

MEMORANDUM

TO: To Whom It May Concern

FROM: Theresa Sidebotham, Esq.

DATE: May 13, 2025

SUBJECT: Executive Summary of Child Safeguarding Audit

I. Introduction

This Executive Summary gives an overview of the Child Safeguarding Audit. We generally conclude that the Children's Program at Christland Church is a safe and pleasant environment for children. The leaders in the Children's Program were caring, conscientious, and dedicated to continuous improvement. This is an excellent program from the perspective of child safety.

What is in place now is typical of a mid-size church that has addressed child safeguarding issues. Christland is blessed with many small children and youth, and is looking to the future when the program may be larger. This is why they have directed staffing toward child safeguarding and requested this audit.

We provided some suggestions, but these were in the context of continuing growth and improvement, not shortcomings that put children at risk.

II. Staffing

Four staff members have primary responsibility for child safety. Ms. Cierra Colborn is the Kids Program Director and is responsible for the overall program. She has a Bachelors in Education and experience teaching preschoolers. In addition to overseeing other aspects of the program, Ms. Colborn does child safety training for the program.

Ms. Rylee Labby is the Childcare Coordinator and works closely with Ms. Colborn. She has responsibility for coordinating childcare for events outside of

Sunday services, which is provided by contractors. She coordinates child safety training for these contractors.

Dr. Christie McIntyre is the Child Safety Coordinator. She has a Ph.D. in Early Childhood Education and was until recently the Director of Teacher Education at Southern Illinois University. She has been working on policy development, staff and volunteer training, incident reporting, communication, audits, and support of leadership. She reviews what is happening in the classrooms and determines if it needs improvement. Her special focus is child safety, both physical and for abuse prevention. Her role is to assist Ms. Colborn in taking the Kids Program forward.

Jackson McLachlan is the pastor in charge of the youth group. He is also working with Dr. McIntyre to expand child safeguarding principles into the youth group. This project is underway.

III. Observations of the Program

While visiting in College Station, in addition to interviewing staff, I was able to visit most aspects of the Kids Program and childcare. In order to access the children's area on Sunday morning, I was provided with a blue vest denoting that I belonged in the area.

The rooms were pleasant, safe, and adequately staffed. The check-in and check-out process was good and managed electronically. Each child was tagged with appropriate information. When children had needs, such as using the bathroom, oversight was handled by the service leaders so that classroom workers did not need to leave the room short staffed, but there was constant monitoring of the children. They used the bathroom alone but were informed that help was available (right outside the door).

The babies and children seemed happy and content in their classrooms and nurseries. They had plenty of adult supervision, and volunteers also seemed happy to be with the children. For any child who became upset, service leaders or Ms. Colborn were available to take them aside and comfort them. There was also a system for quickly contacting parents.

The process of acquiring and training volunteers and contractors was straightforward. Background checks, screening, and child safety training are all in place.

There is a process for abuse reporting. There have been no incidents in the past other than a very young toddler who was biting other children in the face. This was addressed with a safety plan.

IV. Policies and Procedures

Good progress has been made on policies and procedures and the Training Manual for the Kids Program. The Training Manual is a concise tool that would allow a volunteer to know exactly what is expected of them. We recommended some upgrades in definitions, processes, and responses.

Policies and procedures for the Youth Program are still in progress and will be reviewed later.

V. Recommendations

We recommend:

- Continue work that is underway to develop the Youth Program policies;
- Update Policies and Procedures and Training Manual per our recommendations;
- Further define the childcare process for the host homes;
- Further define the role of the Child Safety Coordinator and create a Crisis Response Plan and Crisis Response Team;
- Continue regular training efforts;
- Create a policy for youth volunteers; and
- Continue to grow the programs based on standards laid out by the Evangelical Council for Abuse Prevention (ecap.net)