

## Bella Vista Church of Christ Children Protection Policy

Date: 8/10/2022

The Bella Vista Church has always made it a priority to ensure the physical and spiritual safety of its visitors and members. Recently, multiple religious organizations around the nation have been in the news for child abuse. The Elders of the Bella Vista Church believe it's necessary to develop and post a written policy, and develop more formal plan to avert and/or deal with any abuse of our youth while they are engaging in any events and programs sponsored by the Church.

Beginning immediately, anyone acting as a teacher, chaperone, volunteer, staff or the such, having responsibility for our youth, must be aware of this policy and the actions which can be taken in the event they fail to comply with this policy.

The following rules apply when working with our youth:

1. Avoid being in a situation where you are alone with a youth in a closed door environment unless you are a direct relative or legal guardian. If you find yourself in this situation, you must either open a door to allow others to view activities in the room, or stop the event/program until the situation can be resolved. Ideally, find another adult to be present with you and the youth during the event/program.
2. If you are new to the Bella Vista Church, before you engage (meaning be in a support and or leadership role with youth activities) you understand our staff and/or Elders may request a list of references who will vouch for your recent work with youth. If warranted, and with your knowledge and permission, our Elders reserve the right to conduct formal background checks through professional agencies. This policy does not apply to members or visitors who are simply watching an event/program, unless they can be in a situation where they are alone with a youth who is not a direct relative or they do not have legal guardianship.
3. Violations of this policy can easily be dealt with by reminding others of the policy and offering to help resolve the situation. Any repeated violations of this policy should be reported to the staff or Elders. Repeat violations of this policy can mean the removal of a person's direct involvement in youth events/programs. Each reported violation will be reviewed for its severity, and action will be taken accordingly, up to and including reporting to the local authorities.

We are sincerely appreciative of our staff and any members who dedicate themselves to the education and well-being of our youth. We pray that this policy and the Church's actions help everyone clearly understand the seriousness of this subject and will understand this is done with love.

The Bella Vista Church of Christ Elders