



# Child Protection Health and Safety Policy

## Safety Mission Statement

Beheld the Serpent STEAM Academy seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our opportunities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect children from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

## Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms "child" or "children" or "student(s)" include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term "staff" or "teacher" or "instructor" includes paid persons who work with children. The term "volunteer" includes unpaid persons who work with children. "Staff", "teacher", "instructor", or "volunteer" are adults who will be the persons directly involved and in contact with the students to provide instruction and activities.

## Selection of Workers

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a) **Written Application**

All people seeking to work with children 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, from previous affiliations, reference, and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at Beheld the Serpent STEAM Academy.

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 work with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at Beheld the Serpent STEAM Academy.

#### d) **Criminal Background Check**

All staff and volunteers for this ministry must go through a background check that inspects the following databases:

- National Criminal Search & Sex Offender
- County Criminal Search
- SSN Trace

A background check is performed initially then every other year BTSSA performs another background check. Reports are available upon request. All staff and volunteers must be saved and have proclaimed Christ as their savior in public through believer's baptism and be mature in their spiritual age and agree to and uphold Beheld the Serpent STEAM Academy articles of faith.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined on a case-by-case basis considering all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children 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. 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 on file at Beheld the Serpent STEAM Academy.

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

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological, or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing and bullying.
- **Sexual abuse** – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Staff and volunteers may become aware of the abuse or neglect of children under our care. If staff or volunteers at Beheld the Serpent STEAM Academy become aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the minister for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

If an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at Beheld the Serpent STEAM Academy or during our opportunities or events, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.

2. The staff or volunteer member alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. He or she should be instructed to have no contact with the victim or with witnesses.
3. All allegations of abuse should be reported to the civil authorities, and the organization will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists. The organization will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by civil authorities.
4. The insurance company will be notified, and the organization will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
5. The organization will designate a spokesperson for the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to staff or volunteers. All other representatives of the organization should refrain from speaking to the media.
6. Any staff or volunteer who is found guilty of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be immediately terminated from their position and will not be allowed on the premises.

## **Communications**

1. For medical emergencies or sick students, parents and guardians will receive a call first. If we cannot reach you, then we will send a text message.
2. For inclement weather, parents and guardians will receive a text message and email.
3. Teacher/Student communication outside of the classroom for opportunities that are either full or half semester in length, must be for the sole purpose of content regarding the opportunity and must be agreed upon between the parent/guardian and the teacher and only applies to students of the age 14-17. Communications must be via a method that leaves a historical trail like text or email.
4. Parents or guardians must communicate with the teacher on behalf of the student regarding opportunity content, if the student is younger than 14.

## **Classroom Accessibility**

Classroom doors can be closed to prevent disturbances during class time. Classroom doors will have a full clear glass front for visibility into the classroom. Doors should never be locked while people are inside the room.

## **Security Video Monitoring**

The building has video monitoring on all entrances.

## Teenage Workers

There may be times when teenagers assist staff or volunteers in performing their duties or assisting students with activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Must be at least age 14.
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

## Check-in/Check-out Procedure

For children under the age of 8, parents need to check in with the teacher. If the parent is late in dropping off the child, check in with the office and a staff member will escort the child to class. The teacher will be responsible for releasing the child to the care of the authorized parent or guardian.

## Drop Off/Pick Up

Parents, please drop off and pick up your children in a timely fashion. We do not have the resources to care for your child after the class or opportunity has ended. If you are running late, please check in at the office.

## Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all the students at Beheld the Serpent STEAM Academy. Parents, please be considerate of other students, our staff and volunteers when deciding to place your child in our care. If you suspect your child is sick in any way, please keep them at home or seek medical assistance. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours.
- Runny nose of any sort.
- Eye or skin infections, and/or
- 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 immediately to pick up your child.

## Medications

Beheld the Serpent STEAM Academy does not administer prescription or non-prescription medications to the students under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted by parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Also, it will be recorded if your son or daughter has any allergies or a medical condition that the ministry should be made aware of to assist with providing medical help.

**First Aid**

Our facility has a First Aid station for minor injuries. If a student is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, staff or volunteers 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 contacted in addition to the minister. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

**Discipline**

See our Behavioral and Dress policy.

## Restroom Guidelines

Children five years of age and younger should use a classroom bathroom, if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. Staff and volunteers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the children inside. Staff or volunteers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, staff or volunteers should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the staff or volunteer should prop open the bathroom door as they assist the child.

For the protection of all, staff or volunteers should *never* be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to attending each opportunity.

## Training

Beheld the Serpent STEAM Academy will provide training on this child protection policy to all new staff and volunteers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.