

HESSTON MB CHURCH SAFETY POLICY

Ministry to Youth Summer Intern

We at Hesston Mennonite Brethren Church believe that the spiritual, emotional and physical well being of children is vital. Our goal in developing programs is to promote safety and reduce the risk of abuse or injury to infants and children who participate in our programs.

As ambassadors of Christ, we are called to live according to the high standards of Scripture. We must also remember that working with children is an opportunity and a privilege, not a right. For this reason, every worker must avoid even the appearance of inappropriate behavior.

Minimum Age

All primary workers should be 18 years of age or older. *Younger persons may assist adults, but they should not take the place of adult workers.*

Six-Month Rule

Primary worker volunteers must have been in attendance at Hesston MB for at least six months and must consider Hesston MB to be their home church before volunteering in children's ministries. This time of interaction between ministry leaders and the volunteer allows leaders to get to know the volunteers. The Christian Education committee in consultation with the Pastoral Staff may waive the rule and may take additional steps to screen the volunteer at their discretion.

Worker/Child Ratios

Hesston MB has a goal of maintaining the following ratios of ministry workers to children whenever feasible. **All classes will have a minimum of two adults.** Once children exceed ratios, one additional adult will be added. The church recognizes that in some circumstances achieving these ratios may not be feasible, such as an unexpected number of children showing up for an event.

<u>Ministry</u>	<u>Workers</u>	<u>Children</u>
Nursery	2	6
Children's Church	2	16
Sunday School	2	16
Hide 'N Seek	2	20
Vacation Bible School	2	20

Open Door Policy

All events should be open door. This means that volunteers, parents, and church members have the right to observe any activity.

Touching

We live in an age where child abuse is a reality in our society. The church should act as a "good shepherd" by taking steps to protect the children in our care. Hesston MB desires to safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for our children youth by following the following guidelines:

- Hugging and other forms of appropriate physical affection between workers and young children, are important for a child's development and are generally suitable in our church setting.

- Physical affection should be appropriate to the age of the child. As a child nears adolescence, church workers should recognize that touches can be more easily misconstrued and must be sensitive to the child's perceptions and the perceptions of others. Touching behavior should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. As ministry workers, our behavior must foster trust at all times, it should be above reproach.
- A child's preference not to be touched should always be respected. Do not force affection on a reluctant child.
- Touching should be a response to the child's need for comforting, encouragement, or affection. It should not be based upon the adult's emotional need.
- Touching and affection should be given in the presence of other leaders. It is much less likely that touches will be inappropriate or misconstrued as such when two adult workers are present in the area and touching is open to observation.
- Church workers are responsible to protect children under their supervision from inappropriate touching by others.

Discipline

Hitting or spanking and other forms of punishment involving physical pain are never appropriate for Hesston MB activities. This rule holds true even if parents have suggested, or given permission for, corporal punishment. Instead, Hesston MB's discipline policy is as follows:

1. The first time the child disrupts the class, warn the child and, if it seems helpful, ask them to put their head down on the table for a short time.
2. If the child continues to disrupt class, use your radio to call the education representative person on duty. After calling on the radio, the teacher should open the classroom door so the education representative knows to which classroom to go.
3. The education representative will escort the child from the classroom and the child will be given some time to think about acceptable alternative behaviors.
4. If the child is willing to cooperate, the child will return to the classroom. If not, the parents will be called.
5. If the child disrupts class again, the teacher should use the radio to call again. The child will again be escorted from class and the parents will be called to pick up the child.
6. If the disruptive behavior continues from week to week, the child, teacher, parent(s) and education representative will meet to create a plan of action to correct the problem.

Field Trips

Taking children off premises requires advance permission from parents. There must be more than one adult supervising the activity and parents must be informed of the location of the activity, transportation arrangements and beginning and ending times.

Snacks

Part of shepherding children means to teach them that their bodies are God's Holy temple. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 states, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." There is often a snack provided as a part of the ministry experience but effort should be made to provide healthy snacks. Workers should remember that many children are ultra sensitive to sugars and dyes and that this type of snack can make it nearly impossible for some children to sit still and concentrate. Because of this, sugary snacks or snacks with artificial coloring should never be given in Sunday School or in situations where the child is expected to sit for long periods (more than 30 minutes) following the snack.

Transportation

Parents are expected to provide transportation for their child to and from church events. Should a children's worker be asked by a parent to provide transportation, the worker should give the parent specific information about the time the child will be picked up and dropped off. It is preferred that more than one adult be present in the vehicle.

Children should not be allowed to be running around outside the church after dark while waiting for their ride to arrive. A supervised area inside the church or a fenced, lighted, supervised area outside the church should be designated as the pick up spot for activities.

Bathroom Needs

If a child needs help going to and from the bathroom, the children's worker should use their radio to call for assistance rather than leave the class without two adults. Volunteers should take precautions to avoid even the appearance of misconduct for their own protection as well as the child's.

Reporting Suspicions

Volunteers should report suspected or observed misconduct by other volunteers to a Pastor immediately. In addition, volunteers must report if a minor discusses harming himself or others, committing a crime or being abused. As much as possible under the law, the confidentiality of such reports will be maintained.

Hesston MB Church Youth Worker Information Form

For Volunteers and Paid Staff Working Weekly with Youth Ministries

The Hesston Mennonite Brethren Church *Child and Youth Worker Safety Policy* is about stewardship of God’s gift of people to His church, keeping its ministries consistent with the teachings and example of Jesus Christ and with the Christian tradition of nurturing children. As a church, we believe that the spiritual, emotional, and physical well being of children is vital. This *Children’s Worker Information Form* is designed to help us maintain programs that promote safety and reduce the risk of abuse or injury to infants and children who participate in our programs.

Name: _____ Day Telephone: _____

Address: _____

Age: Under 18 _____ 18-21 _____ Over 21 _____

What church or churches have you attended before you came to Hesston MB?

Church Name/City	Pastor’s Name	Years attended
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Please answer the following. Please note that a “yes” answer does not automatically disqualify you from service.

Have you at any time in the past ever been:

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| a) convicted of, or pleaded no contest to, a felony? | Yes | No |
| b) arrested for any reason? | Yes | No |
| c) hospitalized or treated for alcohol or substance abuse or sexual addiction or are you currently using illegal drugs? | Yes | No |
| d) the subject of any disciplinary action, transfer or dismissal, or been named as a defendant in a civil or criminal lawsuit, as a result of an accident or injury involving children or youth? | Yes | No |
| e) involved in any child or youth molestation, exploitation, abuse or inappropriate behavior in any form? | Yes | No |
| f) disciplined or dismissed from employment or a volunteer position by an employer, including charitable and religious organizations, following an allegation of sexual misconduct, sexual harassment or other immoral or inappropriate behavior? | Yes | No |
| g) If you answered “yes” to any of the above questions, would you like to meet with the senior Pastor to discuss the issue so that you may be considered for service as a children’s worker? | Yes | No |

I certify that I have responded truthfully to the above questions.

Signature: _____ Witness: _____

Date: _____ Date: _____