

Thanks to everyone for your questions/comments/suggestions about the Child Protection Policy (CPP). After reviewing all the questions I decided that we all would benefit from the questions and the answers.

I will list each question that you have about the CPP and then attempt to provide an answer. It's important to remember that our present focus is to implement the CPP by May 1. We are in a learning mode now and once the CPP is implemented and we gain experience, I expect that we will continue to learn and to make changes more tailored to our church's needs and situations for the protection of our children, youth and workers.

**1. What about children outside on the playground area or even in the parking lot without parents?**

My assumption is that you are addressing times when the children are not involved in a Bible class or other church sponsored event. If that is the case, then these children are under the responsibility and supervision of their parents/guardians. A CPP does not take away from the parents/guardians responsibility for their children. Having been in the situation you address, my response would be to communicate with the child to make certain their parents know where they are at. Depending on their response, I would take action to return them inside or maybe go speak to their parents if I thought the child was in an unsafe place. The important point of your question is that it serves as a reminder for us that the parking lot is not a safe place for children to play. The play area on the lower level is made for kids to play, but parents should provide some supervision since this area is not secure.

**2. Can any adult sign-in/sign-out a child or does it need to be a parent/guardian?**

If the parent/guardian is present, then it would be best for them to sign-in/sign-out. However, another adult is acceptable (e.g. grandparents). Some churches require a release from a parent/guardian for another adult to accompany their child(ren). We don't require that. Under the CPP the same person who signs in the child must be the one who signs out the child. Please be prompt in getting your children from their classes. This really helps our volunteers.

**3. If a group (i.e. AA) wants to use the facility, will they have to do the training and comply with the policy? (if there are children involved like a wedding group?)**

Our present position is that groups from outside the MFCC will acknowledge they have read the CPP and agree to keep children safe from abuse. The CPP will be issued when the Marriage Policy is issued or the Use of Facilities Policy is issued. We will not provide training or certification for them. They need to be cognizant of the policy.

**4. Do you also request a credit report? If so, why?**

No. We don't request a credit report for those who want to work with our children. The background check is a multi-jurisdictional criminal check with a review of the sex offender databases in all 50 states.

**5. If a potential worker has already been trained/had background check, etc. will they also need to do that at the church? (e.g. through Marble Falls school system – i.e. a certified teacher or a paraprofessional). Will our background check for prison [ministry] be good enough?**

If you have a background check that is less than five years old, please attach a copy with your signed release form ("Disclosure and Authorization for Consumer Reports"). If your background check fits our requirements under the CPP, then we will use it. If it doesn't, then we will have your authorization to run a new check.

**6. Is it possible to have a split door for Babyland where we could close the bottom half (the noise and movements from the other class rooms are a distraction to the babies and crying babies are probably distracting the other two classrooms)?**

We have discussed possible changes to some doors, like the Nursery and Babyland. The door options will be looked at along with other options like in-room Wi-Fi cameras, or glass inserts in doors, etc. Until that analysis is complete, I recommend the following for Babyland:

If there are two non-related adults in the room, then close the door.

If there is only one adult in the room, then open the door about two feet, just enough so that there is some visibility into the room. Since we currently have only one adult in our children's classrooms, we are going to have hall monitors in the Babyland area and the Treehouse area to provide someone to help with restroom situations and to also monitor each class since there is only one adult in the room with the children. I hope this will help with the Babyland room.

**7. Do we have a playground supervisor?**

No, we do not have a full-time playground supervisor. If the playground is being used by children during a MFCC sponsored event (class, or other activity), then there will be two adults to supervise. Please see my answer to question 1 above.

**8. Do we have discipline training?**

I am not aware of any discipline training available at MFCC. If this is for the children and you know of something that is available, please let me know and maybe we could teach it later once the CPP is implemented.

☺And now I say this “tongue-in-cheek” that if it’s for the adults, it’s probably not going to work!☺

**9. Did we have a policy previous to Nov. 2014 that covered a lessor liability coverage or were we not covered at all?**

As I understand the situation we have always had an insurance policy that provided acceptable liability limits to meet our needs. However, in 2014 Guide One Insurance required an approved CPP to be active in order for them to continue MFCC at appropriate liability limits. MFCC adopted the CPP for the protection of our children, staff, and volunteers. Guide One reviewed and approved our CPP so that we have continued acceptable liability limits for MFCC. Over time we hope to improve the CPP so that these liability limits will be improved to provide more protection for all of our church.

**10. How often will a background check have to be done?**

At present we are considering background checks every five years. Some churches require annual background checks and some require new background check based on an adult’s absence from teaching for a period of time (i.e. a year). The frequency of our background check is something that we will investigate further as we become more experienced with the CPP and its ongoing operations.

**11. Has there been any discussion regarding security cameras for certain areas? (NOT restrooms but in halls, etc.)**

Yes, this has been discussed. I receive news bulletins from Safe Church about items like this and other practices shared by other churches. Right now we want to get the CPP implemented and then decide if something like cameras in each classroom and perhaps throughout the building and outdoors would be the best option for MFCC to pursue.

**12. How can one get information about the four policies?**

Lisa Bray is our church secretary and she can get you a copy of any of the MFCC policies that you would like. Maybe one day we will make them available through our MFCC website.

**13. Check-in/check-out for visitors? Are visitors covered under the policy?**

Children who visit MFCC and attend the Nursery, Babyland, or Treehouse will need to be checked-in and checked-out by an adult. Visiting children are covered under the CPP. Adult visitors are under the CPP also, even though they may not be aware of the CPP. Eventually, I want to create a pamphlet that would quickly highlight our CPP to anyone reading it.

**14. In Treehouse, if there are two unrelated adults in a classroom, can that door be closed (or almost closed) so that we don’t distract the other class across the hall?**

Yes, if there are two un-related adults who are “trained and certified” then the door to that classroom may be closed. It cannot be locked. Remember our goal is to achieve the “two adult rule.” With two adults the risk of abuse is significantly reduced.

**15. And in the nursery, same thing. Can the door be closed so kids don’t escape? Or do we need a “gate”?**

The Nursery door can be closed if there are two un-related adults (trained and certified) in the room. Once again the door should never be locked. We are going to try a “gate” in the 3-4 years old classroom and see how it works. The better option for the Nursery is 1) a door with child-proof glass in it or 2) a half-door. Before I get too optimistic about these changes, please understand that any changes we make to doors will have to meet ADA rules or any fire codes that might apply. All of this would be addressed before door changes could be made. Nothing is easy anymore! Of course a Wi-Fi camera in the nursery would be another solution.

**16. What age does the nursery go through?**

The Nursery is intended for children 2 years of age and younger. If your child is older than two years, they should remain with you and not be brought to the Nursery. There is a “training or quiet room” located next to the Nursery that could be used for older children under the supervision of the parent. This room has a glass wall and has audio so that you participate in the worship service. We also have Adult Classroom #3 which could be used by parents with their children. This room has audio and a glass wall so that worship services can be seen and heard. Adult classroom #3 is not sound proof so any activities for children in this room should be quiet ones.

**17. Sometimes little children need help in restrooms. Who do we call on for help?**

The worker on duty or another adult can help depending on the situation (i.e. gender of child and gender of workers). For a single person restroom like we have in the Nursery, Babyland/Toddlers and Treehouse areas, a trained and certified worker may help a child in the restroom so long as the door remains partially open. It would best if another adult were nearby. Once again the prohibition is that one adult should not be alone with a child and have the door closed. For the multi-person restrooms on the upper level of the building, you would need two adults in the restroom so that one could help the child and the other could be there for security purposes. If the child uses a stall, then the stall door must remain open while the child is being helped. This is why it is so important for us to have two-adult workers with our children in each setting or event or activity.

**18. Don't have “institutional” references. How do I handle that?**

This question refers to the MFCC Child/Youth Application Form and it's a very good question since some of us are retired for several years now. On page 2 where we ask for employers in the last three years, you will not have any if you have been retired longer than three years. Just put “Retired.”

When you get to page 3 and the section “Please list two references (must be of a business or organizational nature):” Then you can list people that you might be associated with through an organization in which you are active, or if you are involved in a ministry here at church you could list your ministry leader. If you volunteer at a school or a daycare or some other place, they could be your reference. For you guys, I would not recommend listing your golfing buddies! Guy golfers are not really creditable references! And the one time they did tell the truth, it would be about you. 😊

Thanks again for your questions. I hope that you will consider serving in our children and youth ministries.

Paul Castiglione

MFCC Child Protection Committee