or interviews shall take place with a minimum of 2 witnesses and will be documented with dates, times, location, names etc. The elders will preserve all records.