

# ICBC CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND ADDENDUM

*Indian Creek Baptist Church,  
Mill Run, PA*

*Updated August 2024*

## **Mark 10:13-16**

People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

of the Indian Creek Baptist Church, Mill Run, PA

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The material in this manual is a combination of material from:

- \* Safe Church Manual of the Bare Memorial Church of God
- \* Safe Church Child Protection Manual – Guide One Insurance
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- \* Hope Baptist Church Safe Church Policy Concerning Abuse Prevention
- \* Somerset Church of Christ Child & Youth Protection Policy
- \* <http://keepkidssafe.pa.gov/>
- \* <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/>
- \* Safe Sanctuaries, Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church by Joy Thornburg Melton, 2006.

## **INTRODUCTION**

We live in a sinful, broken world. Every day we see more crime, violence, and loss of life. It is easy to wonder why God still allows us to exist and why He allows all the evil to continue. But God is still in control and God is still love. We should not be discouraged by the things we see around us, but rather we should stand firm in our faith. As Christians, we are to be salt and light in our world and we need to seek how to make the world a safer, better place.

Because of sin, abuse happens in all demographic, socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, and religious groups. We at Indian Creek Baptist Church (ICBC) adopt this policy and procedures to reduce the risk of abuse in our church, and to protect those whom God places in our care. We seek to protect our children, youth, and vulnerable adults. We desire to honor the name of Jesus Christ, as well as our workers, and our church. We are committed to providing a safe community in which people can safely grow, learn, and serve.

## **OUR PURPOSE**

Indian Creek Baptist's purpose is to be God's light to the mountain by preaching the gospel, winning souls to Christ, making disciples and ministering to the whole person through missionary outreach.

## **OUR BELIEFS**

At Indian Creek Baptist Church, we believe:

- \* The Bible to be the inspired word of God.
- \* The birth of Jesus Christ as evidence of His deity, in that He was virgin born.
- \* The blood of Christ shed on the cross to be the only atonement for sin.
- \* The bodily resurrection of Christ from the tomb and His ascension into Heaven.
- \* The body of Christ, called also the Church, to be composed of all believers.
- \* The blessed hope and His personal return to earth.
- \* The believer's call to a life of consecration.

## **OUR POLICY**

It is the conviction of the Indian Creek Baptist Church (ICBC) that abuse is contrary to and is a violation of God's Scriptures and Pennsylvania State Law. As such, it will not be tolerated. Therefore, we establish these policies to reduce the risk of abuse happening within the church body and building; to protect our children, youth, vulnerable adults, members, leaders, and volunteers; and to ensure that any possible situations that may involve abuse will be handled responsibly.

**All volunteers and staff, ages 14 and older, who interact with those under the age of 18, or vulnerable adults:**

1. Must be given and read a copy of this manual.
2. Must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that is lived out in your personal and public life. (An exception to this may be teen helpers for Kings Kids Club.)
3. Must attend the church regularly for six months prior to being assigned as a volunteer in a leadership role.
4. Must be actively attending church while being in a position of leadership.

5. Must satisfactorily (in accordance with PA Title 23, Section 6344c) complete, maintain, and return the following documentation to the chairperson of the Child Protection Committee:
  - a. ICBC Volunteer Information – Working with Children and Youth
  - b. Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Background Clearance (SP 4-164)
  - c. Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance (CY 113)
  - d. The FBI National Clearance OR a signed statement that you have been a resident of PA for the previous 10 years and are not disqualified from working with children or youth according to PA Code, Title 23, Section 6344c. (Exception: Volunteers who have lived outside PA in the last 10 years and employees MUST submit the FBI Clearance.)
  - e. All clearances listed in b, c, and d must be current within 60 months of hire or assignment, and be renewed every 60 months from the date of the previous clearance.
  - f. Any volunteer or employee arrested or convicted of an offense that would disqualify them from service, must provide written notification to ICBC within 72 hours after the event. (Note – if a record exists of a crime, the Deacons will review the information and determine if the volunteer would be allowed to work in the capacity requested.)
  - g. Volunteers under age 18 do not need to complete the forms listed in 5 b, c, and d.
6. Are encouraged to attend the trainings given by ICBC.
7. Must adhere to prescribed safeguards as outlined below.
8. Must Report any suspected abuse to the Child Line Hotline **1-800-932-0313**. Then notify the Pastor and/or the Child Protection Chairperson and make an electronic report within 48 hours.
9. Volunteers under the age of 18 must be supervised by an adult who is at least 18 years old.
10. Volunteers must have the approval of the person heading the program they want to volunteer with. This may include an informal interview where questions can be asked.
11. A list of everyone who has completed all of the above requirements will be kept on file with our church and insurance company.

### **Accountability**

1. All ICBC volunteers are expected to interact with children in a mature, capable, safe, caring and responsible manner, with a high level of accountability.
2. All work with children and youth should be planned in a way that minimizes risks as far as possible. This plan includes being visible to other adults when working with children and youth. Visibility can be accomplished by planning activities in areas where other adults are present and at a time when other activities are occurring. Isolation can also be overcome by avoiding being alone with children.
3. Always be accountable to other adults regarding your interactions with children and youth. All volunteers should expect regular interaction with other staff members and other volunteers.
4. All events must be held in open areas, or at least, where activities can be viewed from outside the room (i.e. window in a door, or an open door).
5. All volunteers should ask only other approved volunteers to be substitutes.
6. Children under the age of 8 should not be left unattended.
7. Record should be kept of all children and youth activities, including the date and name of participants. This could be as simple as an attendance chart.
8. Staff and parents are encouraged to periodically and randomly visit classrooms and other areas where children and adults are together.
9. Should an event take place outside of ICBC, the person in charge should make sure that the setting is appropriate and that the children or youth are properly supervised. Signed permission forms

should be completed for any activity where children or youth are leaving the premises. The person in charge is responsible to approve any drivers for the event.

### **Adult Supervision Policy**

1. There must be at least one adult over the age of 18 and who is at least 5 years older than the children or youth being supervised present for any programs, activities, or interactions with youth and children. This protects both the worker and the child. If there is only one child for a class or activity, that child should join another class.
2. One-on-one interactions should occur only with parental permission, and church staff should be informed. For meetings at the church, another adult should be in close vicinity, aware that the meeting is occurring and willing to stay in the vicinity until it is completed.

### **Touch**

Because healthy, caring touch is valuable to children but unhealthy touch is abusive, the following guidelines should be followed:

1. Touch should be in response to the need of the child and not the need of the adult.
2. Touch should be open rather than secretive. For example, a hug in the context of a group is very different from a hug behind closed doors.
3. Touch must be age-appropriate and generally initiated by the child rather than the adult. It must be with the child's permission and any resistance from the child should be respected.
4. Touch should always communicate respect for the child. Adults should avoid doing things of a personal nature for children that they are able to do for themselves.
5. Adults and other youth or children are not to hit, slap, pinch, push, hold against their will or otherwise assault children.
6. The following signs of affection may be appropriate within specific contexts: verbal praise or side hugs (shoulder to shoulder hugs). For smaller children, this may include touching their hands, faces, shoulders and arms, arms around their shoulders, hugs or holding them when others are present.

### **Windows / Open Door Policy**

Classroom doors should have a window or door must be open. Doors should never be locked or windows blocked while persons are inside the room.

### **Teenage Workers**

We are happy to have teenagers under age 18 helping with our children's programs such as Junior Church and King's Kids Club as well as at times babysitting (paid or volunteer). The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 12 or in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. (King's Kids Club is an exception to this and those age 11 or in 6<sup>th</sup> grade are allowed to help.)
- Must be screened as specified above.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult.

### **Medications Policy**

It is the policy of ICBC not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the teacher or leader of the program to develop a plan of action.

## **Discipline Policy**

It is the policy of ICBC not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers may find it helpful to talk to another worker to find positive ways to deal with discipline issues, such as rewarding good behavior, using time out if necessary, or talking to the parents. Workers should consult with the parents if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

## **Restroom Guidelines**

If a child needs to use the bathroom, a worker should escort the child or group of children to the bathroom. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. The worker should prop open the main bathroom door and should then remain outside the stall door until the child is finished. If a child needs help, the worker should leave the stall door open as they assist the child. Then they should escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. **Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.**

## **Accidental Injuries to Children**

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be contacted in addition to the Pastor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional. These will be made available near the gym and in the mailroom. Completed forms will be kept in the Pastor's office.

Note: If an adult receives injuries on the church premises, an incident report should also be completed.

## **First Aid Kits**

First Aid Kits will be checked annually and any supplies needed will be restocked. A list of where the kits are located will be kept in the Pastor's office.

## **Key Policy**

1. The Directors will maintain a list of people who have keys to the church or other ICBC buildings. A list of these key holders will be kept in the Pastor's office.
2. Keys should not be loaned out to unauthorized individuals.
3. A key holder should not use his or her key to access the church with a child or children not his or her own (or who are not grandchildren or under their care as a legal guardian or foster parent) when there is no church related activity being held in which the child or the key holder are involved. This is to prevent a situation where an adult key holder is alone with a child in the facility.

## **Child Abuse and Police Clearance Records:**

1. All police / child abuse clearances and other relevant information will be kept in the Pastor's locked office. This information is confidential and will only be available to the Pastor, Deacons, and Child Protection Chairperson as needed.
2. A master list of those working with children and the date of their clearances will be kept updated by the Child Protection Chairperson. Clearances must be renewed every five years.
3. The Child Protection Chairperson will review all clearances. If there are questions or someone has a police record, the Chairperson will consult with the Pastor and the Deacons. Having a police record does not determine that a person is not allowed to work with children but they must be evaluated and decided whether it is safe / wise for a person to work with children.

**Child Protection Committee:**

A Child Protection Committee will be appointed annually. They will review the ICBC Child Protection Policy each year and also will be available to deal with any issues that arise in this area.

**Training**

ICBC will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual or semi-annual basis. Other possible trainings include: CPR / First Aid, appropriate boundaries regarding physical touch and discipline; mandatory reporting, signs and symptoms of abuse; and basics of what we believe. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

**ADDENDUM TO THE  
CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**  
of the Indian Creek Baptist Church, Mill Run, PA

*Updated August 2024*

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## **DEFINING ABUSE (The following section is for adults only.)**

**Child abuse:** A general term to describe inappropriate, immoral, unethical, and/or threatening behavior by an adult toward a minor under 18 years of age. Child abuse can be perpetrated with or without the consent of the victim. It can occur in a one-on-one encounter or in a group setting. It is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following categories: Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Emotional Abuse and Neglect.

**Physical Abuse:** Any act or failure to act that causes non-accidental harm to another's physical being. This can include hitting, beating, burning, biting, shaking, etc. This may also include sexual abuse.

1. **Physical warning signs** may include bruises, welts, burns, or scars on any part of the body, particularly in places that are unusual for bruising; multiple bruises in different stages of healing and/or in different areas of the body; marks shaped like particular objects such as a belt buckle, cord, cigarette or cigar; infected wounds or lack of treatment for obvious needs.
2. **Behavioral warning signs** may include feeling really deserving of punishment, fear of adult contact, acting up often, withdrawing, being afraid to go home, being excessively angry or easily irritated, inappropriate actions for their age group, trouble making friends, sudden changes in behavior, injury to one's self, inappropriate boundaries or ideas about boundaries with other children or adults, treating others abusively, participating in other risk taking behaviors, suicidal feelings, losing interest in school or activities, talking about being abused, dirty, or bad, etc.

**Sexual Abuse:** Activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim or where there is a difference in responsibility, trust, or power between them based on age, or physical, intellectual or emotional capacity that forces or entices a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. There are three categories of sexual abuse. (Note: If a person is under the age of 18, and there is less than four years' age difference and there is not a significant difference in responsibility, trust, or power between them, what would normally be defined as abuse will typically be considered inappropriate behavior.)

1. **Verbal:** Remarks that include sexual threats, innuendos, solicitation and sexually explicit language (whether in person, on the phone, via text messaging or on the internet / social media); inappropriate comments about a person's body or appearance; or any verbal expression with the intent to arouse or stimulate.
2. **Visual:** Indecent exposure; showing or taking of suggestive or pornographic pictures or video; showing a child pornographic material, unclothed persons or any sexual activity or simulated sexual activity such as masturbation or intercourse; peeping, leering, or staring; or viewing child pornography.
3. **Physical:** Fondling or physical contact with a child's clothed or unclothed genitals, pubic area, buttocks, or in the case of a female, breast, or causing a child to perform sexual acts to an adult; masturbation in front of or to the victim; rubbing, holding, or kissing for the purpose of sexual gratification. Signs of physical sexual abuse may include trouble walking or sitting; sexually transmitted disease or a pregnancy; bloody or torn clothing; continual stomach aches or vomiting, etc.

**Note:** Any sexual contact, conversation, joking, or horse playing that is not done between a married couple, regardless of location, is considered unbiblical and a violation of the polity of Indian Creek Baptist Church.

**Emotional Abuse:** The persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe adverse effects on the child's emotional development. Emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security.

1. **Verbal** assaults (e.g., belittling, screaming, threats, blaming, sarcasm, constant criticism, persistent teasing, corrupting, name calling), unpredictable responses, continual negative moods, constant family discord and double message communication are examples of emotional abuse. This may also include conveying that the child is worthless, unloved or inadequate. It may involve causing a child to feel frightened or in danger or exploiting or corrupting the child. Even imposing inappropriate expectations on a child, in terms of their development, comes into this category.
2. **Behavioral warning signs** may include poor self esteem, destructive or extreme risk taking behavior, outbursts of anger, withdrawal, suicide attempts, inability or difficulty in forming and maintaining relationships, treating others abusively, having inappropriate boundaries or ideas about boundaries, negative self talk, etc.

**Neglect:** A persistent failure, refusal, or inability of a parent or guardian to provide for the needs of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult emotionally or physically. This may include abandonment, inadequate supervision, truancy, exposure to traumatic or inappropriate stimuli, inadequate health care, shelter, food, clothing, hygiene, or other basic necessities.

**Abuse to One's Self** (This is something to be aware of for both children and adults):

**Cutting/Self Injury:** Can be marked by excessive bruising, scarring, burning, or cut marks, often in very ordered forms, usually on arms, legs, or stomach. It is an intentional way of giving an outward and visual expression of inward pain. Cutters are often intentional in covering marks by wearing long sleeved shirts and pants even when inappropriate, are secretive about their behavior, and often show verbal outbursts or withdrawal. Often starts small with pricks or scratching and progresses in quantity, frequency, and methodology.

**Eating Disorders:**

1. Anorexia can be marked by not eating, distorted body image, obsession with weight, weakness, fainting spells, secretiveness, excessive exercise patterns, constant comparison to others, and, eventually, an extreme weight loss. Can involve use of drugs/medications.
2. Bulimia can be marked by throwing up often, discolored and worn down teeth, bingeing, relatively normal body weight, and secretive about eating habits. Can involve use of laxatives as well. Often includes regular trips to the bathroom, or seeking privacy following meals.
3. Excessive overeating can be marked by constant eating or regular bingeing sessions, eating to the point of illness, eating used as a coping mechanism, excessive weight, need to eat excessively to feel normal.

**Emotional/ Mental Abuse to Self:** Marked by saying mean, sarcastic, or derogatory remarks about one's self.

**Substance Abuse:** All substance abuse, including alcohol, inhalants, tobacco, and all forms of drugs, are usually marked by a change of behavior be it gradual or extreme. It may include any of the following: drop in grades, inability to keep commitments, glazed or bloodshot eyes, incoherency, depression, lack of involvement, withdrawing, angry outbursts, dark circling around the eyes, risk taking behaviors, change in friends, desire for or lack of money, change in eating habits, secrecy about behavior, respiratory infections and problems, physical bruising on arms, neck, or fingernails, smells of substances, smoke, or excessive cologne or fresheners on breath or clothing, etc.

**Suicide:** Marked by talk of ending one's life, depression, giving away of possessions, having a plan to do it, extreme risk taking behaviors, withdrawal from activities, questioning about another's love or interest, questions about death and future, making restitutions for past actions, crisis situations, etc.

**Workaholism/Busyness:** Marked by lack of close relationships, irritability, lack of sleep, inability to keep commitments, depression, need for perfection, inability to say no, a strong desire to please others and need for approval, potential for breakdowns, substance abuse, susceptible to illness, and may participate in other risk taking behaviors.

## **LAWS CONCERNING ABUSE**

### **PA Title 23, Section 6311 - Mandated reporters**

According to this section, mandated reporters shall make a report of suspected child abuse if the person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse. Mandated reporters include pastors and all spiritual leaders of a regularly established church, as well as any individual, paid or unpaid, who, on the basis of their role in a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, accepts responsibility for a child. Therefore, our Pastor, children's teachers, and everyone else who works with youth or children in our church, qualify as mandated reporters.

However, there may be Privileged Communications for a Pastor when a person shares something they have done in a penitential nature. In this case, a Pastor is not permitted and cannot be forced to disclose the information without the consent of the communicant (see 42 PA C.S. § 5943 - relating to confidential communications to clergymen). The same may apply to an attorney (see 42 PA C.S. §§ 5916 and 5928 - relating to confidential communications to attorney.)

### **PA Title 23, Section 6312 – Persons encouraged to report suspected child abuse**

Any person may make an oral or written report of suspected child abuse, which may be submitted electronically, or cause a report of suspected child abuse to be made to the department, county agency or law enforcement, if that person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse. This is called permissive reporting.

### **PA Title 23, Section 6313 – Reporting procedure in PA**

A mandated reporter shall make an immediate and direct report of suspected child abuse directly to the PA Child Abuse Hotline either orally by calling **CHILDLINE** at **1-800-932-0313** (24 hours a day) or electronically at [www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis](http://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis). If the report was made orally, an electronic report using form CY 47 (<http://www.pa-fsa.org/Portals/0/Docs/Mandated-Reporters/CY47Final.pdf>) must also be made within 48 hours to the department or county agency assigned to the case.

The written report of suspected child abuse, which may be submitted electronically, shall include the following information, if known:

- (1) The names and addresses of the child, the child's parents and any other person responsible for the child's welfare.
- (2) Where the suspected abuse occurred.
- (3) The age and sex of each subject of the report.
- (4) The nature and extent of the suspected child abuse, including any evidence of prior abuse to the child or any sibling of the child.
- (5) The name and relationship of each individual responsible for causing the suspected abuse and any evidence of prior abuse by each individual.
- (6) Family composition.
- (7) The source of the report.
- (8) The name, telephone number, and e-mail address of the person making the report.
- (9) The actions taken by the person making the report.
- (10) Any other information required by Federal law or regulation.
- (11) Any other information that the department requires by regulation.

(See our additional guidelines for reporting abuse under **OUR RESPONSE PLAN**.)

**PA Title 23, Section 6319 covers the penalties for failure to report.** Reports of suspected abuse must be made or you can be held accountable by Pennsylvania State Law.

**PA Title 23, Section 6344 requires all employees, 14 years of age or older, and volunteers (PA Title 23, Section 6344.2) who are 18 years of age and older who will be responsible for the welfare of children or have direct contact with children to submit the following clearances:**

1. Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Background Clearance (SP 4-164)
2. Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance (CY 113)
3. The FBI National Clearance OR a signed statement that you have been a resident of PA for the previous 10 years and are not disqualified from working with children or youth according to PA Code, Title 23, Section 6344c. (Exception: Volunteers who have lived outside PA in the last 10 years and employees MUST submit the FBI Clearance.)

The employer (ICBC) must maintain a copy of the required information, and require the individual to produce the original document prior to employment or acceptance to serve in any such capacity. An employer that intentionally fails to require an applicant to submit the required documentation before the applicant's hiring commits a misdemeanor of the third degree.

This section also states that this information must be current every 60 months, from the date of the original submission. If the information obtained in any submission reveals that the employee has either a founded report of child abuse in the 5 year period immediately preceding verification, or has committed any of the

acts listed in 6344(c), they shall be disqualified from service. For the purposes of criminal liability under this section, an employer, administrator, supervisor or other persons responsible for the selection of volunteers are presumed to have acted in good faith when identifying individuals required to submit certifications and maintain records as required by this section.

**PA Title 23, Section 6344(c) - Grounds for denying employment or volunteering with youth or children include:**

- (1) If the applicant is named as the perpetrator of a founded report on the child abuse history clearance, committed within the five year period immediately preceding verification.
- (2) If the applicant's criminal history indicates the applicant has been convicted of one or more of the following offenses or its equivalent under Federal law or the laws of another state:
  - Chapter 25 (relating to criminal homicide).
  - Section 2702 (relating to aggravated assault).
  - Section 2709.1 (relating to stalking).
  - Section 2901 (relating to kidnapping).
  - Section 2902 (relating to unlawful restraint).
  - Section 3121 (relating to rape).
  - Section 3122.1 (relating to statutory sexual assault).
  - Section 3123 (relating to involuntary deviate sexual intercourse).
  - Section 3124.1 (relating to sexual assault).
  - Section 3125 (relating to aggravated indecent assault).
  - Section 3126 (relating to indecent assault).
  - Section 3127 (relating to indecent exposure).
  - Section 4302 (relating to incest).
  - Section 4303 (relating to concealing death of child).
  - Section 4304 (relating to endangering welfare of children).
  - Section 4305 (relating to dealing in infant children).
  - A felony offense under section 5902(b) (relating to prostitution and related offenses).
  - Section 5903(c) or (d) (relating to obscene and other sexual materials and performances).
  - Section 6301 (relating to corruption of minors).
  - Section 6312 (relating to sexual abuse of children). The attempt, solicitation or conspiracy to commit any of the offenses set forth in this paragraph.
- (3) If applicant's criminal history record information indicates the applicant has been convicted of a felony offense under the Controlled Substance, Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act, committed within the five-year period immediately preceding verification under this section.

**USE OF MEGAN'S LAW**

In Pennsylvania, the State Police also maintain a website that lists individuals currently registered with the Pennsylvania State Police as active sexual offenders pursuant to Pennsylvania's Megan's Law. This website is not to be used to threaten, intimidate, or harass anyone listed on it. This site is to help protect others by making known those who have either been convicted of, entered a plea of guilty to, or have been adjudicated delinquent of certain sexual offenses in PA or another jurisdiction.

In regards to this website:

1. ICBC will use this site to be aware of those moving in and out of the area who have a history of sexual offenses. The Child Protection Chairperson will periodically check this site and get regular updates of such movement.
2. If we find someone on the list who attends ICBC, the Pastor and Deacons will be notified.
3. It is our commitment to show love and grace to those who may have committed a sexual offense in the past, as well as be vigilant of their attendance or activities at ICBC. If we observe anything that is of question, we will seek to take the appropriate steps in handling the situation.

## **OUR RESPONSE PLAN WHEN ABUSE IS SUSPECTED OR WITNESSED**

**Guidelines on dealing with any allegations or reports of abuse to one of the children or youth under our care, if abuse is suspected or witnessed outside of our care (i.e. child shares something that happened to them):**

1. Emergency medical attention, when necessary, should be sought immediately.
2. Report the abuse directly to the PA Child Abuse Hotline either orally by calling **CHILDLINE** at **1-800-932-0313** (24 hours a day) or electronically at [www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis](http://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis). If the report was made orally, an electronic report using form CY 47 (<http://www.pa-fsa.org/Portals/0/Docs/Mandated-Reporters/CY47Final.pdf>) must also be made within 48 hours to the department or county agency assigned to the case.
3. Immediately notify the Pastor and/or Child Protection Chairperson that a report has been made. They will then:
  - a. Keep a simple log of the date, time, and summary of incident.
  - b. Set up and maintain the electronic account to make written reports online via the Child Welfare Portal.
  - c. Ensure that any other follow up that is determined necessary is completed.
  - d. Inform the Deacons as necessary.

**Additional guidelines if an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at ICBC or during our sponsored programs or activities (meaning that someone staffing, volunteering, or otherwise attending is accused of abusing a child in our care):**

1. The allegation will be taken seriously, always protecting the victim. The abuse will be reported following regular reporting procedures.
2. The parent or guardian of the child will also be notified by the Pastor, Deacon, or Child Protection Chairperson assuming the accused is not the custodial parent.
3. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. The Pastor or Deacons will handle this.
4. Civil authorities will be notified, and ICBC will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. ICBC will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
5. Notify and hold an emergency meeting of the Pastor, Deacons and Child Protection Chairperson to determine communication with the church body, media, and community. All communications will be made under the direction of our lawyer and an appointed person.

6. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
7. The Deacons will help determine how the situation will be communicated to the church.
8. The Pastor or Head Deacon will be the spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. We will seek the advice of legal counsel before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the congregation. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking to the media.
9. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.
10. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.

**Tips to listening to someone who shares about something that has happened to them:**

1. All children and adults should be valued and listened to.
2. Create a safe environment in which children can share their concerns. Give the child time to say what he or she wants. Be very sensitive to the emotional needs of the child and try to relieve the stress and anxiety which accompany an abuse situation.
3. Listen carefully to what the child says and affirm that he or she is doing the right thing by reporting the abuse.
4. React calmly and do not panic or overreact to the information reported by the child so as not to further distress a child.
5. The views and wishes of children and young people should be respected and taken into account, insofar as this is consistent with their safety and protection but DO NOT promise confidentiality.
6. Assure the child that he or she is not to blame and is not guilty of any wrong doing with respect to the abuse suffered.
7. Do not interrupt or ask more questions than you need to in order to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said.
8. **Be very careful not to use closed (answered by “yes” or “no”) or leading questions. Instead use open questions, e.g., “Is there anything else you want to say?” or “Can you tell me more about that?”**
9. Take seriously what you are hearing, but avoid condemning the alleged offender.
10. Be aware that the child may be frightened or may have been threatened not to tell what happened. Remember that most children feel loyalty to significant people in their lives and often find it difficult to say things that seem against those people.
11. Do not challenge, argue with, refute, or criticize the child, or state to the child any conclusion, for example, that the child simply was wrong or misunderstood what actually happened.

**Upon evidence that a member or anyone associated with ICBC has a police record, failed a child abuse clearance, or has been convicted of a sexual abuse crime, the following steps will be taken:**

1. The Pastor will contact the Deacon board, advising them of the situation and the person involved.
2. The Pastor will meet with the offender to hear his/her story.
3. The Pastor will report to the Deacon board, providing details of the meeting with the offender.
4. Unless circumstances dictate otherwise, the following steps will be taken by the Deacon board and/or Pastor:
  - a. Notification will be given to SS Superintendent, BYF advisors, Jr. Church leaders, Jr. Choir leaders, King’s Kids Club leaders, Bible School leaders, God’s Tots leaders and any other leader of the

- children/youth of our church. The leaders will monitor the situation to make sure the offender does not volunteer with or be left alone with any children in any of the above groups.
- b. The offender will be reminded by the Pastor of prohibited involvement with any of the above groups but encouraged to continue coming to church.
  - c. Any further offense on church property should be reported to the Pastor and/or Deacon board who will report the incident to the police. The Deacon board and the Pastor will meet to discuss and determine excommunication from the Indian Creek Baptist Church.
5. The Deacons' goal is not to decide guilt or innocence but to pursue an investigation in a godly and responsible way.

## CONCLUSION

Through this Child Protection Policy and Addendum, it is our desire to help protect the children and youth of our church, as well as all those working with them. We want to extend God's hand of grace and love to all those we are in contact with and to help make the church a place of safety as well as healing.

We realize that we live in a broken world and that many within in the church have also been touched by abuse in some way. We recognize that abuse affects people in different ways and that it isn't always easy to talk about or deal with things of this nature. If you have experienced abuse of any kind in your past and want to find deeper healing, please talk to the Pastor or one of the members of the Response Team. There are also other resources available you may find encouraging, such as *"On the Threshold of Hope: Opening the Door to Healing for Survivors of Sexual Abuse"* by Dr. Diane Mandt Landberg, 1999, American Association of Christian Counselors.

Counseling is also available through Christian Family and Children's Center. Under the direction of Executive Director, Dr. D. Merle Skinner, and with clinical supervision provided by Dr. Murray Thompson, Clinical Psychologist, they have services that help provide clinical help for children, individuals, marriages and families. They are an active member in the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC). Visit their website at [www.champion.org/counseling](http://www.champion.org/counseling), email them at [info@champion.org](mailto:info@champion.org), or call **724-455-2223** to schedule an appointment.