

## **Congregation Beth Sholom**

### **Children and Teens Safety and Protection Policy**

#### **Child Protection Values Statement**

The Torah teaches that each human being is made in the image of God, and Jewish tradition understands that each human life has infinite value. With those ideas as the foundation for our approach to the safety of our children, Congregation Beth Sholom (CBS) is a community that believes that our first responsibility to our members and guests is to keep them safe. This Policy was developed with these fundamental principles in mind, and the Policy applies to all members of the congregation, including all staff and congregants.

CBS aims to provide children with a positive and enriching Jewish, educational, spiritual, social, and cultural environment that promotes their intellectual, moral, and emotional growth. Providing for their safety and security is the first step toward reaching those goals. Our expectation is that the policies and procedures we have developed will help us keep our children safe, and will guide us on our path toward creating and nurturing the kind of community we aim to be.

This Policy has been, with permission, modeled on the Child Protection Policy of the Conservative Synagogue Adath Israel of Riverdale (CSAIR).

#### **Scope of This Policy**

This policy applies to all activities on CBS synagogue property and those that are off-site and under the auspices/sponsorship or co-sponsorship of CBS.

#### **Definitions**

For the purpose of this Policy:

**Child** refers to any youth from birth through 17 years old, and includes teenagers (**Teens**) through 17 years old. References to Child(ren) throughout includes Teens. References specific to Teens refers to individuals age 13-17.

**Abuse** of children can take several different forms.

**Physical Abuse** is the use of non-accidental physical force toward a child that has a risk of causing, or does cause, bodily injury or emotional trauma.

**Sexual Abuse** is any occurrence in which an adult engages a child in sexual activity. Sexual activity may include, but is not limited to, fondling, masturbation, oral sex, penetration of the vagina, anus, or mouth by a penis, finger or other

object or body part, or other sexual contact, such as inappropriate kissing, stroking, or massaging a child.

Other acts that can constitute sexual abuse include, but are not limited to, sexual communication (whether verbal or written, including by telephone, text message, email, or social media), voyeurism (spying on private or intimate behaviors, such as those involving undressing, nudity, or sexual activity), exposing a child to pornography or other sexually explicit material, exposing part or all of an adult's naked body, exposing part or all of a child's naked body (except as necessary for medical purposes, such as performing CPR, or caregiving, such as help with toileting), exploiting a child by prostitution and/or pornography, or any activity intended to abuse, degrade, arouse, or gratify sexual desires, performing sexual acts in front of a child, or grooming behaviors.

**Grooming** is the use of seemingly innocent behaviors to gain the trust and cooperation of a child or to establish a relationship with a child, the child's family, or the community for the purposes of one's own sexual gratification. Behaviors of grooming include, but are not limited to, giving of preferential gifts to a child, asking a child to keep a secret, seeking or encouraging the attention of a child, spending an increasing amount of time with a child, being overly physical with a child, inappropriate interactions with a child in person or via electronic devices or social media, and the testing or ignoring of professional boundaries or rules.

Sexual activity between teens (or a teen and a younger child) can also be abusive; indicators might include a significant disparity in age, development, or size; if one child is in a position of responsibility, trust, or power over the other; if one child is unconscious or otherwise impaired; or any time coercion is used or consent is not provided.

**Emotional Abuse** is defined as acts toward a child that cause or have a substantial likelihood of causing harm to the child's physical, psychological, social, spiritual, or moral development. Emotional abuse might include, but is not limited to, patterns of restricting a child's movement, discriminating, blaming, belittling, denigrating, threatening, scaring, ridiculing, or other non-physical forms of hostility or bullying.

**Neglect** is the failure of a responsible person to provide for a child's basic needs or to protect them from harm to the degree that the child's health, safety, or well-being are threatened.

**Children and Teen Safety Committee (CATS or Committee)** is established by the CBS Board of Trustees to oversee the development, implementation, and monitoring of an ongoing child safety and protection program at CBS.

**Policy Violations** are those act(s) by individuals that either accidentally or intentionally breach or disregard the expectations for behavior and conduct delineated by this Children and Teens Safety and Protection Policy (**Policy**).

### **Youth Volunteers**

A **Regular Youth Volunteer** is an adult who routinely works with children at CBS at known and expected intervals (e.g., a volunteer who assists weekly with Shabbat morning programming) and/or is a member of the Children's Programming Committee or the Youth Committee.

An **Intermittent Youth Volunteer** is an adult who intermittently and without a set schedule works with children at CBS. An Intermittent Youth Volunteer will work alongside a staff member or a Regular Youth Volunteer.

**Teen Leaders** are teens who volunteer or work with children at CBS (e.g., minyan leaders) on a regular basis.

## **Code of Conduct for Interactions with Children and Teens**

All members of the CBS community are required to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with being a positive role model (*Dugma Ishit*) for children and other adults, and to follow this policy.

It is a violation of this policy to neglect or sexually, physically, or emotionally abuse a child, or groom a child for such abuse. Such acts may also be a violation of law.

CBS will offer education and training to all members of the CBS community (including staff, volunteers, and congregants) about acceptable and unacceptable interactions with children in order to minimize the risk of inappropriate conduct occurring within the community and at CBS-sponsored events.

### **Appropriate Conduct and Behavior**

#### **Interactions with Children**

Interactions with children related to CBS activities should take place in spaces that are both **observable and interruptible**. This includes, but is not limited to, classrooms and/or spaces with unlocked doors and observable windows.<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, one-on-one interactions between a CBS employee (or CBS-recommended tutor) and child taking place at CBS or related to CBS activities (e.g., youth programs, B'nei Mitzvah preparation), regardless of where held, should ideally occur at times when

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<sup>1</sup> If an unrelated adult needs to assist young child with toileting, the door to the bathroom/stall may be closed to maintain the child's privacy, but another adult should stand outside the bathroom door and the parents should be informed as soon as reasonably possible that this occurred.

additional staff and/or adults are expected to be present. For CBS staff, these interactions should also be scheduled on the calendar of the CBS employee.

- If other adults are not expected to be present, the child's parent/guardian should be informed and it should be suggested that the parent/guardian be present within reasonable distance (by sight and/or hearing) of the room of the meeting. For virtual meetings, the parent should be provided with the meeting login information/link.
- The room door should be open or with an unobstructed window view with clear visibility into the room. The door should be unlocked and the adult should not be physically situated between the child and the room exit.

### Appropriate Touch

Nurturing touch is an important part of healthy child development. These policies and guidelines are intended to establish parameters for appropriate physical contact between adults and children, and between children and other children. By providing these policies, we seek to educate members of our community to maintain a safe and healthy environment.

The appropriateness of physical contact will vary with different ages, the context and intent of the interaction, and the stages of childhood development. **Three key principles regarding touch include: parental consent, child consent, and having at least one additional adult present. In short – “ask twice and make sure you are not alone.”**

Several rules regarding appropriate contact apply to all interactions with children:

- Before touching it is best to “check first” with the child, when developmentally appropriate and within context. When possible, verbal instructions and directions should replace physical contact.
- A child's development and age must be noted when considering if physical contact is appropriate. Examples of this type of touch may include, but are not limited to:
  - *Infants through five years of age* – appropriate touch may include assistance with the changing of clothing, toileting/diapering for children who are not toilet trained or who need assistance, assisting a child to walk up or down stairs, lifting a child onto or off of a chair or into or out of a stroller, or providing comfort during moments of distress.
  - *Children aged six and older* – Nurturing touch may be appropriate such as during moments of distress to provide comfort or injury to provide care.

- A hug may be appropriate at a moment of happiness or sadness. For example, a member of the clergy may want to express happiness with a hug on the bimah during B'nei Mitzvah celebrations. Such sentiments should always be expressed in public, and never in private. Ideally, the child should be asked in advance if they approve of a public hug in these circumstances.

Staff/Volunteers should gently block and redirect a child who attempts to touch them in an inappropriate or sexual manner. This should be done in a gentle manner, being mindful not to embarrass the child. Staff and Volunteers should gently and firmly set limits when children seek excessive, inappropriate, or sexual attention and information, and they should work with the parents of children who continually struggle with these limits.

## **Inappropriate Conduct and Behavior**

### **Inappropriate Touch**

Under no circumstances should a member of the CBS community have physical contact with a child that is considered to be or could result in sexual, physical, or emotional abuse of a child as defined in this Policy.

Acts by an adult towards a child that are prohibited include, but are not limited to:

- touching genitals, breasts, thighs, or buttocks
- touch intended to cause pain or distress to a child, including physical punishment
- overly physical touch such as roughhousing, tickling, or wrestling with children
- being with children unrelated to you in a private, one-on-one setting, or otherwise out of sight of other adults and without the knowledge of other adults
- asking or having a child touch an adult's genitals, breasts, thighs, or buttocks

In limited circumstances it may be appropriate for an unrelated adult to assist a child with toileting if the child needs assistance. To protect the child's privacy, the door to the bathroom/stall may be closed, but another adult should stand outside the bathroom door and the parents should be informed as soon as reasonably possible that this occurred.

### **Drugs and Alcohol**

The supply of drugs or alcohol to children is a criminal offense and is prohibited at all CBS-sponsored events. Similarly, it is prohibited for Staff or adults serving in a volunteer capacity to interact with children while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

## Peer-to-Peer Relationships

CBS seeks to promote and foster healthy peer-to-peer relationships. We are committed to maintaining an environment free from emotionally and physically harmful peer interactions. CBS does not seek to ban physical contact between peers (child-child or teen-teen) at CBS or CBS-sponsored events; however, all contact, behaviors, and communications must be in context (age-appropriate and consensual).

Prohibited behaviors, whether in person or online, include, but are not limited to:

- sexual harassment
- bullying
- unwanted sexting
- unwanted physical contact
- sexual pressure and/or coercion
- stalking

## Language and Communication

What we say and how we communicate with others can be nurturing and supportive. Communications with children should include language that is encouraging, respectful, and confidence-boosting.

Language and communication can also be destructive and hurtful. All members of the CBS community should be careful and cognizant of the language used at all times, and especially when we speak to or are in the presence of children.

All members of the CBS community should refrain from making any sexually suggestive comments, jokes, innuendos, or signs with a child or in the presence of a child. Adults should not ask children about their sexuality or share information about an adult's sexuality, intimate behaviors, relationships, desires, or body.

Staff should not accept social media "friend" requests from children utilizing the staff's personal social media account.

## Photography

CBS actively promotes photographic recording of our community for archival and promotional purposes. CBS does so in a way that respects and protects children's privacy.

The following rules apply to photography (including video) of children taken by or on behalf of CBS:

- Permission from the parent/guardian must be obtained prior to public posting (e.g., bulletin boards or posting on social media) of any photo images or video recording.

- No photography may be conducted inside changing areas, bathrooms, or while a child is in a state of partial or complete undress.
- Any image (digital or other) of a child (even if taken with permission) but which reveals private body parts is not suitable for public display and must be deleted/destroyed.
- No publicly displayed images of children may include identifying personal information such as full name, address, or phone number unless agreed to by the child's parent/guardian.
- All third-parties engaged to photograph at CBS-sponsored events must agree to and adhere to the guidelines set forth by this statement.

### Transportation

Any transportation (walking or driving) of a non-relative child by CBS staff in connection with CBS-sponsored events should be done with the permission of the child's parent/guardian, preferably in writing (when not Shabbat/Yom Tov). Whenever possible, there should be another adult or other children in the vehicle or on the walk.

In the event CBS staff will be transporting an unrelated child alone, this must be communicated to the child's parent/guardian in writing (when not Shabbat/Yom Tov) and agreed to by the parent/guardian in advance. When it is not Shabbat/Yom Tov, CBS staff should email/text another CBS staff member to notify them of the departure and arrival at the destination.

### Policy Exceptions and Deviations

Every effort should be made to strictly adhere to this policy. There may, however, be exceptional circumstances where the Code of Conduct provisions do not apply (such as a medical emergency or a situation requiring a building lockdown) or where compliance with these guidelines would place the child or another individual's safety in danger. At such times, when security and safety are the primary concerns, an adult occupying a room alone with a child with a secured and/or locked door and/or with lowered blinds and an obstructed view with no visibility may be necessary.

In the event of any deviation from this Policy, CATS should be notified as soon as possible after the incident.

There may also be situations where a deviation from this Policy can be anticipated due to special circumstances. In such cases, an exception request should be made to CATS in writing in advance so CATS can determine if the exception is appropriate.

All policy exceptions will be documented in writing by CATS.

## **Children and Teens Safety Committee (CATS)**

In keeping with CBS's commitment to the safety and security of our children as a critical aspect of providing a nurturing community that supports the intellectual, moral, and emotional growth of our children, CATS has been established by the CBS Board of Trustees to oversee the development, implementation, and monitoring of an ongoing child safety and protection program at CBS. The guidelines included in this Policy, along with educational trainings for the staff and congregation, are at the core of our child protection program.

### **Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of CATS to coordinate and oversee:

- implementation of this Policy
- educational forums and trainings
- ongoing revisions to this Policy
- guidance to the congregation on questions of child protection
- timely and responsible handling of allegations of policy violations, suspected abuse or child safety concerns

CATS shall engage external professionals as needed, such as in cases of an alleged child abuser or known registered sex offender being part of the CBS community.

### **CATS Membership**

CATS members shall be CBS members in good standing who possess maturity of judgment, deep integrity, compassion, sensitivity, the ability and commitment to maintain confidentiality, and agree to follow the protocols outlined in this document for preventing and responding to policy violations and allegations of child abuse.

CATS shall consist of at least three, and no more than five members, of which at least one shall be a member of the Board of Trustees. The CBS President will designate a CATS Chairperson in consultation with the Rabbi. The Chairperson, in consultation with the President and Rabbi, will appoint CATS members. Each CATS member is expected to commit to a three-year term, but no CATS member shall serve for more than two (2) consecutive terms. For the initial appointment of CATS members, some will be designated to serve for one term and others will commit to serve for two terms for maintenance of continuity.

Additionally, the President (or their designee), the Rabbi, and the Program Director shall be ex officio members of CATS without voting privileges and shall generally be invited to participate in all meetings, deliberations, and regular communications of CATS. At the discretion of the Chairperson, CATS may meet in closed session, from which one or



more of the ex officio members or standing members may be excluded depending on the nature of the topic being discussed.

CATS members shall keep all meetings and communications confidential, except as otherwise stated in this Policy.

CATS members who fail to comply with the policies and protocols set forth herein shall be removed by vote of the disinterested CATS members and the President (notwithstanding the President's non-voting status).

### **CATS Meetings**

CATS shall meet at minimum two (2) times each year to oversee maintenance of this Policy. Additional meetings will be held as necessary to address child protection concerns that arise. A majority of voting CATS members must be present to conduct a meeting.

CATS members shall recuse themselves from deliberations and actions relating to family members and other situations in which there is an actual or perceived conflict of interest. A majority vote is required for CATS decisions relating to policy compliance and violations. In the event that there is no majority vote (due to a recusal), the President shall be granted a vote, provided there is no conflict of interest.

### **Policy Dissemination, Affirmation, and Training**

This Policy, as well as an Executive Summary, will be disseminated widely to the CBS community through publication and educational opportunities that will raise awareness and help create a safe environment for our children. This Policy and Executive Summary will be posted on the CBS website and print copies will be available in the CBS office. This Policy and Executive Summary will also be provided to every member through ShulCloud. All CBS members will be asked to acknowledge that they have read and understood the Executive Summary.

The following individuals will be required to sign an affirmation that they have read and agree to abide by the terms of this Policy prior to beginning their duties:

- CBS Clergy and Staff
- Members of CATS
- Members of the Board of Trustees
- Members of the Youth Committee, Children's Programming Committee, and other Committees that program for children and teens as determined by CATS
- Regular Youth Volunteers
- CBS-recommended B'nei Mitzvah Tutors
- Regular/permanent contractors with opportunity to interact with children at CBS (as determined by the Synagogue Administrator in consultation with CATS)

A Teen Summary of this Policy will be available that sets forth the key policy provisions in age-appropriate language for teens. Teen Leaders are required to sign an acknowledgement that they have read and agree to abide by the terms of this Policy as set forth in the Teen Summary. Teens who participate in CBS USY and Kadima and their parents will be asked, as part of the USY/Kadima registration process, to acknowledge that they have read and agree to abide by the terms of this Policy as set forth in the Teen Summary.

### Training

To raise further awareness and support the creation of a safe environment for our children, CBS will offer training and educational opportunities on child safety issues and this Policy to CBS members.

Annual training on child safety and this Policy is required for all CBS Clergy and Staff, CATS Members, Regular Youth Volunteers, Teen Leaders, and CBS-recommended B'nei Mitzvah Tutors. CBS Clergy and Staff must complete such training prior to the start of employment.

The CBS Youth Committee and Children's Programming Committee will also be required to receive training annually. Training on this topic received in another forum can satisfy this requirement for Committee members if documentation of the completed training is provided.

A portion of one meeting of the Board of Trustees annually will include an overview of child safety issues.

Training for CBS USY/Kadima participants and their parents will be optional.

CATS will identify appropriate trainings that will satisfy these training requirements.

### Summary of Affirmation and Training Requirements

<b>Role</b>	<b>Policy Affirmation</b>	<b>Training</b>	<b>Coordinator</b>
CBS Clergy	Before starting employment and annually	Before starting employment and annually	CATS
CBS Staff	Before starting employment and annually	Before starting employment and annually	CATS
Children and Teens Safety Committee (CATS)	Before starting Committee membership and annually	Before starting Committee membership and annually	CATS
Board of Trustees	Annually	Presentation at Board Meeting annually	CATS
Members of the Youth Committee, Children's Programming Committee & Other Committees as determined by CATS	Before starting Committee membership and annually	Before starting Committee membership and annually	Program Director
Regular Youth Volunteers	Before starting volunteer work and annually	Before starting volunteer work and annually	Program Director
Teen Leaders	Teen Summary Affirmation before starting duties and annually	Before starting duties and annually	Program Director
USY/Kadima Participants and Their Parents	Teen Summary Affirmation annually	Optional	Program Director

<b>Role</b>	<b>Policy Affirmation</b>	<b>Training</b>	<b>Coordinator</b>
CBS-Recommended B'nei Mitzvah Tutors	Annually	Annually	Synagogue Administrator
Other CBS Members	Executive Summary Acknowledgment annually	Optional	CATS
Gan Rina	Annually	Optional	Synagogue Administrator
Contractors	As needed	N/A unless more regular/permanent	Synagogue Administrator

## Hiring and Engagement of Staff and Volunteers

The objective of the requirements for hiring and engagement of staff and volunteers is to ensure that all CBS employees and Regular Youth Volunteers who may interact with CBS's children are appropriately vetted so that CBS can provide a safe and nurturing environment for all of our children.

The basic screening program for all employee applicants, Regular Youth Volunteers, and Teen Leaders should include the following elements depending on the position applied for:

- A completed employment/volunteer application form
- Personal interview
- Reference checks
- Background check

Applicants are to be informed during the initial conversation that CBS is vigilant in the protection of its children and are to be provided a copy of this Policy. During the interview, questions will be asked to evaluate the applicant's beliefs and values regarding the treatment of children, their reasons for wanting to work with children, and general awareness and understanding of child protection issues.

New employees, Regular Youth Volunteers, and Teen Leaders may not begin their engagement at CBS before the interview and screening process has been successfully completed.

## Reporting Violations

Any potential violations of this Policy, boundary violations, suspected abuse, child safety concerns, or other allegations that might jeopardize the safety of a child, should be reported to CATS, preferably in writing, using the CATS Policy Incident Report, which may be dropped off in the CBS office or sent by email to [CATS@cbsteaneck.org](mailto:CATS@cbsteaneck.org). Reports can also be made verbally, but follow up may be requested. Proof or first-hand direct knowledge is *not* necessary to submit a report.

**Teen Leaders should report concerns or questions immediately to their supervisor, the Rabbi, or CBS President.**

### Reporting Suspected Abuse by a Parent or Caregiver

**If a child is in immediate danger, call 911.**

**In New Jersey, any person having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse or acts of abuse by a parent or caregiver should immediately report such information to NJ ABUSE at 1-877-652-2873.** If you are unsure whether a report should be made to NJ ABUSE or would like help making the report, you should contact the Rabbi, CBS President, or a CATS member.

Reports to NJ Abuse may be made confidentially or anonymously. New Jersey law provides immunity from civil liability for persons required to report suspected abuse in good faith and without malice.

## CATS Process for Addressing Violations

CATS will initiate an internal investigation upon receiving a report of any violation of this Policy. Depending on the nature of the allegations, CATS may also need to notify the State, Police and CBS's insurance provider, and CATS may consider consultation or delegation of the investigation to outside experts.

Depending on the nature of the allegation or violation, actions by CATS may include, but are not limited to:

- notification of the child's parent/guardian
- immediate actions to protect the child/other children, including separation of the alleged violator from the child/other children at CBS
- review of the Policy to ensure understanding
- written warning documented in a staff member's employment file
- suspension of paid/volunteer responsibilities at CBS involving access to children
- assignment of a Shomer (supervisor)
- termination of employment or a contract with CBS

- termination of CBS membership and/or exclusion from CBS activities (upon approval from the Board of Trustees)

## **Integration of Individuals Known or Suspected to Pose a Risk to Children**

CBS is deeply committed to protecting our children from potential and known perpetrators of child abuse and maltreatment. The safety of our children is paramount. This is a core value of our community and the unifying principle upon which this Policy is based.

Inclusion is another core value of our community. As in all communities, there may be individuals already within the CBS community, or who may wish to join, who have been convicted of child abuse or neglect or have substantiated findings against them, have unresolved allegations of child abuse or neglect, or have otherwise behaved in a manner that is potentially harmful to children.

In considering whether and how to integrate such individuals into our community, CBS will prioritize the safety of our children.

Prioritizing child protection while also upholding CBS's value of inclusion is a complex endeavor that requires nuance, sensitivity, and expertise. At the discretion and direction of CATS, an expert consultant may be engaged prior to including or excluding such individuals.

## CATS Policy Incident Report – Part 1

*To report to the CBS Child and Teen Safety Committee (CATS) any potential violation of the Children & Teens Safety and Protection Policy, boundary violations, abuse, child safety concerns, or other allegations that might jeopardize the safety of a child/teen, email the following information to [CATS@cbsteaneck.org](mailto:CATS@cbsteaneck.org) or drop off the completed form (in a sealed envelope) in the CBS office. Proof or first-hand direct knowledge is not necessary to submit a report. This report is confidential and will be shared with CATS (and legal authorities if necessary).*

1. Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

2. Date/Time of incident/behavior \_\_\_\_\_

3. Location of incident/behavior \_\_\_\_\_

4. Name of individual(s) – adult or child – who accidentally or intentionally violated the CATS Policy, harmed or potentially harmed a child, or otherwise engaged in concerning behavior toward a child \_\_\_\_\_

5. Name of child(ren) involved in incident/behavior \_\_\_\_\_

6. Describe, with as many details as possible, the incident/behavior

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7. (Optional) Individual submitting this report (disclosing your identity can help expedite an investigation, but you can submit anonymously):

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## **CATS Policy Incident Report – Part 2** *(For Committee use only)*

1. Date/Time CATS member(s) were in contact with individual submitting report

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2. Summary of conversation between CATS member and reporting individual

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3. Date/Time of full CATS discussion of reported incident and list of those in attendance

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4. Key discussion points

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5. Additional information, if any

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6. Actions recommended by CATS

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