

Double Oak Community Church

Preschool/Children's Ministry Policies

Dear Preschool/Children's Volunteer or Staff Member,

Welcome to Double Oak Community Church!

At Double Oak Community Church, we take our responsibility to care for children very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which children can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for volunteers and staff members. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children, protecting children, you, and the mission of Double Oak Community Church. The following procedures have been adopted and will be diligently enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

The Child Protection Team

Double Oak Community Church

DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH Policies & Procedures for Preschool/Children's Ministry

Contents:

•	Overview of DOCC Child Protection Policies.	•••••	4
•	Child Protection Policy		5
•	Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse		6
•	Child Protection Team		7
•	Preschool/Children's Ministry Staff Monitor	ing Plan	8
•	Building Safety	9	
•	Worker to Child Ratio	9	
•	Discipline	10	
•	Bathroom Supervision and Assistance Guide	lines	11
•	Intoxicants	12	
•	Medication	12	
•	Nudity	12	
•	One-to-One Interaction with Children		13
•	Transportation	13	
•	Parental Contact	13	
•	Parental Involvement		3
•	Physical Contact	14	
•	Sexually Oriented Conversations		15
•	Sexually Oriented Materials		.15
•	Tobacco Use	15	
•	Verbal Interactions	15	
•	Release of Children	15	
•	Supervision	16	

Overview of DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH Child Protection Policies

Because we desire to protect children involved in our ministry, DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH requires all staff members and volunteers working with preschool and children (and other vulnerable populations) to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placements begin.

STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a Minister or a member of the DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH Child Protection Team. Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in 'grooming' a child for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or 'gatekeeper'), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, <u>DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH requires all staff members and most volunteers to complete sexual abuse awareness training</u>. This training will be renewed every three years.

STEP TWO: Screening Process

Staff members and volunteers working or serving with children are required to complete the DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH Screening Process, which includes:

- -a Confidential Volunteer and Employment Application
- -a face-to-face interview; and
- -references to be checked.
- *A volunteer must be a regular attender of DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH before being eligible to serve in positions providing ministry services to preschoolers or children. Special allowances may be made for non-regular attenders to serve at special events like VBS and WinShape Camp provided they have completed the application, interview, references and background check.

STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures

Staff members and volunteers are required to <u>review the policies</u> contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material, and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check

DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in preschool or children's activities undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon the ministry position, differing levels or intensity of criminal background check may be required.

Child Protection Policy

ABUSE TOLERANCE

DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH has **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH to act in the best interest of all children in every program.

In the event a staff member or volunteer observes any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse or neglect (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is that individual's responsibility to immediately report their observations to an immediate supervisor, the Age Group Minister or the Executive Pastor.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse or neglect will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to Shelby County Department of Human Resources, or another appropriate agency.

Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a child for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to an immediate supervisor, the Age Group Minister or the Executive Pastor.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Church policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from Preschool or Children's Ministry positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Executive Pastor and the Board of Elders.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY

All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to an immediate supervisor in the ministry area, the Age Group Minister, or the Executive Pastor.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in Preschool/Children's Ministry. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Shelby County Department of Human Resources.

Any person found to have violated this policy may be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming involving children or students at DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH. If the person is an employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH.

Failure to report a policy violation is grounds for termination of an employee. Volunteers who fail to report a policy violation may be restricted from participation in any future activities involving children or students at DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH.

REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Employees and volunteers at Double Oak Community Church are required to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, or any inappropriate behavior of a colleague or coworker, to the Age Group Minister or the Executive Pastor.

Alabama law requires that any person having cause to believe a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect must make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

Employees and volunteers *may* report to the Age Group Minister or the Executive Pastor, and allow them to make the appropriate report to law enforcement agencies. In no way does any provision in this policy discourage any employee or volunteer from reporting a suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities.

Employees and volunteers are required to verbally report an incident to the Age Group Minister or the Executive Pastor as soon as possible after the incident.

RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE

DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH Leadership will take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs.

DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH Child Protection Team

CHILD PROTECTION TEAM

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children, DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH will appoint and maintain a Child Protection Team which will meet annually.

MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Child Protection Team is to enable DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH Preschool and Children's Ministries to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

COMPOSITION

The Child Protection Team will be comprised of the following members:

- 1. Executive Pastor
- 2. Preschool Minister
- 3. Children's Minister
- 4. Student Minister
- 5. Missions Team Representative
- 6. Elder

MEETINGS

The Executive Pastor will chair the meeting of the Child Protection Team on a annual basis to discuss risk management practices and updates. The Child Protection Team will also meet on an emergency basis upon the recommendation of a member or following the report of any incident or allegation.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Child Protection Team will be charged with the following duties:

- 1. Applying existing DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH policies and procedures related to children's safety and risk management issues.
- 2. Monitoring all Preschool and Children's Ministry programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
- 3. Making recommendations to the DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH Board of Elders regarding safety issues.

Preschool/Children's Ministry Staff Monitoring Plan

Monitoring of staff members and volunteers will include regular (announced and unannounced) visits in each program to provide supervisors the opportunity to observe staff member and volunteer interaction with children.

- **1. Each supervisor** conducts an unscheduled observation at least once each week for programs that occur weekly.
- **2. Preschool and Children's Minister** conducts regular performance evaluations for individuals in paid staff positions.
- **3. Executive Pastor** conducts an unscheduled observation of a Preschool and Children's Ministry program at least once each quarter.
- 4. The Executive Pastor meets with the Preschool and Children's Minister at least once monthly to discuss Preschool/Children's Ministry, including safety training and procedures.
- **5. The Child Protection Team** meets once each year to discuss safety training and procedures.

BUILDING SAFETY

The Age Group Minister will be responsible for ensuring that the Preschool/Children's areas are monitored during Sunday classes or programming. This will include unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers and children in classrooms.

No child will ever be left unattended in the Preschool/Children's area or on the playground during ministry programming or classes. Preschool/Children's Ministry staff members or volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in any room or building. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single child, that staff member or volunteer will take the child to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: if a child is the last in a class to be picked up by a parent, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present.)

After every programming event, Preschool/Children's Ministry staff members and volunteers must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

On the children's playground, staff members and volunteers are to circulate, watching children during play periods, giving particular attention to the areas not easily seen from all viewpoints. (Example: under slides, in corners, behind structures).

Any two children together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area of the playground.

WORKER TO CHILD RATIOS

DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH is committed to providing adequate supervision in all ministry programs. Accordingly, the following worker to child **minimum ratios** will be observed:

Program	Workers	Children
Nursery	2	8
Preschool, 2 and 3 years old	2	12
Preschool, 4 and 5 years old	2	18
Children, Grades K-5	2	20

If a worker is 'out of ratio' it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the program supervisor or the Preschool/Children's Minister. Supervisors will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately bring worker to children ratios into compliance with Church policy.

DISCIPLINE

It is our policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children. **No form of physical discipline is acceptable.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, biting or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. In employing this procedure, staff members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines:

- 1) Verbally redirect the child before physically intervening. With younger children some physical redirection may be necessary (for example, removing a toy from the hands of a child that is hitting another).
- 2) If the behavior does not cease, remove or direct the child away from the group to a corner of the room where the group is meeting (avoid being alone with the child).
- 3) Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the time-out, and provide the child with clear explanation of your expectations. ("Jamie, you didn't stop hitting Chris when I asked you to, so you need to sit quietly in the blue chair for three minutes.") In addition, be verbally reassuring, as being removed from the group will likely upset the child. Do not physically hold a child in time-out.
- 4) Provide the child with a chair to sit in or a "spot" to sit on (using a pillow, blanket, carpet square, etc.) until their time-out is complete.
- 5) Follow the rule of thumb that a time-out is ineffective if it lasts longer than one minute for every year of the child's life (3 years old, 3 minutes).
- 6) Monitor the child through the entire time-out without giving your undivided attention. For longer time-outs give intermittent praise to reassure the child and keep them on task. ("Jamie, you're doing a great job of sitting quietly just 2 more minutes.")
- 7) Praise the child once he or she has completed the time-out and tell them that their reward is being able to rejoin the group. Remind them that repeating their initial behavior will result in further time-out. Follow this with praise.

Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents and the Preschool/Children's Minister.

BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINE

Preschool

Because preschoolers may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies:

Diapering

- 1) Only female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.
- 2) Every effort should be made to change diapers in plain sight of other preschool caregivers.
- 3) Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
- 4) Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery will be recorded on the registration cards relayed to the classroom teacher.
- 5) Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
- 6) Children should be changed on changing stations only.

Toilet training

- 1) No child will be forced to toilet train.
- 2) Only female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children of either sex.
- 3) When children are taken into bathrooms the door will be left partially open whenever possible.
- 4) Young children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
- 5) Parents should be consulted on each child's progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with volunteers or staff members. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery will be relayed to the classroom teacher ("Georgia can use the toilet, but she needs to be reminded ask her if she needs to go.").
- 6) Children should be verbally assisted where possible. If physical assistance is necessary, another staff member or volunteer should be present, when possible.
- 7) "Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing. Extra clothing and diapers are available in the preschool area, if the parent has not furnished a clothing change.

School age children

School age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. Children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities. Staff members and volunteers should never take a lone child to the restroom.

If a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another worker to accompany him/her. If another worker is not available to accompany, he/she should go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. If the child requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall. Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer.

Special needs

Parents will offer instruction to staff members or volunteers to change the diapers of special needs individuals. After the age of 4, parents or legal guardians will change all special needs individuals.

INTOXICANTS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol, or any illegal drug while in any church facility, while traveling with children, or while working with or supervising children during any DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH program or activity. A volunteer should report to their supervisor if they are taking prescription medication which might pose a risk to the safety of children.

MEDICATION

A staff member or volunteer may not administer medication to any child while serving in Preschool/Children's Ministry. Special accommodations will be made for Vacation Bible School, camp or other extended stay activities where a nurse will be on duty to administer any needed medications.

The only exception will be if a child needs to have medication kept onsite for emergencies, such as allergies or asthma. The parent must meet with the Age Group Minister and the child's teacher prior to leaving these medications with the Age Group Minister, and instruct them on the proper usage. These cases will be decided on an individual basis.

NUDITY

Staff members and volunteers serving in Children's Ministry should never be nude in the presence of children in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes during a pool party, weekend or overnight retreat, etc.), the staff member or volunteer leading the event will submit a plan to the Preschool/Children's Minister concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Staff members and volunteers should never conduct one-to-one, unobserved meetings or interaction with children while participating in Preschool/Children's Ministry activities or programs. Another trained, screened adult should always be present.

TRANSPORTATION

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children:

- 1. Children should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.
- 2. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
- 3. No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving Church vans, or vehicles owned or rented by DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH, or their own vehicle unless in an emergency.
- 4. No volunteer under the age of 25 may drive Church-owned or rented vehicles. However, an employee of the church that might be under 25 may drive a Church-owned vehicle.

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents who leave a child in the care of DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if a child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Preschool/Children's Ministry programs.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their child's program will be required to complete the Church's volunteer application and screening process.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH has implemented a 'physical contact policy' that promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting children. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by those working in Preschool/Children's Ministry programs:

- 1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children are important for children's development, and are generally suitable in the church setting.
- 2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to an immediate supervisor, the Preschool/Children's Minister or the Executive Pastor.
- 3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
- 4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children or Preschool/Children's Ministry staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
- 5. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in Preschool/Children's Ministry must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
- 6. Do not force physical contact, touch or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.
- 7. Staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
- 8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse must be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor, the Preschool/Children's Minister or the Executive Pastor.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children, and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any child in the program.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from possessing (or transmitting to a child) any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children in their care.

TOBACCO USE

DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in church facilities, while in the presence of children or their parents, or during DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH activities or programs. DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH is a tobacco-free facility.

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. Staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is or could be construed by a reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

At any time that a child has been entrusted to Preschool/Children's Ministry staff members or volunteers, the Church incurs responsibility for the safety and welfare of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.

Preschool/Children's Ministry staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians at the close of services or activities.

It is presumed a person who drops off a child has authority to pick up that child.

In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact their immediate supervisor or the Preschool/Children's Minister before releasing the child.

Mt Laurel Campus Birth - PreK Release Policy

Parents will receive a name tag for the child to wear and a security tag for them to keep. Parents will give the security tag to the volunteer or staff member that matches the child's name tag when picking up the child. Siblings will not be allowed to pick up children birth-PreK.

Doors to the Preschool Hallway will be locked after Drop Off and transition between services. Parents/guardians may enter the Preschool Hallway only by showing a security tag.

Mt Laurel Campus Grades K-5 Release Policy

Parents will receive a name tag for the child to wear. Security tags are not necessary for pick up. Children in Grades 3-5 will be released at dismissal time to meet their parents unless parents give instructions to the classroom teacher for their child to remain in the classroom. Children in Grades K-2 can be picked up by a parent, guardian or older sibling.

Chelsea Campus Release Policy

Parents will receive a name tag for the child to wear and a security tag for them to keep. Parents will give the security tag to the volunteer or staff member that matches the child's name tag when picking up the child. Siblings will not be allowed to pick up children birth-PreK.

Special Events

Release for special events will be determined for each event and will be communicated to the parents/guardians accordingly.

SUPERVISION

Staff members and volunteers in Children's Ministry are expected to provide adequate supervision for children in their care while working in church programs.

Policies and Procedures

Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH's Preschool/Children's Ministry Policies and Procedures Manual and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH.

Further, I understand that the manual may be modified at any time, and that any guidelines may be amended, revised, or eliminated by DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH.

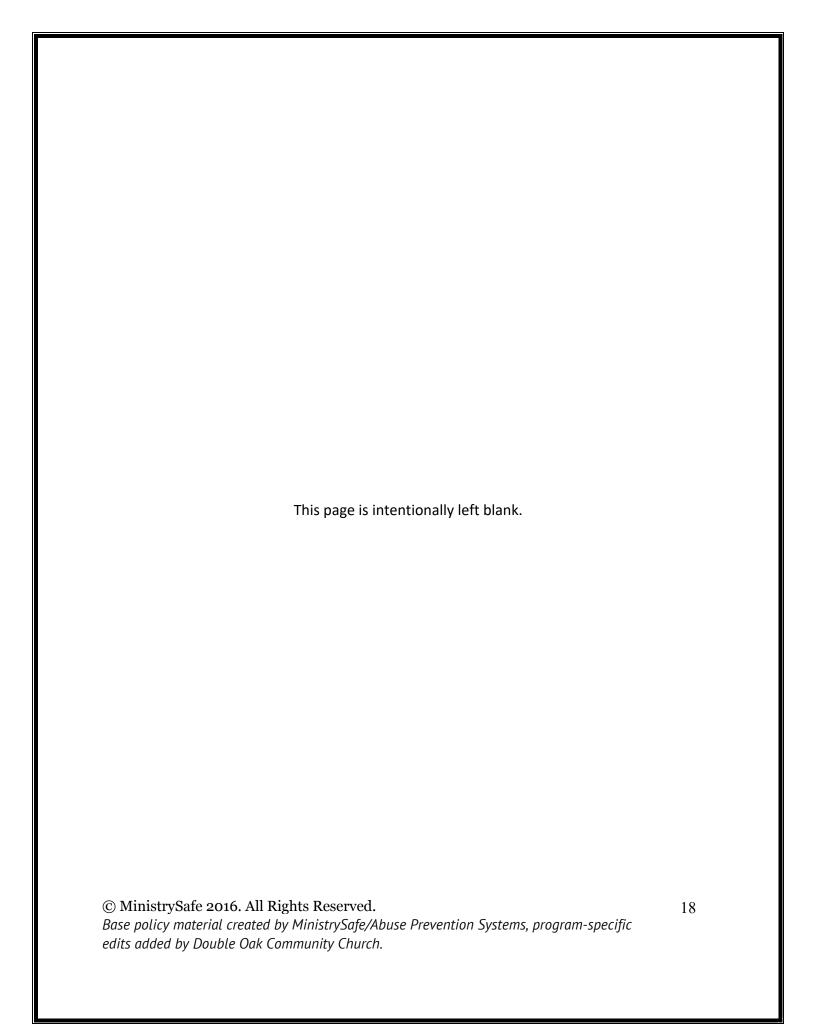
I also acknowledge that I have reviewed and agree to fulfill the duties listed in the manual. While, ideally, I will serve in this ministry for the agreed term, I understand that I may choose to end this relationship at any time. If possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to my supervisor.

I further acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this manual in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between DOUBLE OAK COMMUNITY CHURCH and me. If I am applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no compensation for hours worked.

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed, as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted.

procedures manual.	COMMUNITY CHURCH policies and
Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please prin	_ nt)
Staff Member or Volunteer's signature	_
Date:	

^{*}Applicant should keep this copy



Policies and Procedures

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Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)
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^{*}Please return this copy to the Preschool/Children's Minister.