

Chinese Bible Church of Greater Boston

Safe Church Policy

Version 1.0 – March 3, 2021

I. General Purpose Statement

Chinese Bible Church of Greater Boston (CBCGB) seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for those who participate in our programs and activities, particularly those most vulnerable including children, elderly, and the disabled. CBCGB also seeks to ensure that monetary donations to the church are used responsibly and protected from misuse or misappropriation. For these reasons, this policy outlines guidelines and safeguards including background checks for all our employees, those in CBCGB leadership roles such as Board of Elders and Board of Deacons, and volunteers involved in ministries including Children, Youth, Church Finances, Missions, Social Concerns, Kitchen, Transportation, Bookstore, and Human Resources.

CBCGB recognizes that prayer is our best defense and encourages its members to pray that the church will be a safe and secure place for all who attend. However, by implementing the practices below, our goal is to outline additional ways we seek to protect the children, youth, elderly, and the disabled of CBCGB from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior and to protect the church's assets, while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

II. Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms "child" or "children" include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term "elderly" and "disabled" include persons who due to either physical or mental limitations are not able to care or make decisions for themselves. The term "worker" includes all paid church staff and volunteer persons who work with children, elderly, and the disabled, church leaders, and those who have access to the finances of the church.

III. Selection of Workers

All new persons who aspire to church leadership positions, who desire to work with children, elderly, or disabled participating in our programs and activities, or who desire to have access to the finances of the church will be screened. This screening includes the following (as applicable):

A. Christian

All who aspire to these positions must be Christians who affirm the Statement of Faith as defined in the church's bylaws and who demonstrate lives transformed by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

B. Six Month Rule

Volunteers shall not be considered for any position involving contact with children, elderly, or disabled or access to church finances until they have been involved with CBCGB for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children. This requirement may be waived by the pastor, elder, or ministry leader overseeing the applicable ministry for one-time speakers or volunteers whose role is limited to the duration of specific time-bound events. It may also be waived by the pastor, elder, or ministry leader overseeing the applicable ministry for volunteers who are able to provide references from trusted individuals known by the pastor or who have sufficient experience with CBCGB members outside the context of CBCGB so as to vouch for their character.

C. Written application

Ministries, particularly those which have interaction with children, elderly, or the disabled, may require prospective volunteers to complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by CBCGB. Such applications may request basic information from the applicant and may inquire into previous experience working with the applicable vulnerable populations, previous CBCGB experience, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at CBCGB for as long as the persons are engaged in ministry among vulnerable populations at CBCGB.

D. Personal Interview

Upon completion of the application and at the discretion of the pastor, elder, or ministry leader overseeing the ministry, an interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss their suitability for the position.

E. Reference Checks

Before a new applicant is permitted to work with children, elderly, or the disabled, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references are preferably of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references and from organizations where the applicant has worked with the applicable vulnerable populations in the past. At the discretion of the pastor, elder, or ministry leader overseeing the ministry, church congregation members who are in current or past leadership roles may be acceptable as references. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at CBCGB for as long as the persons are engaged in ministry among vulnerable populations at CBCGB.

F. Criminal Background Check

New applicants must undergo a background check as described in the Criminal Background Check section below. All employees, church leaders, and volunteers working with vulnerable populations or finances are also required to undergo regular background checks as described in Section IV.

IV. Criminal Background Check

CBCGB utilizes the Massachusetts Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check and the Sex Offender Registry Information (SORI) check to screen applicable workers. CORI consists broadly of named-based arraignment records which are created and maintained by the Massachusetts courts. CORI is limited to criminal offenses in the state of Massachusetts. SORI consists of Massachusetts registered sex offender records. For more information, please refer to CBCGB's CORI Policy. CBCGB will request permission through a CORI acknowledgement form and perform a background check on those required by this policy at least once for every two years. For new employees or workers who live outside of Massachusetts, the church may also use additional background check resources.

A. CORI Representatives and Organizational Users

The CBCGB CORI Representative will be the Office Administration Director.

The backup CORI representative will be the Human Resources Committee (HRC) Chair or one designated by the HRC Chair.

The CORI representatives are responsible for ensuring organizational compliance with Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS) CORI regulations and ensuring that all organizational users of CORI have reviewed the CBCGB CORI Policy and understood all relevant DCJIS training.

Besides the two CORI representatives, the Board of Elders may assign additional organizational users who are given access to perform background checks. The number of organizational users will be limited due to the sensitivity and confidentiality of information.

B. Workers requiring criminal background checks

CBCGB requires that all church employees, including pastors, ministers, and church office staff and all church council members submit to a CORI and/or SORI check prior to assuming any responsibilities. CBCGB also requires that all adult (age 18 and above) workers who may have access to children, youth, elderly or the disabled to submit to a CORI and/or SORI check. Workers who are not involved with vulnerable populations may only need to submit to a CORI check.

This section provides examples of those required to submit to CORI/SORI checks. This list is not intended to be exhaustive but provides examples of volunteers who fall under the above criteria:

- CORI and/or SORI checks
 - New prospective employees who meet all other qualifications for a particular position
 - Church staff including:
 - Pastors
 - Ministers
 - Church office staff (full-time and part-time)
 - Lay Church Council Leaders including:
 - Lay elders
 - Deacons
 - Ministries with access to children, youth, disabled, or the elderly:
 - Nursery adult leaders, volunteers, and contractors
 - Children's Ministry adult leaders, volunteers, and contractors
 - Youth Ministry adult leaders and volunteers
 - Philly Ministry adult leaders and volunteers
 - Short-term mission adult team leaders and volunteers
 - Vacation Bible School adult leaders and volunteers
 - Church van drivers
 - Stephen Ministry leaders and counselors
 - Ministries with access to church finances
 - Finance committee members
 - Missions Committee Chair and Treasurer
 - Social Concerns Committee Chair and Treasurer
 - Human Resources Committee Chair
 - Church Kitchen leader and bookkeeper
 - Church Bookstore leader and bookkeeper

This list is by no means exhaustive. If there is any question regarding whether a volunteer needs to submit to CORI and/or SORI background checks, the Senior Pastor and the two CBCGB CORI Representatives in consultation with the Board of Elders will make the determination.

C. Disqualifying Offences

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from assuming a position after a CORI and/or SORI check will be determined by the pastor and/or elder

overseeing the applicable program or ministry on a case-by-case basis in accordance with CBCGB's CORI Policy.

Generally, convictions for offences involving children, elderly, or the disabled and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency, and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children, elderly, or the disabled and/or have access to church finances. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The CORI acknowledgment form and results obtained from CORI and/or SORI checks will be maintained securely at CBCGB in accordance with the CBCGB CORI Policy. Such records will be destroyed two years after they have been acquired.

V. Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance when children, elderly, or the disabled are being supervised during our programs and activities. However, this may not always be possible in cases such as children's classes with only one adult teacher or in counseling situations. In such cases and at the discretion of CBCGB, rooms may be monitored by security cameras or there must be at least one other unrelated adult worker on church premises with doors to rooms opened or windows which allow for others to see into the room.

VI. Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

The Massachusetts Department of Children & Families defines abuse as "the non-accidental commission of any act by a caregiver which causes or creates a substantial risk of physical or emotional injury or sexual abuse of a child; or the victimization of a child through sexual exploitation or human trafficking, regardless if the person responsible is a caregiver."¹ Neglect is defined as "failure by a caregiver, either deliberately or through negligence or inability, to take those actions necessary to provide a child with minimally adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, supervision, emotional stability and growth, or other essential care, including malnutrition or failure to thrive; provided, however, that such inability is not due solely to inadequate economic resources or solely to the existence of a handicapping condition."²

¹ "Definition of abuse and neglect," accessed August 9, 2020, <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/definitions-of-abuse-and-neglect>.

² Ibid.

Employees and volunteers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of a child at CBCGB becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the pastor, elder, and/or ministry leader overseeing the program and/or ministry. If a pastor, elder, and/or ministry leader becomes aware of allegations of abuse or neglect, this will also be reported to civil authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that a pastor, elder, and/or ministry leader becomes aware that an incident of abuse or neglect may have occurred at CBCGB or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. The worker alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation.
3. Civil authorities will be notified, and CBCGB will comply with Massachusetts requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. CBCGB will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. The Senior Pastor will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. We will seek the advice of legal counsel or outside agency before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the congregation. All other representatives of the church should refrain from speaking to the media.
5. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.
6. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position.

VII. Discipline Policy

It is the policy of CBCGB not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children, elderly, or the disabled. Workers should consult with the pastor overseeing their program or ministry if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

VIII. Training and Education

CBCGB will provide training on this child protection policy to all new workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual

basis. All workers are required to attend training every three years as appropriate to their role. CBCGB will keep a record of those who have attended such a training.