

Quidnessett Baptist Church Policy

Policy Name: 02-001-Youth and Vulnerable Adult Ministry Protection and Training	Origin: 02.20.2025	Ministry: Youth and Adult Ministries
	Revision: N/A	
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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide policies and/or procedures for the Youth, Student, and Adult Ministries of Quidnessett Baptist Church (QBC), and the volunteer(s)/employee(s) who work in those ministries.

Scope

QBC is subject to Rhode Island laws regarding the protection of its participants. QBC recognizes that the welfare of minors or vulnerable adults in its care is paramount and will make every effort to hinder the abuse of minors or vulnerable adults by utilizing protective measures including the screening, training, and supervision of all volunteers and employees. This policy is intended to protect all people young and old who are participating in events sponsored by QBC. This policy applies to all church employees and volunteers responsible for supervising the activities that take place at QBC. This policy does not constitute a contract between the church and its employees/volunteers or any other party. It is merely a statement of policy and general guidelines which the church will seek to follow. The church makes no guarantee to any party that all aspects of this policy will be followed in any given situation. The church is not responsible for the individual acts of any employee/volunteer.

Definitions

- 1) **Participant** shall be defined as one who participates; a partaker; one having a share or part in events or programs sponsored by Quidnessett Baptist Church (QBC).
- 2) **Child, children, youth, and minor** shall be defined as any individual age 17 and under.
- 3) **Adult** shall be defined as any person 18 years or older.
- 4) **Vulnerable Adult** shall be defined as someone who is 18 or older and is unable to care for themselves or protect themselves from abuse, exploitation, or neglect.

- 5) **Youth Ministry** shall encompass all ministries that have participants infant through 6th grade. This includes but is not limited to Nursery, Sunday School, Vacation bible School (VBS), Children's Church, and AWANA.
- 6) **Student Ministry** shall encompass all ministries that have minor participants 7th-12th grade.
- 7) **Adult Ministry** shall encompass all ministries that have adult participants. This includes but is not limited to Christian Education, the Clothing Ministry, Dorcas Ministry, Medical Equipment Ministry, Men and Women Bible / Book studies, and prayer meetings, and Corporate Worship, and fellowship gatherings.
- 8) **Employee** shall be defined as anyone paid by the church on a full or part-time basis and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors, vulnerable adults, and all people groups in attendance at QBC sponsored events.
- 9) **Church** shall be defined as Quidnessett Baptist Church (QBC).
- 10) **Ministry Leadership Team** shall be defined as those individuals appointed by the Elders who will be responsible for approving all employees and volunteers who serve in a church ministry.
- 11) **Volunteer** shall be defined as anyone not paid by the church and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors, vulnerable adults, and all people groups in attendance at QBC sponsored events.
- 12) **Abuse** is defined as any action or failure to act that endangers or harms a child's or vulnerable adult's physical, psychological, or emotional health and development during QBC-sponsored events. Abuse manifests in various forms, including but not limited to:
 - a) **Physical Abuse:** Non-accidental acts causing physical harm, such as but not limited to hitting, kicking, burning and/or biting.
 - i) **Emotional or Psychological Abuse:** Behaviors that harm a person's self-esteem or emotional well-being, including verbal insults, belittling, persistent teasing, threats, and/or isolation.
 - b) **Sexual Abuse:** Any sexual activity imposed on a child or vulnerable adult. This includes but is not limited to activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and/or pornography. Other forms of sexual abuse can include verbal comments, exposure to pornographic materials, obscene phone calls, and/or allowing minors to witness sexual activity, including inappropriate touching or exposure.
 - c) **Neglect:** Failure to provide essential care, such as food, shelter, medical attention, or emotional nurturing.

- d) **Financial Abuse:** Misuse or exploitation of an individual's financial resources without their consent.
- e) **Bullying:** Intentional harm, intimidation, or coercion directed at someone perceived as vulnerable.

13) **Incident of abuse** means any occurrence in which any person:

- a) Has committed any act of abuse as define above or
 - i) Has threatened to inflict or has inflicted physical injury upon a minor or vulnerable adult or any other person in attendance or volunteer or employee other than by accidental means or is reasonably suspected to have done so.
 - ii) Commits or allows to be committed any sexual offense against a minor or vulnerable adult or any other person in attendance at a QBC sponsored event or is reasonably suspected to have done so. This includes things such as sexual advance, or making a request for sexual favors, or engages in sexually motivated physical contact, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.
 - iii) Exposes a minor or vulnerable adult or any other person in attendance at a QBC sponsored event to visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature or is reasonably suspected to have done so.

Policy

1) VISION AND VALUES

- a) **Mission:** To lead all people groups to be fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.
- b) **Vision:** Inviting all people groups to know Christ in a way that transforms their daily lives and the lives of those around them.
- c) **Values:** Truth Based: We believe that God's word is foundational truth, and it is our heart to train every participant to use it as their sole guide, authority, and conscience.
- d) **Relational:** We believe that life-change happens best in the context of relationships. Gifted, godly, and passionate volunteers/employees who exhibit Christ to all people groups, their families, and each other to show them how to do the same. This modeling will impact God's kingdom for generations to come.
- e) **Nurturing:** We believe that spiritual growth happens best in an atmosphere of emotional safety, physical security, and sanitary conditions. We are committed to exceptional standards in these areas.

2) **Qualifications and Application** - Because we love all people and desire to protect all people groups, QBC requires all volunteers and employees working in ministry, to complete the following volunteer application steps:

- a) All ministry volunteers and employees shall:
 - i) Complete the Ministry Application (Form YM-01)
 - ii) Consent to background checks (biennially or more frequently as needed).
 - (1) Individuals who have been arrested for, charged with, are on deferred adjudication or regular probation for, or have been convicted of sexual oriented or sex related crimes, either misdemeanor or felony, cannot serve in any area of ministry.
 - iii) Children younger than 14-years-old with parent or legal guardian consent) may be considered “helpers” but may not act as a 2nd member of leadership in the two-deep leadership frameworks.
- b) Undergo a reference check: All references will be contacted and asked to assess the applicant’s suitability/capability for working in Ministry at QBC.
- c) Read, agree to abide by, and sign the QBC Ministry Code of Conduct Form (annually).
- d) Be interviewed and approved by one or more members of the applicable Ministry Leadership Team or Elder(s).
- e) Volunteers and Employees serving in Youth or Student Ministry must also:
 - i) be a member in good standing of QBC for at least 6 months and at least 14 years of age (with parent or legal guardian consent).
 - ii) Successfully complete a QBC sanctioned Youth Protection Training (biennially).
 - iii) Read, agree to abide by this Youth Protection Policy (annually).

3) **Participant, Volunteer and Employee Protection**

- a) QBC intends to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of volunteer(s)/employee(s) and participants. As a precaution and to ensure strict accountability from one adult to another the following rules must be followed:
 - i) Two-deep leadership
 - (1) A reasonable effort shall be made to have two adult employees/volunteers present in the room (or nearby) with minors or vulnerable adults during QBC activities.
 - (2) One-on-one contact between minors and vulnerable adults with employees/volunteers should be avoided. In situations requiring a personal conference, the meeting is to be conducted with the knowledge and view of other adults and/or youth.
 - (3) Private online communications (texting, phone calls, chat, IM, Slack DM etc.) must include another volunteer/employee or parent or guardian.

- (4) Communication by way of social media (Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), Slack, Snapchat, etc.) must include another volunteer/employee or parent or guardian.
- (5) QBC recognizes that there will be times when an unaccompanied employee/volunteer may be present with a group of minors or vulnerable adults or with a single minor or vulnerable adult. In those circumstances, doors to the room shall remain open and windows shall remain uncovered, or the activity shall be conducted in a public space, in view of other adults or participants.
- (6) Meetings that regularly occur between one employee/volunteer and a group of minors or vulnerable adults or with a single minor (junior or senior high small groups, private music lessons, counseling, etc.) or vulnerable adult shall have written parental or guardian consent from each participant using Special Meeting Consent Form (YM 07) on file with the Ministry Team Leader before the meetings occur.
- (7) QBC recognizes that a fundamental goal of the junior and senior high philosophy of ministry is to build relationships with students and families and to have regular, intentional contact with students. Meetings that spontaneously occur between one employee/volunteer and a group of minors or with a single minor are to be encouraged rather than thwarted by the scope of this policy. Therefore, employees/volunteers will be responsible to conduct these meetings in view of other adults and/or minors. A report of the meeting must be communicated to the Ministry Team Leader and parent or guardian as soon as possible. This communication may be in the form of verbal or written communication.

4) Restroom and Shower Policy

- a) Separate shower and restroom facilities should be provided for male and female adults as well as for male and female youth. If separate facilities are not available, separate times should be scheduled and posted. Adult volunteer(s)/employee(s) should not use the shower facilities at the same time as youth or vulnerable adults. Adult volunteer(s)/employee(s) should be present near but not inside the shower facilities to monitor safety and privacy. Adult volunteer(s)/employee(s) should closely monitor these areas but only enter as needed for youth protection or health and safety reasons.
- b) Privacy of youth and vulnerable adults is respected. Adults and youth must respect each other's privacy, especially in situations such as changing clothes and taking showers for overnight events. Adult volunteer(s)/employee(s) should not use the changing facilities at the same time as youth or vulnerable adults. Adult volunteer(s)/employee(s) should be

present near but not inside the changing facilities to monitor safety and privacy. Adult volunteer(s)/employee(s) should closely monitor these areas but only enter as needed for youth protection or health and safety reasons.

- c) Volunteer(s)/employee(s) may aid a child using the restroom only if the child is three years or younger or has special needs requiring extra assistance. Only female volunteers should provide this assistance.
- d) Two volunteers are required to take the children under 10 years of age to the restroom. One volunteer should check the restrooms before the youth enter then hold the door open with the other volunteer (remaining outside) while the youth are using the restroom. Children 10 yrs of age and older should use the buddy system (2-3 youth together) for trips to the restroom.
- e) Minors with an age difference of greater than 3 years should not use the restroom at the same time. Each minor or group of minors should use the restroom separately while the others wait outside.
- f) Diaper changing for children 3 years and younger may be performed by a QBC volunteer/employee provided the parent or guardian consents to such action. All parents or guardians must complete a nursery registration form YM 02 which includes the parent or guardian preference on diaper changes. Please refer to this form for each participant's preferences. All diaper changes should be performed in the open-door changing area in the nursery. Gloves should be worn and the paper laid down and changed and the changing pad wiped down after each diaper change.

5) Physical / Non- Physical Contact

- a) QBC is committed to protecting youth in its care and recognizes that appropriate touch is part of a positive, nurturing environment in a healthy ministry. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by QBC volunteer(s)/employee(s).
 - i) Permissible Physical Contact
 - (1) A gentle pat on the back or on the head, or a handshake.
 - (a) Walking hand in hand with young children.
 - (2) Brief hugs within sight of others. Employees/volunteers must avoid any prolonged hugs and must stop a hug immediately upon request of the other party involved.
 - (3) Touching hands, faces, shoulders, and arms, as well as placing an arm around someone's shoulders, sitting next to each other, holding hands during prayer, giving high fives, hand slapping, and fist bumps are all acceptable if all parties involved give their consent.

ii) Gift giving

- (1) Accepting and giving gifts from/to minors and vulnerable adults is permissible when appropriate (Christmas, birthday ect.) but is discouraged as a frequent practice. Report to your Ministry Team Leader any gifts you receive that seem inappropriately given.

iii) Close emotional relationships

- (1) Employees and volunteers must avoid developing close emotional relationships with minors or vulnerable adults of the opposite sex. Additionally, they are expected to exercise the utmost caution and maintain professional boundaries when interacting with minors or vulnerable adults of the same sex.

iv) Prohibited Contact - The following are actions a volunteer/employee should NEVER engage in

- (1) Touching anyone in anger or disgust
- (2) Touching any participant in a QBC sponsored event in any manner that may be construed as sexually suggestive
- (3) Touching any participant in a QBC sponsored event between the navel and the knee.
- (4) Touching the private parts of any participant in a QBC sponsored event.
- (5) Forced physical contact, touch, or affection on any participant in a QBC sponsored event who appears reluctant. All participants' preference not to be touched must be respected.
- (6) Physical contact between an employee/volunteer or any participant in a QBC sponsored event that would provide, or is intended to provide, any form of sexual gratification.
- (7) Physical contact between an employee/volunteer and a minor or vulnerable adult such as giving massages, kissing, prolonged embracing, and the like.
- (8) Physical abuse

- (a) Striking, spanking, shaking, slapping or other violent behaviors towards any participant in a QBC sponsored event.
- (b) Pornography
- (c) Showing any participant in a QBC sponsored event images that are pornographic is prohibited. Accidental viewing of pornography when in the presence of any participant in a QBC sponsored event should be reported to the Ministry Team Leader immediately. If employees/volunteers become aware of the existence of pornography in the hands of a minor or vulnerable adult they should immediately report this to their Ministry Team Leader

(9) Verbal/mental abuse

- (a) Language that is humiliating, degrading, threatening, sexual, personally intimate, related to body development or physique or crude-regardless of how the communication was conveyed (e.g. text messages, email, phone calls, social networking sites, etc.)

6) Correction of Poor Behavior

- a) No form of punishment that involves pain or physical discomfort may be used. Minors may be restrained if they are in danger of hurting themselves or others. Disruptive minors may be removed from the group when necessary.
- b) Acceptable means of correction include:
 - i) Verbal correction
 - ii) Withholding a privilege for a brief time
 - iii) Separation from an activity for a brief time
 - iv) Calling parents if child does not respond to other efforts

7) Visibility & Security

- a) For the sake of safety and accountability, all interaction between minors and vulnerable adults must take place in an observable location.
- b) When supervising minors and/or vulnerable adults, a reasonable ratio of employees/volunteers to participants must be maintained at all times. The Ministry Team

Leader in charge of the group is primarily responsible for establishing and ensuring this ratio, considering factors such as the number and age of the participants, the nature of the activities, and the location where the activities are held. The Ministry Team leader should reference current RI State regulations as a resource for making this decision.

8) Overnight procedures

a) Overnight activities will require:

- i) A signed QBC Event Permission Slip (YM 09) from the parent/legal guardian of the minor(s) participating.
- ii) Must have a minimum of two employees/volunteers participating.
- iii) Must maintain a ratio of one employee/volunteer per nine minors.
- iv) An employee/volunteer may never sleep in the same bed as a minor.
- v) There must be both male and female employees/volunteers present at all co-ed overnights.
- vi) At least two same-gender employees/volunteers on same-gender overnight.
- vii) On campouts, no employee/volunteer may ever be in or sleep in a tent with minors.

9) No confidentiality

- a) Employees/volunteers can never promise confidentiality to a minor or vulnerable adult. Employees/volunteers must report to the Ministry Team Leader if a minor or vulnerable adult discusses harming themselves or others, committing a crime, or being abused.

b) Digital Privacy

- i) Inappropriate use of cameras, imaging, or digital devices is prohibited. It is inappropriate to use any device capable of recording or transmitting visual images in areas where privacy is expected by participants. Posting ANY images on the internet is not allowed unless permission has been granted by the parents/legal guardians and approved by the Ministry Team Leader. Refer to the media release agreement (YM 06) for each participant.

c) Hazing and bullying

- i) Physical hazing and initiations are prohibited. Verbal, physical, and cyber bullying are prohibited.

d) Controlled substances

- i) The use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs and/or mind- or mood-altering substances at QBC sponsored events is prohibited.

10) Transportation Guidelines

- a) All drivers must be at least 25 years of age. Have an active driver's license and have proof of insurance. Insurance must meet or exceed the requirements of the state in which the vehicle is registered and primarily used.
- b) Whenever possible, there shall be two (2) adult volunteers in each vehicle. The non-driver must be a member of QBC and will ride in the front passenger seat. When having two adult volunteers available to ride inside the same vehicle is not possible, there must be two or more non-related youth, or vulnerable adults present to prevent a one-on-one adult volunteer to minor scenario. When two youth or vulnerable adult passengers are not available, and only one is to be transported, the youth or vulnerable adult passenger should sit in the back seat alone and not in the front with the driver.
- c) The driver will not transport more people than the vehicle is designed to carry.
- d) All passengers must wear a properly fitting seatbelt.
- e) Drivers may not transport any minors or vulnerable adults who do not have signed consent.
- f) If there is any inappropriate behavior or disturbance, the driver will pull over, if possible, until the problem is resolved.
- g) Minors or vulnerable adults will be walked to and from their homes or the church by the non-driving volunteer.
- h) Minors or vulnerable adults should never be left alone in the vehicle.
- i) Drivers will not use a mobile phone when the vehicle is in motion.
- j) The non-driver will operate any audio media or GPS system while the vehicle is in motion.
- k) While safety is always important in all circumstances, the transportation guidelines apply only to events and activities to which QBC provides transportation. QBC will specify the events and activities for which QBC provides transportation and for those which it does not provide on a case-by-case basis.

11) Reporting and Investigations

QBC supports and maintains a **zero-tolerance** policy against abuse and neglect. Abuse and neglect include physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment, or maltreatment. It is against the law and against QBC policy for any volunteer or employed staff, male or female, to physically, sexually, or mentally abuse or neglect any person. Abuse and neglect (minor or otherwise) are serious crimes, and QBC intends to fully prosecute abuse or neglect in any form of the law. As a volunteer/employee you are under the following obligations:

- a) All volunteers and employees must never prevent a report of abuse or neglect from being filed.
- b) All volunteers and employees shall immediately report and document any incident of abuse, neglect or violation of this policy of which they have knowledge or which they have observed. The person making the report shall complete the Report of Alleged Abuse or Neglect Form (YM 05) and leave it in the Office Manager's mailbox in a sealed envelope. The person making the report should also immediately notify an elder of the documentation. Any person making such a report shall keep the information strictly confidential.
- c) Follow the internal reporting procedure:
 - i) The person reporting an incident of abuse shall contact appropriate staff and or any member of the Elder Board. The reporter shall provide information regarding all relevant facts with respect to the incident of abuse or neglect. Upon receiving a report of an incident of abuse, the person receiving the report, together with the reporter, shall complete a written report (YM 05) of the incident and submit a copy of the report to the Elders.
- d) Obligation to report to local law enforcement
 - i) In all cases where any volunteer(s)/Employee(s) has reasonable cause to believe that a minor or vulnerable adult, known to the volunteer(s)/employee(s) in a professional capacity, has been or may be abused or neglected by either known or unknown persons inside or outside of QBC, the volunteer(s)/employee(s) shall make a report to the local law enforcement agency's investigators within 24 hours of the determination of reasonable cause. If the volunteer(s)/ employee(s) is/are in doubt regarding whether a report should be made he or she shall telephone the agency anonymously and discuss the situation with an investigator to determine whether the report should be made. The volunteer(s)/employee(s) shall make a written record of the name and the title of the investigator with whom he or she spoke, and the recommendation made by the investigator, and then submit a copy of the written record to appropriate leadership within the church.
 - ii) Responding to the report

- (1) When someone receives a report of an incident of abuse, he or she shall immediately take steps to ensure the safety of the alleged victim. After the safety of the alleged victim has been secured, and after the report has been appropriately documented, the person receiving the report shall:
- (2) Immediately contact appropriate leadership or any member of the Elder Board who will then contact the parents or guardian of the alleged victim to inform them of the incident.
- (3) Take all steps necessary to ensure that the alleged wrongdoer is barred from further work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults pending the investigation.

12) Consequences of Violation of This Policy

Any employee/volunteer accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by QBC to be harmful to a minor or vulnerable adult may be immediately suspended from participation in any church ministries. Any employee/volunteer confirmed to be in violation of QBC's Youth and Vulnerable Adult Ministry Protection and Training Policy shall be prohibited from future participation as an employee/volunteer in all church ministries. If the person is an employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from QBC.

Exemptions

This policy is mandatory unless Elders or designated Leadership grants an exemption. Any requests for exemptions from any of these directives should be referred to the Elders or Leadership and dually approved by the requester's ministry leader.

Breach of this Policy

Any breach of this policy will be referred to Leadership who will review the breach and determine adequate action. If said breach is outside of the authority of Leadership, and or termination of membership is recommended, Elders will be contacted for final judgment. ☒

Signature Page

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