



Kids' Life Bible Clubs

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

Objective

Kids' Life Bible Clubs (KLBC) is a non-denominational Christian ministry to elementary school children in west Michigan. KLBC recognizes its Biblical, moral, and legal imperative to protect the children attending its Bible Clubs by establishing a policy to ensure a safe environment, free from physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and to protect its volunteers and staff by outlining high-risk activities to avoid when working with minor children.

Definitions

Child Abuse: "The physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, negligent treatment, or maltreatment of a child under 18, by a person who is responsible for the child's welfare, under circumstances which indicate that the child's health or welfare is harmed or threatened thereby. "Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act – Public Law 93-247, as amended Physical abuse is intentional, deliberate behavior that causes bodily harm to a child. It can take the form of assault, shaking, kicking, pinching or choking. In general, it includes all non-accidental physical injuries. Sexual abuse can be defined by any form of sexual contact between a child and adult or older youth. This could include showing or talking about sexually explicit material. Emotional abuse conveys a message that the child is worthless and undeserving of love and care. It can take the form of threats, critical words, demeaning terms or names, deprivation of affection, or similar emotional cruelty. It can be spoken or unspoken. Neglect is failing to meet a child's needs, such as nutritional, physical, emotional, educational, and safety.

Policy

KLBC strictly prohibits any physical, sexual, or emotional abuse of children attending its Bible Clubs in person or online. Any person who may pose a threat to children will be prohibited from working in this ministry. This includes any volunteer or staff person who arrives at a Bible Club or other KLBC event impaired by alcohol, illegal or recreational drugs, or legal drugs used improperly, or medications that affect judgement or provision of services to children. A KLBC volunteer or staff member who is accused of any form of abuse will be immediately suspended from his/her position with KLBC while the allegation is investigated internally or externally by appropriate authorities. A staff member will continue to receive salary during the investigation. If the allegations are substantiated the volunteer or staff member will be immediately and permanently removed from her/his position at KLBC with no further compensation for the staff member. In all cases, the Board of Directors will determine whether or not the accused individual will be reinstated to his/her position at KLBC. Volunteers and staff members must promptly notify KLBC leadership* when they or others violate the procedures mandated by this policy. See Reporting suspected child abuse section for procedure to follow.

Ministry leaders who become aware of a violation of the procedures set by this policy are required to take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance with them. In order to ensure compliance, it may become necessary to remove workers from their positions.

*KLBC Ministry leadership includes the Executive Director, Program Coordinator, and chairperson of the KLBC Board of Directors

Child Safety Procedures

Volunteer and Staff Application Process

- All persons, ages 12 or older, who wish to work in a Kids' Life Bible Club where they have any contact with children and all staff or potential staff will submit a completed KLBC application.
- Every applicant, staff member, or potential staff member will agree to have her/his personal references contacted by a ministry leader. For occasional volunteers their personal reference may be solely a recommendation from the club leader
- Applicants, staff and potential staff aged 18 and over will agree to undergo criminal and sexual offender background checks. These checks will be reviewed every 5 years.
- After the ministry leader reviews the application, contacts the references, and performs the criminal and sexual background checks, the leader will contact the applicant and conduct an interview.
- When indicated by our screening procedures, volunteers, staff, or potential staff who pose a threat to children or youth will be removed from consideration for any ministry position.
- Every approved volunteer applicant, staff member, or potential staff member will acknowledge in writing that they have received a copy of, read, and agreed to abide by the KLBC Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Procedures.

Working Safely with Children

- All children must have a completed and signed KLBC permission form from the parent or guardian to participate in Bible Club. All volunteer and staff members must have this information with them while conducting Bible Club.
- The information on the KLBC permission form is private. Do not give out this information to anyone other than KLBC leadership, law enforcement authorities or government child welfare agencies.
- Children must be checked in and out of Bible Club by name and date on a KLBC attendance form for each Club.
- Children must be released from Bible Club as directed by the parent or guardian. If released to a person, that person must be listed on the permission form and should sign the child out. Do not allow a child to leave the Bible Club room with the wrong person or without a sign-out.
- If released to another program in the school the child must be accompanied by a volunteer to the program space, not allowed to run through the halls of the school.
- Follow appropriate classroom management practices as outlined under the Disciplining Children section.
- Corporal punishment (slapping, hitting, pinching, pushing, yanking the arm, etc.) is prohibited.
- All sexual contact with a child is prohibited. Showing or talking about sexually explicit material is prohibited.
- Abusive verbal threats, insults, shaming, yelling or scowling angrily are prohibited.
- Derogatory comments about other faiths and their practices are not acceptable.

- Anyone working with children should limit physical contact to a pat on the back or forearm, a “high 5”, or handclasp. Lap sitting, kissing, tickling, back rubs, and frontal or bear hugs are not appropriate.
- Club activities should take place in an area that is open or is visible from the outside or inner hallway.
- Two screened adult volunteers or staff should be present in a classroom with children at all times. No adult should ever be alone in a room with a child.
- Only one adult member of a family should serve in a Club unless another non-family member is present.
- If it is not possible to have two screened adults in the Club, at least three individuals should be present, with one being a screened adult.
- If a child needs to use the bathroom, an adult should first check to be sure it is safe before the child enters. An adult volunteer should wait for him/her outside the hallway door. If the child needs assistance in a stall two adults must be present; one adult may help the child but must leave the stall and hall doors open so they can be visually monitored by the second adult.
- All communication with children must be done through their parent or guardian. Direct contact of a child on Facebook or other social media apps, through emailing or texting is not allowed.
- KLBC does not permit transporting children in personal vehicles unless with a parent or legal guardian.

Dealing with Illness and Injuries

- Volunteers who are ill (fever, or a communicable disease that can be transmitted by cough or touch) will not be permitted to participate in Bible Club.
- A child who is ill (fever, stomach ache, or have a communicable disease that can be transmitted by cough or touch) will have their parent or guardian notified to pick them up. If they are not able to be picked up right away they will be moved away from the group and monitored by an adult.
- Use reasonable caution to avoid contact with blood, saliva, vomit or other bodily fluids. Wash your hands thoroughly after helping a sick child.
- A child who has received a minor injury should be given first aid as needed. Parent or guardian should be notified of the injury when they pick up the child.
- Any injury that may require medical treatment beyond first aid should be given immediate attention. The parent or guardian of the child must be contacted. If warranted, emergency medical personnel should be called.
- The lead volunteer must complete a Notice of Injury report whenever an injury occurs during Bible Club and promptly notify the KLBC leadership.

Responding to a child’s report of abuse or neglect

- Take the child seriously when he/she tells you of abuse or neglect.
- Make dated notes immediately afterwards while the story is fresh in your mind.
- Do not attempt to substantiate any allegation or suspicion of abuse or neglect.
- Remain clam. Do not appear frightened or disgusted by the child’s story, since this may cause the child to stop talking or to believe you are upset with him/her.
- Do not frighten the child by mentioning police involvement.
- Do not try to convince the child that the story is not true or that it did not happen the way the child reports it.
- Do not tell the child he/she has been abused or neglected.

- Do not make promises to the child that you will not tell anyone what has been shared with you.
- Assure the child that whatever happened was not his/her fault. He/she does not deserve to be hurt by anyone.
- Assure the child that it was a good decision to tell someone what happened to him/her.
- Assure the child that you care about him/her.
- Tell the child that you want to find help so the incident can be prevented from happening again.
- Do not offer the child a reward for telling the story or promise a gift if the child tells another adult.
- Do not ask the child to show you any bruises that are beneath the child's underwear or clothing. It may be against the law to confirm a report of abuse in this way.
- The child reported to have been abused or neglected shall not be interviewed in the presence of an individual suspected to have perpetrated the abuse.

Reporting suspected child abuse

- As a volunteer you are considered a permissive reporter and are not mandated by Michigan law to report child abuse or neglect. As a Christian you have a moral obligation to care for the children in Bible Club.
- A permissive reporter is ordinarily entitled to anonymity at the time of reporting suspected abuse or neglect. If you have reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect, call Centralized Intake (855-444-3911) to make a report, or if available, make a report through the online reporting system (Michigan.gov/mdhhs) and notify the KLBC executive director verbally immediately, unless the executive director is the suspected perpetrator. In that case notify the chairperson of the board of directors. Fill out side 1 of the Report of Actual or Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect (DHS-3200) and follow instructions on page 2. If the immediate report has been made using the online reporting system and that report includes information required in a written report under subsection (2), that report is considered a written report for the purposes of this section and no additional written report is required. Forward a copy of the written or electronic report to the Executive Director or board chairperson within 24 hours.
- Delaying action may result in further abuse to the child.
- KLBC executive director or board chairman will ensure that the child's parent or guardian is informed immediately. If the child's parent or guardian is the suspected perpetrator, the KLBC leader will defer to local authorities to contact parent or guardian.
- If there is any question as to whether or not a report should be made to authorities, the KLBC leader or board chairperson will contact a lawyer to provide a written opinion as to whether the organization should report the suspected abuse or neglect to authorities.
- Continue to offer support and love to the child throughout your association with him/her.
- Do not discuss suspected abuse or neglect with others except KLBC leadership and local authorities. Defer all media inquiries to KLBC leader or board chairman.
- KLBC leader or board chairperson must promptly notify our ministry's liability insurance carrier upon notice of suspected abuse or sexual misconduct.

Dealing with Law Enforcement and the Media

- All KLBC leadership, employees, and volunteers will cooperate fully with law enforcement officials or government agencies investigating allegations of child abuse, or neglect.
- KLBC Leadership will seek legal counsel as soon as possible after we receive notice of possible abuse or molestation within the organization.

- One individual – a member of the leadership team, - or our attorney - will be the designated spokesperson to handle all inquiries from the news media. Our spokesperson will be the only person to convey information concerning the situation, doing so in a prudent manner to avoid compromising an ongoing investigation and to maintain the privacy of the individuals involved.

Disciplining Children

“Blessed is the man you discipline, O Lord, the man you teach from your law.” Psalm 94:12.

Discipline and disciple both come from the Latin word *discere* which means, “to learn”. We seek to create an environment in our Bible Clubs where we model God’s love and show our love for children as we disciple them to know and follow Jesus Christ. When necessary children will receive calm, caring, intentional discipline that encourages them to focus and learn.

What’s NOT permitted?

- Corporal punishment (slapping, hitting, pinching, pushing, yanking by the arm)
- Abusive verbal threats, insults, shaming or yelling
- Inappropriate physical touch, lap-sitting, frontal and bear hugs
- Scowling angrily
- Trying to discipline when you are feeling out of control

Appropriate Classroom Management Practices

- Pray for children between Bible Clubs, pray with them during Bible Club, learn their names.
- Send post cards to parents introducing yourself, thanking them for allowing their child to attend Bible Club, and asking them to pray for the Club and the children’s behavior.
- Post clear expectations and mention them before each club, reminding kids as needed.
- Have your lesson well prepared but flexible, plan in some fun activities.
- Include children in teaching lesson, leading songs, verse memorization activities, etc.
- Vary routine with “surprise” activities.
- Have enough helpers and inform them of your expectations and procedures.
- Redirect disruptive child to another activity.
- Separate chatty or disruptive kids, placing them close to you or with a helper.
- Have helper sit with disruptive child away from the group; possibly give them an activity sheet to work on.
- Praise and compliment good or kind behavior but don’t only focus on the well-behaved child, encourage children who behave poorly that they can do better, nod and smile as you speak to them.
- Mean what you say and be consistent in applying consequences for misbehavior.
- Withdraw privileges or treats from children who disobey expectations.
- Set up a special treat in a paper bag for the one child who best behaves and participates. This is given out at the end of Club by having a helper choose the child or draw name from a group of candidates.
- For smaller Clubs give each child 3 plastic chips or coins at the beginning of each Club. Take one away (make eye contact, ask for it quietly, state the infraction to the child) for each infraction of the rules. The children with no chips left at the end of the session do not get the treat. Tell them they will have another chance next time and you know they will do better, smile and nod.
- If child does not respond to discipline, the child’s parent should be called and asked for suggestions to improve behavior. The child can be given a time away from Bible Club for the next week. When all else fails a disruptive child can be suspended from Bible Club.

- If the disruptive child is in an after-school program, you may be able to have a screened helper take him/her back to that program if behavior doesn't improve. Check with the leader of the program for her/his discipline procedures.
- Turn situation over to someone else before you lose your cool.
- Affirm kids with a "high 5" or thumbs up, smiles, and positive comments.
- Pray, pray, pray!

Policy and procedures review

- This policy and procedures document will be updated yearly and then reviewed with staff and volunteers annually.

Website: www.kidslifebibleclubs.org, Email: klbc2110@sbcglobal.net office phone: 616-455-2490
Address: 2110 Enterprise SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508

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