



*Homelink*

## **Child Protection Policies (supplement to our Handbook)**

### **General Purpose Statement**

Homelink seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the families who participate in classes. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children at Homelink from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior, while also protecting our teachers and volunteer workers from false accusations.

### **Definitions**

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of 18. The term “worker” includes both paid and volunteer persons who work with children.

## **Child Abuse Policies**

### **Selection of Teachers and Staff**

All persons who desire to teach or work with children at Homelink will be screened. This screening includes:

#### **a. Written Application**

All persons seeking to teach must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence in the SHARE files.

#### **b. Personal Interview**

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

#### **c. Reference Checks**

Before an applicant is permitted to teach at Homelink, at least two of the applicants references will be checked. Documentation will be maintained in confidence in the SHARE files. (Note: Should this applicant be a homeschool mom who has been a member of SHARE and is well-known by many other homeschool moms, this reference check will be waived.)

#### **d. Criminal Background Check**

A national criminal background check is required for all teachers and for any other volunteers who are full-time. Before a background check is run, prospective workers will

be asked to sign an authorization form allowing SHARE to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, she/he will be unable to work with children.

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by Cathy Mullins and Kelly Keilholz on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, indecency, and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence in the SHARE files.

**e. “Protecting God’s Children” Program**

As per the request of the pastor of St. Andrew’s Catholic Church, all of our teachers are required to take the Protecting God’s Children workshop. The Protecting God’s Children program is the VIRTUS program aimed at protecting children from child sexual abuse. Protecting God’s Children is an online 3-hour awareness session for adults in the faith community who interact with minors.

Participants are taught to identify situations that could leave a child vulnerable, the signs that a child may have experience abuse, the methods of sexual offenders and critical steps to help prevent abuse.

**Open Door Policy**

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window besides it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

**Younger Workers**

Some of our teachers ask certain students to act as teacher assistants (TA), and they themselves are under the age of 18. The following guidelines apply to our TAs:

1. Parents must give permission for their child to be a TA.
2. Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

**Two Adult Rule**

Although it is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when students are in their classes, it is impossible to be able to do this. When there is only one teacher in a class session, doors to the classroom should remain open and both teacher and students should be easily seen by anyone walking by.

## **Leaving the Building**

For insurance and safety reasons, and to avoid the appearance of truancy, students are not allowed to leave the Homelink building and walk to the park, store, or other non-Homelink locations between classes. Students may wait outside of the building for pick-up, but they must stay inside the first set of yellow lines. No balls, roller blades, scooters, skateboards, or bikes are allowed in the parking lot – or in the designated outdoor waiting area. For those students who drive themselves, this policy is altered. With parent permission a driving student may leave Homelink and/or return according to their class schedule. No student may drive another student unless we have parent approval.

## **Drop-off and Pick-up**

We do not have the luxury of a nice foyer where we can view every student coming and going with their parents. However, we have many parents who either stay in the building and wait for the children to come down from classes, or they wait in their cars on the parking lot. Should parents see something that concerns them, they have been instructed to call Cathy Mullins or Kelly Keilholz immediately and we will address the situation.

We ask that younger students wait in the cafeteria and that mom or dad comes into the building to get them. However, we realize that there are often other children and sleeping babies in the car, so if a parent gives permission for their younger child to wait behind the yellow lines outside, we honor that.

## **Rule of 3:**

This rule is the bedrock of our safety plan. Students may only be in 1 of 3 places when at Homelink:

- #1 In class
- #2 In the cafeteria --Students with a break between classes must stay in the cafeteria. Students may not hang out in any other part of the building, nor may they congregate outside without adult supervision or special permission from a director or teacher. We see the front door, within the yellow lines, as part of the cafeteria. Older students and those with permission, may stand at the door and wait for their ride.
- #3 Walking to their parents' vehicle

## **Security**

Kelly Keilholz is a full-time volunteer and the Cooking Class instructor at Homelink. She has had training in both security and awareness programs. Her husband, Ron, is a retired police officer and both he and Kelly were a part of the security detail at St. Louis Family Church for many years.

## **Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse**

Child abuse is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child physically, emotionally, sexually, or neglectfully.

Teachers at Homelink 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 teaching at Homelink becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child, he/she will report it immediately to either Cathy Mullins or Kelly Keilholz for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at Homelink, 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. Authorities will be notified and Homelink will comply with requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. Homelink will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by authorities.
4. Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. Cathy Mullins and Kelly Keilholz will be our spokespersons concerning this event and all other representatives of Homelink should refrain from speaking to the media or anyone about the event.
6. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position teaching with children or youth at Homelink.

## **Sick Child Policy**

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all the children who attend Homelink. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- ❖ Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours.
- ❖ Green or yellow runny nose
- ❖ Eye or skin infections
- ❖ Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request

## **Medications Policy**

It is the policy of Homelink not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. If a teen asks for an ibuprofen or acetaminophen, we will administer it one time. If a younger child asks for the same medication, a parent will be called and will have to give permission over the phone.

Exceptions to this policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with either Cathy or Kelly to develop a plan of action.

## **Discipline Policy**

It is the policy of Homelink 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. Workers should consult with Cathy Mullins or Kelly Keilholz if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

## **Accidental Injuries to Children Policy**

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be made:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, Homelink will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once a child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

## **Prayer Policy**

Prayer is essential over our children and families, in order to stay alert, aware, and discerning of God's voice, as well as to stand against the attacks of the enemy in our lives. We should never underestimate the importance of speaking blessing and truth over their lives. Prayer is powerful and His Word is true. All of the Homelink teachers, workers, and volunteers are encouraged to pray for their students. Beginning class with prayer is totally acceptable also. We believe that this is the best way to protect and bless the children in our care.