



DOUBLE OAK  
*community church*

# Double Oak Community Church

## Missions Policies: Preventing Abuse & Neglect of Children

# Double Oak Community Church Mission Trip Policies: Preventing Abuse and Neglect

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## **Overview of the DOCC Child Protection Policy**

Because we care for and desire to protect children, Double Oak Community Church (DOCC) requires all adult mission trip members to complete **4 SAFETY STEPS** before placement.

### **STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training**

DOCC policies and procedures require that mission trip members avoid abusive or neglectful behavior of any kind. Mission trip members are required to report any policy violations to the mission trip leader, age group minister, or Executive Pastor. Mission trip members should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers, as well as “grooming behaviors” used by abusers to select and prepare 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 care-giver or ‘gatekeeper’), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip DOCC mission trip volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, DOCC requires all mission trip leader(s) and most volunteers to complete MinistrySafe sexual abuse awareness training (live, or online at [www.MinistrySafe.com](http://www.MinistrySafe.com) or [www.AbusePreventionSystems.com](http://www.AbusePreventionSystems.com)). This training will be renewed every two years.

### **STEP TWO: Screening Process**

Mission trip volunteers participating in trips with interaction with underage children are required to complete the DOCC Screening Process, which requires a volunteer to:

- complete any required Mission Trip Application
- complete the Child Protection Application, including a signed release
- provide references to be checked

### **STEP THREE: Review Policies & Procedures**

Mission trip volunteers are required to review the policies 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**

DOCC requires that all mission trip members participating in trips with interaction with underage children undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of criminal background check may be required.

# **Child Protection Policy**

## **ABUSE TOLERANCE**

DOCC has **zero tolerance for abuse**. It is the responsibility of every mission trip member to act in the best interest of children during every activity.

In the event any mission trip member observes any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is the personal responsibility of each mission trip member to immediately report their observations to the trip leader(s), age group ministry, or Executive Pastor.

## **REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS**

Double Oak Community Church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and Alabama state law, to the mission trip leader(s), age group ministry, Executive Pastor, the Police Department, Shelby County Department of Human Resources, or other appropriate agency.

Double Oak Community Church intends to create and foster a culture of communication, reporting safety concerns or policy violations. Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible a mission trip member may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a child for sexual abuse. Mission trip members are asked to report possible 'grooming' behaviors, any policy violations, or any suspicious behavior to the mission trip leaders, age group ministry, Executive Pastor immediately.

## **ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES**

DOCC staff and mission trip leaders who supervise volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all DOCC Child Protection policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Executive Pastor and Board of Elders.

# **Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse**

## **REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY**

In order to maintain a safe environment for children, Double Oak Community Church volunteers must be aware of each individual's responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation that is a violation of these policies. All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to the mission trip leader(s), age group ministry, or Executive Pastor.

## **CONSEQUENCES OF PROHIBITED OR HARMFUL ACT**

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act, or any act considered to be harmful to a child or volunteer, will be immediately suspended from participation in missions or children's related activities. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement and appropriate agencies.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act will be removed from future participation in missions activities and programming that involve children at DOCC. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from DOCC.

Failure to report a prohibited act to one of the individuals identified above is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination of a staff member or dismissal from programming.

## **REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES**

Staff members and mission trip members at DOCC are required to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, or any inappropriate behavior of a fellow team member, to the mission trip leader(s), age group ministry, Executive Pastor.

Also, 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. In no way does any provision in this policy discourage any volunteer from reporting a suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate [state] authorities.

**When in doubt, REPORT!**

## **RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE**

Any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously, and will be reported in accordance with this policy to the DOCC Child Protection Team. If appropriate, the Shelby County Department of Human Resources, or other appropriate agencies will be notified.

## **WHEN A CHILD HAS BEEN VICTIMIZED**

If a volunteer has knowledge or a suspicion that a child is a victim of sexual abuse or other maltreatment, the information will be reported as outlined above.

# **DOCC Child Protection Team**

## **CHILD PROTECTION TEAM**

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

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The purpose of the Child Protection Team is to enable DOCC to carry out appropriate mission trip activities while safeguarding children against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

## **COMPOSITION**

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

1. Executive Pastor
2. A Missions Representative
3. Preschool Minister
4. Children Minister
5. Student Ministry leader
6. Elder

## **MEETINGS**

The Executive Pastor will chair annual meetings to discuss risk management practices and updates. The Child Protection Team will meet to discuss what, if any, changes are necessary to DOCC's policies or programming to ensure child safety. The Child Protection Team will also meet on an emergency basis upon the recommendation of a member, or to address a circumstance or respond to the report of any incident or allegation.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

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

1. Applying existing DOCC policies and procedures related to child safety and risk management issues.
2. Monitoring all missions related programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
3. Making recommendations regarding safety issues to the Board of Elders regarding safety issues.

## **Mission Trip Volunteer Monitoring Plan**

Monitoring of mission trip members will include regular (announced and unannounced) visits in each area of missions' activities to observe volunteers' interactions with children. A missions team representative will be part of the DOCC Child Protection Team.

## **Missions Culture – Mission Team Members**

### **PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

Your physical grooming makes a statement to other mission team members, parents and other staff and mission trip members. While serving at DOCC, we ask that you limit your freedom concerning clothing, and other outward physical accessories and fashions. If you have questions about your personal choices in these matters, and whether an article of clothing or style is appropriate for wear on the mission field, please consult the mission team leader or age group ministry.

### **MODESTY**

Your choice of clothing makes a statement. While serving on the mission field, we ask that our female mission trip members help us create an atmosphere of modesty by wearing one-piece bathing suits, covering swimwear with t-shirts and shorts while not participating in water activities. We ask our male volunteers to show similar respect to women by wearing t-shirts when not participating in water activities, and to avoid Speedo-style swimsuits.

### **DATING**

Public displays of affection between dating couples are not permitted under any circumstances. We expect professional behavior at all times.

### **MODELING BEHAVIOR**

Children will look to you to set the boundaries they will test. This is a dilemma with which every mission trip member will wrestle. Please read and understand the guidelines below regarding appropriate "touch and talk", and follow them closely.

The following rules are to be followed at all times:

- **No Verbal Abuse**
- **Never touch a child in an aggressive manner**
- **Absolutely No Profanity**
- **No Displays of Public Nudity at Any Time**
- **No Mooning, De-Pantsing, Wedgies or Swirlies**
- **No Sleeping or Napping with Children for Any Reason**
- **Never Compare a Child's Body with Another Child or Volunteer**
- **No Racial Put-Downs or Racial Jokes**
- **No Wrestling, or Tickling**

## Missions Culture – Children

### **DISCIPLINE**

It is our policy that 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, 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 (6 years old, 6 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.

If a child is unruly or fails to comply with verbal warnings or instructions from a mission trip member, the team leader will contact the child’s parent. If the behavior persists, the child’s caregiver will be contacted to pick up the child. In the event of a fight or physical altercation, the mission trip member will verbally redirect the child involved, trying to avoid physical intervention. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to the mission trip leader, age group ministry or Executive Pastor.



## **VERBAL INTERACTIONS**

Verbal interactions between mission team members and children should be positive and uplifting. DOCC mission team members should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging and constructive.

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

## **Supervision of Children**

### **OFF-LIMIT AREAS**

All mission trip members will be responsible for ensuring that children are not in areas deemed off-limits.

### **MONITORING HIGH-RISK AREAS**

**The purpose of this section is to become aware of *high-risk* areas that could exist on the mission field, and methods to effectively lower that risk.** Any areas of property where children are not directly supervised is a high-risk area. In these areas, children can more easily bully and abuse (verbally, physically, and even sexually) each other. It is the responsibility of all mission volunteers to be aware of the potential for bullying and abuse, and to monitor locations where a child can be alone.

For activities involving large numbers of children, adult mission trip members will be assigned to monitor high risk areas for the duration of the activity. Monitoring of high-risk areas will be built in to the programming and planning for these events. High-Risk Areas include:

- all bathrooms on property
- night activities
- water activities
- VBS transportation

### **BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINE**

School age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. (However, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities.) Volunteers should never take a lone child to the restroom.

If a 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.

### **UNOBSERVED ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTION WITH A CHILD**

No child will ever be left unattended or unsupervised during missions programming or activities. DOCC staff and mission trip members are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in any room or building. In the event a mission trip member finds himself/herself alone with a single child, that mission trip member will take the child to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: If a child desires conversation or counsel with a mission trip member after regular programming has concluded, the mission trip member is to relocate the discussion to a place where other volunteers are present, or which is easily observed.)

After every programming event, mission trip members must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving to ensure that there is no child left unsupervised. Any two children together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area.

### **APPROPRIATE ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH A CHILD**

DOCC recognizes that meeting the emotional needs of children may occasionally require mission trip members to meet with them on an individual basis. Mission trip members should observe the following guidelines when interacting with children.

Mission trip members should conduct one-to-one meetings with an individual child at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed.

### **GIFT GIVING**

Volunteers are prohibited from providing special gifts to any individual child. Special occasions or special accomplishments should receive group acknowledgement and can easily be rewarded with group recognition (i.e., mention during announcements; have the entire group sing Happy Birthday, etc.)

## **Rules for Child Safety**

### **PHYSICAL CONTACT**

Double Oak Community Church is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, DOCC has implemented a 'physical contact policy' which promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our missions activities.

All mission trip volunteers should exercise good judgment when expressing one's self through physical touch. Appropriate physical touch may include the following:

1. An arm around the shoulder (side hug)
2. Short, congratulatory or greeting hugs
3. A brief, assuring pat on the head or shoulder, but NOT to those kids who feel that such touch is offensive to have their heads patted or hair fluffed.

4. A few NEVERS:
  - a. We don't touch kids in anger or disgust.
  - b. We don't touch kids in any sexually connotative manner.
  - c. Never touch a child's private parts (to remove ticks or for any other reason).
  - d. Never tickle a child; this can be misconstrued as sexual contact.
  - e. Never ignore a child's request not to be touched.
  - f. Never express or require physical affection or touching in any form from a child who shows or expresses discomfort with physical touch.

The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone volunteering for mission trips at DOCC:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between mission trip members and children are important for child's development and are generally suitable in the missions 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 the missions team leader, age group minister or Executive Pastor.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, never based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or mission trip member.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children or mission trip members. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or interpreted as such when physical contact is open to observation.
5. Mission trip members are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by other adults and children.

If a question ever arises, consult the missions trip leader(s), age group minister or Executive Pastor. Any infraction of the above policy involving even the slightest form of sexual connotation will result in immediate dismissal from the mission activities.

Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by any mission trip member or child must be reported immediately to the mission team leader, age group minister, or Executive Pastor.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Mission trip members 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 in a non-public place should be avoided. Mission trip members should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport. The presence of at least two mission trip members is encouraged.

2. Mission trip members should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
3. The use of cell phones while driving vehicles (owned or rented) is prohibited, unless in an emergency. In other non-emergency circumstances, mission trip members are to stop the vehicle before using a cell phone.
4. Absolutely NO TEXTING is allowed by the driver of a moving vehicles used for transportation of children to and from missions' activities.
5. No volunteer under the age of 25 can drive church vehicles. However, an employee of the church that might be under 25 can act as a driver.

### **SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS**

Mission trip members are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children (or others) 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. If it is necessary to address issues related to purity, dating, sex and human sexuality, clear such discussions with the trip leader.

### **SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS**

Mission trip members are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials or images (magazines, cards, phone pics, videos, etc.) on the mission field, or in the presence of children or other team members.

### **NUDITY**

Mission team members should never be nude in the presence of children in their care.

### **MEDICATION**

A mission trip volunteer may not administer medication to any child while serving in missions.

### **TOBACCO**

Double Oak Community Church requires mission trip members to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products while on church property, and while in the presence of children or their family members.

### **INTOXICANTS**

Mission trip members are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drug while on any mission trip, while traveling with children, other team members, or while working with or supervising children.

## **Child Contact Policy**

### **COMMUNICATIONS WITH CHILDREN**

The DOCC safety standards established to protect children and insure healthy relationships during mission trips should be respected once home as well. The following policies should be respected in all interactions with children occurring outside of mission trips.

- Parents of all children must approve any and all interactions, including but not limited to: email, social network interactions, phone calls, personal visits. No interaction should ever take place without the knowledge and approval of the child's parents or guardian.
- If a child requests to be a “friend” on Facebook or similar social networking sites, permission from parents or caregiver should be granted before accepting these offers.
- Current or former volunteers should never be alone with a child in an unobserved context or location. This is a policy which takes on even more importance outside of mission trips.
- Current or former volunteers should limit connections by gender. Current or former male volunteers should not initiate or maintain contact with female children. Current or former female volunteers should not initiate or maintain contact with male children. Dating relationships of any kind between mission trip members and a child are strictly prohibited.
- If a child shares information that puts them or anyone else in danger, the parents of that child should be notified immediately. When in doubt, err on the side of caution, and contact the mission trip leader, age group minister, or Executive Pastor for counsel.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA MISCONDUCT**

Social media and electronic communication can be used inappropriately. (e.g., emotional abuse, sexual abuse, bullying, harassment, and hazing). Such communication by volunteers will not be tolerated. Electronic communication should not contain or relate to any of the following:

1. Drugs or alcohol use;
2. Sexually oriented conversation, sexually explicit language or sexual activity;
3. An adult’s personal life, social activities, relationship or family issues, or personal problems
4. Inappropriate or sexually explicit pictures.

**Policies and Procedures**  
**Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement**

I have received and read a copy of DOCC’s policies and procedures manual for preventing abuse and neglect, and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during serving in mission activities at DOCC.

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

I also acknowledge that I have reviewed and agree to fulfill the duties listed in my employment or mission trip member position description. While, ideally, I will serve for the full term specified in the position description, I understand that my service or employment is voluntary and that I may choose to end this relationship at any time (if possible, by providing two weeks’ notice to my supervisor).

I further acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this handbook in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between DOCC and me. If I am applying as a mission trip member, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no compensation for hours that I have 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.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of the DOCC policies and procedures manual for preventing abuse and neglect.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mission trip member’s name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mission trip member’s signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

[This page to remain attached to the DOCC Missions Policies]

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Mission trip member’s name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mission trip member’s signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

[This page to be signed, detached and delivered to the Missions Team Leader]