

# Interfaith Families Project

## Sunday School Child Protection and Discipline Policies

### Child Protection Policy:

#### PURPOSE

The staff, board and members of the Interfaith Families Project of Greater Washington (IFFP) believe that the children in our community should be completely safe in our midst. In order to ensure this, the following policy regarding appropriate discipline of children and contact between adult staff and volunteers and the children will govern all IFFP activities, and compliance with this policy shall be a condition of employment or participation.

#### DEFINITIONS

In this policy, the terms “**children**” and “**youth**” refer to and include all persons under 18 years of age.

“**Child abuse**” means the physical or mental injury of a child by a parent or other person having permanent or temporary custody or responsibility for the care and/or supervision of the child under circumstances that indicate harm or a substantial risk of harm to the child’s health, safety or wellbeing.

“**Discipline**” refers to actions intended to correct or modify behavior, teach social norms for appropriate behavior in a group setting and/or assist children to develop and maintain appropriate levels of self-control.

“**Sexual Abuse**” Sexual abuse means any act that involves activity of a sexual nature, including but not limited to molestation or exploitation, of a child by any party or other person responsible for the child’s permanent or temporary care and/or custody. For purposes of this Policy, sexual abuse or misconduct includes touching and non-physical interactions between a child and one or more adults undertaken for the purpose of sexual stimulation or gratification. **Such behavior is always considered unwelcome and non-consensual when the interaction involves a child, even if the child has indicated his or her consent, whether verbally or otherwise.** Inappropriate touching includes kissing, fondling and all other sexual behavior. Other inappropriate behavior may include sexual remarks, the display of pornographic or sexually suggestive images, or the observation of any type of sexual activity.

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### **STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

All persons working in any capacity with children and youth at IFFP or in connection with an activity sponsored by IFFP shall respect the integrity of each individual child and engage only in behavior that supports in a positive way each child's mental, emotional and psychological growth.

Sunday School teachers, youth advisors, nursery supervisors and helpers shall discipline children with kindness designed to further the goal of helping children to develop a sense of responsibility and self-control.

Corporal punishment is not permitted, and is understood to include but not be limited to slapping, spanking, pinching and/or shaking. Punitive techniques that cause physical pain, such as requiring children to assume and maintain an uncomfortable position, are never appropriate and are not permitted. Physical restraint of children should be used only in an effort to insure the child's own safety or the safety of others. Derogatory, humiliating or frightening remarks or comments shall not be used.

Appropriate discipline establishes clear expectations, provides rewards and incentives for acceptable behavior and uses appropriate verbal disapproval, loss of privileges and redirection to teach children acceptable behavior (see IFFP Discipline Policy). Inappropriate discipline shall be construed as child abuse that may result in immediate termination of employee or volunteer status.

Sunday School teachers, youth advisors, nursery school supervisors or helpers shall not touch or interact with children or youth in any way that is intended to be sexually stimulating or undertaken for purposes of sexual gratification. Adults shall behave at all IFFP functions in ways that are neither intended nor likely to result in sexual stimulation.

Physical expressions of affection shall not be excessive, nor are they to be imposed on another individual who does not welcome such expressions; however, common expressions of appreciation and affection (hugs), affirmation (pats on the back), support (prayer), or physical caretaking (diaper changing, etc.) are appropriate as long as respect for others' personal wishes about being touched are honored.

All persons working with children or youth shall work in pairs when possible. A teacher or other adult may work alone with a child if there is visible access to the classroom, such as a window in the door to the classroom or an open door. This requirement is intended for the benefit and protection of adults as well as children.

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All children and youth participating in IFFP-sponsored activities, including transportation to and from such activities, shall do so with the express permission of a parent or legal guardian. When practical this permission shall be given in writing.

It is recommended that children and youth be transported in groups, and, when possible, two adults shall be present when a single child is being transported.

The child safety restraints required by law in motor vehicles shall be used for all children to whom they are applicable.

### **SUPERVISION AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

Sunday School and youth programs are under the supervision of the Director of Religious Education ("DRE"). The DRE shall seek to staff all programs with at least two adults. From time to time IFFP staff will participate in these programs to assist with the supervision of children and youth.

Communication and explanation of this policy will be included annually in training and orientation programs for Board members, staff members and volunteers. This Agreement will be included in Back to School Sunday and Teacher Training packets, and it also will be posted on the IFFP website.

All IFFP volunteers working with children and youth shall be members of the community. IFFP may also hire paid staff to work with children and youth. These staff must consent to a background check.

Prior to working with children and youth, IFFP staff members and volunteers must complete an orientation reviewing this Child Protection Policy, sign the accompanying Policy Agreement and complete a background form.

Any adult or youth who has been convicted of any offense involving child physical or sexual abuse may not serve in any capacity in any IFFP-sponsored activity in which youth or children participate.

Signing the accompanying Policy Agreement shall constitute an acknowledgement and affirmation that the individual signing has not resigned from or been terminated from any volunteer or paid position for any reason relating in any manner to admitted or alleged child abuse or sexual misconduct, and that the individual has not been convicted of any offense relating in any way to child abuse or sexual misconduct of any kind.

IFFP performs a background check on staff and volunteers who work with children or

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youth at IFFP pursuant to the consent for such a search given in this Child Protection and Discipline Policy Agreement.

### **REPORTING OF SEXUAL ABUSE OR MISCONDUCT**

Any person witnessing or having reasonable suspicion of physical or sexual abuse of any child or youth shall report the information immediately to the DRE, Board Chair or Spiritual Director. The report shall include all events witnessed and information received, stating the date, time, and location of such events or the receipt of information and identifying any other witnesses or persons involved in the events or information being reported. Any allegation of child abuse must and will be immediately reported to the proper law enforcement and social services authorities, according to federal, state, and local or municipal laws and regulations. IFFP will cooperate fully with any law enforcement and social services agencies and personnel.

The IFFP Board will not take any retaliatory action against any person making such a report. Every reasonable effort will be made to protect the privacy and rights of all persons involved. All parties will be requested not to discuss the matter until a full investigation has been completed and/or a resolution has been reached. The IFFP Board will investigate all reports thoroughly and promptly, and may, prior to the completion of any such investigation, take such actions as it deems necessary and appropriate. To the fullest extent practicable, and to the extent permitted by the law, all such reports and investigation and resolutions of the same will be kept in strict confidence. If any investigation confirms that misconduct has occurred, the IFFP Board will take whatever corrective action may be appropriate, including discipline up to and including immediate termination of employment or volunteer service.

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### **Discipline Policy:**

**The IFFP discipline policy assumes that:**

1. Classrooms have been “set up for success” with appropriate visuals and other environmental supports.
2. Lessons are taught in a manner that accommodates a variety of different learning styles.

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3. Students in each class have created their own set of class rules and discussed the kind of classroom community in which they want to participate. IFFP teachers will also do their best to prevent negative behavior by always reinforcing positive behavior.

**When needed, whichever teacher is not teaching the lesson will do the following:**

1. If a negative behavior occurs, the child will be given a clear and calm verbal warning. “(insert child’s name), please (state DESIRED behavior), that’s *one*.”  
Example: “LuAnn, please keep your hands to yourself, that’s *one*.”
2. If the behavior continues, the child will be given a second clear and calm verbal warning. “(insert child’s name), please (state DESIRED behavior), that’s *two*.”
3. If the behavior continues, the teacher will say “(insert child’s name), that’s *three*, it’s time to take a break,” and accompany the child to a predetermined spot (this could be a chair in the room or right outside the door). This is NOT a punishment. It is a chance for the child to calm down and get his/her act together without getting extra attention for misbehavior.
4. After several minutes, the teacher will invite the child to return to class. If the child still needs to comply with an earlier request (e.g. to pick up something s/he had thrown), the teacher will nicely ask him or her to do so.
5. When the incident is over, it’s OVER. The child is back and completely welcome. No further mention is made of the misbehavior.
6. If a child is having a very difficult time and “1-2-3” is neither effective nor possible, the teacher will request that a parent come and pick up the child. The teacher and parent will talk during the week about ways they can work together to help the child have a more successful experience in the next class.
7. If a child regularly has a difficult time in class, the teacher will contact the Director of Religious Education. The teacher, DRE and parents will then meet to figure out a way to create a successful Sunday School experience for the child.

**Everyone who works with minors needs to sign the Signature and Background Check Forms. To do so, go to the following link.**

**(If you work with kids at IFFP, please print it off to sign it.)**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TeldpKDsip8qZj67I6IA1zdT6iTDKMXKMzYhxMvhTRk/edit?usp=sharing>