

Bayit Child Protection Committee (CPC) Policy Rollout FAQ

You may reasonably be asking “Do I have to do anything differently because of the new Child Protection Policy?” We hope this FAQ will help to answer that question as well as other questions you may have.

We encourage you to read the full policy on the CPC page of the Bayit website in order to learn about the practices and protocols that are designed to help prevent physical and sexual abuse of children from occurring in our Bayit. Our objective is to create a safe environment for our children, including healthy and safe boundaries for adults and children. The specific behaviors outlined in the policy are mandated for our staff and Bayit leadership. Others in the Bayit community are encouraged to be mindful in their interactions with children.

The Child Protection Committee
childprotection@thebayit.org

1. Whom do I call if I observe someone physically or sexually abusing a child on Bayit premises or during a Bayit off-premises activity?

If you observe child abuse occurring on the Bayit premises or during a Bayit off-premises activity, you are obligated to take all possible efforts that do not involve physical injury to yourself to interrupt the abuse and ensure the immediate safety of the child, including calling 911.

2. What do I do if I have a reasonable suspicion of child physical or sexual abuse taking place in the Bayit community?

if you have a reasonable suspicion of child physical or sexual abuse taking place within the Bayit community, even if not in the Bayit or during a Bayit activity, this policy strongly encourages you to report it to the appropriate state authorities. Alternatively, it can be reported to the Child Protection Committee who will work with the reporting community member to report reasonable suspicions of child abuse to the authorities.

The New York State reporting hotline number is 1-800-342-3720 for anyone suspecting child abuse by a parent or other custodial relationship, and 911 for child abuse by someone in a non-custodial relationship.

This policy also requires members of the Bayit rabbinic team and the Bayit’s Executive Director, Youth Directors, social worker, and members of the Child Protection Committee to report reasonable suspicion of any child abuse in the Bayit community by a parent or custodial relationship.

3. Why should I report reasonable suspicion of child physical or sexual abuse to outside authorities, and why does the policy require many Bayit employees to do so? Why not handle such reports in-house?

The State Hotline and police are trained to investigate such reports. We are not. The trained personnel have the knowledge and experience to make a determination whether further action is warranted. We do not. In addition, In-house investigations may be subject to internal pressure to protect the institution or even the alleged perpetrator. Our priority is to protect children.

4. Can you explain the email I will get about sex offenders in the neighborhood?

New York State maintains a public Sex Offenders Registry by zip code. Anyone can access the Registry. The Bayit will send out an alert email with a link to the Registry whenever there is a change on the 10463 or 10471 lists. The email will not include any specific names. It will give you the opportunity to check the Registry if you so choose.

5. What does the policy say about hugging and picking up children?

Bayit Staff and Clergy should not pick up children unless they are in need of immediate assistance.

Bayit Staff and Clergy should not initiate frontal hugs with children. Brief side-hugs, or hugs with an arm between the two bodies (handshake, or “pound” hug) are good alternatives. If a child initiates a hug with a Bayit Staff or Clergy, the hug should not last for more than two or three seconds (often referred to as a “catch and release”).

If a child is in distress and needs to be comforted, one should sit with the child 1-1, listen to what is going on, and be present for him or her. If these comfort measures are insufficient, one of the child's parents should be notified and brought to help.

Appropriate physical contact can be a powerful form of connection between people and is encouraged between Bayit Staff and Clergy and children. Appropriate physical contact occurs when all parties, adults and children, agree and volunteer to be touched. Examples include: holding hands with small children, side-hugs, high fives, handshakes, fist bumps and more.

6. May Staff or Clergy be alone 1-1 with Bayit children?

*Bayit Staff and Clergy should avoid being alone 1-1 with children. If circumstances arise where a Bayit Staff or Clergy is alone 1-1 with a child, his/her activities must be **observable and interruptible**. "Observable" means that what is going on can be seen and is either in a public area or in a room with an open door. "Interruptible" means that there are people generally present who could come by and see what is going on.*

7. How does the policy impact 1-1 tutoring happening in the building, such as for Bnei Mitzvah, even by non-Bayit staff?

Tutoring taking place in the Bayit when the child's parent is not present, is to be conducted in open areas where the activity is observable and interruptible (e.g. the Main Lobby or Lower Lobby) and only at times when the building is not otherwise empty. When the child's parent is present the tutoring may be conducted in other available spaces, such as a beit midrash or a classroom.

8. How does the policy impact the Bayit's hiring and training processes?

The policy has an expansive screening method for hires and some volunteers. Depending on the type of hire or volunteering, screening can include applications, interviews and reference calling; sex offender registry checks, background checks, and public-information-only internet checks.

The policy has a robust initial and ongoing training requirement for various categories of Bayit employees and leaders including policy review, online trainings and meeting with the Child Protection Committee.

9. Will I need to be screened if I am a volunteer?

Any volunteer who participates 3 or more times in a 12-month period at Bayit programs in a role involving direct interaction with youth must undergo a screening. Volunteering of this type includes, but is not limited to: serving food to children at youth events, playing a character in the Simhat Torah Biblical Characters Wax Museum, running a booth at a carnival or checking children in at a program. The checks may not be able to be completed prior to the third volunteer occasion, but will be initiated at the time of the commitment to the third volunteer occasion. The screening includes interview and reference calling; sex offender registry check, background check and public-information-only internet check.

10. Does the policy have social media and email guidelines?

Absolutely. A few highlights include:

- Parents of children under the age of 16 must be cc'd on all email correspondence between Bayit Staff members and children. Clergy may correspond with children via email without parents included, but if they do so another Bayit Staff member must be copied (either cc'd or bcc'd).

To facilitate programming and advertising, the Youth Director(s) or other authorized employee may communicate with youth department members under the following guidelines:

- Emails or Social Media posts will be done through an official HIR managed email address, e-mail newsletter service, Twitter account, Facebook page (or similar as electronic communications evolve) and not from a private email address. Parents should be included in all posts, email blasts, WhatsApp groups, etc.

- Youth Department Staff (i.e., group leaders) need to communicate with their supervisor/Youth Director on work related matters. These e-mails should be limited to work related issues as much as possible. For Youth Department Staff under 16, parents must be copied on all email exchanges. E-mails should be limited to youth department programming and employment issues.

11. Why are so many boundaries important? Don't they make us a less warm, open, welcoming community?

Ahavat Yisrael and Ahavat Habriot, love for the Jewish people and love for all humanity, are values central to the Bayit's mission to be a warm, welcoming, and inclusive community. Appropriate boundaries are tools for fostering the healthy warmth, welcome and inclusivity we seek to create. Appropriate boundaries protect children as well as adults and help to create a safe environment for all.