

 Child/Youth Protection Policy

MINISTRY PURPOSE

YOUR CHURCH NAME is a non-profit religious organization and is substantially controlled, operated, and supported by a church. More importantly, our organization is a community of believers who have joined together to meet the spiritual, relational, and educational needs of the greater community.

Our organization promotes behavior consistent with the Holy Scriptures. Consequently, when joining YOUR CHURCH NAME’s staff, Pastoral Ministry, or Children’s Ministry, you freely and willingly agree to the standards of behavior outlined in this policy. The standards included in this policy are not exhaustive; rather, they provide a guideline of conduct we believe is in accordance with biblical standards.

As representatives of YOUR CHURCH NAME, it is imperative that our actions are above reproach in all things. Consequently, the following standards of conduct shall apply to all staff and volunteers serving in the Youth and/or Children’s Ministry. Violations of these standards by staff are regarded as a serious breach of integrity and could result in discipline, up to and including termination. Violations of these standards by volunteers may result in your removal from the ministry team.

God’s Word teaches us that certaincharacterattributes are desired, including love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-24).

I will strive to seek, encourage, and demonstrate these attributes in my relationships and in working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. As a Christian church, the Holy Bible serves as our code of conduct for all employees and volunteers. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Initial

Scripture further teaches us that every believer has a duty to protect the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of those most vulnerable among us. (Psalm 127:3, Proverbs 22:6, Mark 9:42, and James 1:27).

YOUR CHURCH NAME understands the responsibility placed upon our church by both God and parents who entrust children and the vulnerable to our care. Any person who may pose a threat to children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be prohibited from working in any ministry involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults. This is non-negotiable. We desire to protect the vulnerable, and not lead susceptible persons into temptation.

As an employee, volunteer, or administrator of YOUR CHURCH NAME, I agree to follow the standards of conduct of this ministry.

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Initial

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.

Youth Service Organization: YOUR CHURCH NAME has activities that involve the direct supervision of children and is considered by the State of California as a Youth Service Organization.

Vulnerable adult: Any person 18 years of age or older who is unable to legally consent, or unable to comprehend the nature of certain actions, or susceptible to coercion or abuse. This may include individuals who are mentally or physically disabled and the elderly.

Employees include all employees, whether they work with children or not, including seasonal, occasional, and part-time employees.

Administrators include ministry leaders (i.e. pastors, ministers, HR administrators, and board members).

A **Volunteer** who is 18 years of age or older and has direct contact with, or supervision of, children for more than 16 hours per month or 32 hours per year.

Adult workers include employees, administrators, and volunteers.

Youth includes children and vulnerable adults.

Mandated Reporters: California law requires that all administrators and employees are mandated reporters. YOUR CHURCH NAME does not classify volunteers who supervise children as ‘religious practitioners’ to be mandated reporters.

Child abuse and neglect 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:

* Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting. Unlawful corporal punishment or injury.
* 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. Willful cruelty or unjustified punishment.
* Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child as least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography. Sexual assault and sexual exploitation.
* Neglect – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care. Both acts and omissions.

Selection Of Workers

YOUR CHURCH NAME seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children of YOUR CHURCH NAME from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations.

All employees, administrators, and volunteers who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened.

**VOLUNTEER SCREENING PROCEDURES**

1. No individual will be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with Children or Youth until s/he has been involved at YOUR CHURCH NAME for a minimum of six (6) months.

2. Prior to consideration, all candidates seeking a volunteer position that involves working with youth will complete and return an initial ministry application. The applications will request basic information from the candidate and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, reference, and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions.

3. All candidates shall be searched through the California Sex and Arson Registry (CSAR), the State’s repository for sex offender information, to identify and exclude any persons with a history of child abuse or other convictions that would preclude them from working with youth.

4. When requested Biblical Guidance is available to all employees, volunteers, adults, parents, and family members and is conducted by pastors and authorized leaders**.**

5. The ministry designee will carefully review the application, ensuring that the candidate is an appropriate match for the ministry position. The ministry designee also will permanently store all application materials—the application form, reference check, notes from interviews, etc.—in a locked file cabinet or other secure location.

6. If the individual appears to be an appropriate candidate for the ministry position, the ministry designee will check at least two references to confirm the information the candidate provided on the application. References provided should be of an institutional nature, as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the candidate has worked and/or volunteered with children in the past. YOUR CHURCH NAME will contact a minimum of two references.

7. A Criminal Background Check Guidelines: Pursuant to Section [11105.3 of the Penal Code](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=11105.3.&lawCode=PEN), all employees, administrators, and regular volunteers, who will be transported in the same vehicle or staying overnight with a minor, shall undergo a background check to identify and exclude any persons with a history of child abuse or other convictions that have been determined by the FBI that would preclude them from working with youth.

Before a background check is conducted, all employees, administrators, and regular volunteers will be asked to complete sign an authorization form allowing YOUR CHURCH NAME to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/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 the authorized Custodian of Records based on guidance provided by the FBI. 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. Pursuant to privacy laws, the result of the background check will not be disclosed to any applicant. However, you may contact the FBI directly for your records via <https://www.edo.cjis.gov/#/>.

The background check authorization form and results will be permanently maintained in confidence on file at YOUR CHURCH NAME.

6. After the ministry designee contacts references and a background check has been completed (if necessary), an approved ministry leader will conduct an interview with the candidate.

7. When indicated by our screening procedures, servant candidates who pose a threat to youth will be removed from consideration for any ministry position involving youth.

EMPLOYEE SCREENING PROCEDURES

1. The same procedures required for volunteers also apply to all potential employees, regardless of the ministry position for which they are being considered.

2. When indicated by our screening procedures, employment candidates who pose a threat to youth will be removed immediately from consideration for employment anywhere within our organization.

Supervision

Two Adult Rule:To the greatest extent possible, the presence of two unrelated mandated reporters when ministry activities involve contact with, or supervising, youth. California does not consider volunteers to be mandated reporters.

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult employees or volunteers will be in attendance at all times when youth are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some classes may have only one adult worker in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three youth with the adult worker. YOUR CHURCH NAME does not allow youth to be alone on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation.

YOUR CHURCH NAME adult workers are not professional counselors and do not offer or provide counseling services. The adult workers at YOUR CHURCH NAME are not licensed or trained in any counseling, medical or psychological disciplines. YOUR CHURCH NAME offers biblical guidance from the Word of God, the Holy Bible. The guidance provided is strictly from a biblical perspective and cannot be construed as “therapeutic” or “clinical” counsel. Nothing said or implied should be taken in any way as advice to not follow your doctor’s prescribed directions, medical advice, or prescriptive regimen. State requirements are adhered to in regards to reporting to police authorities any discussion that would indicate a situation involving child abuse or the presence of a high probability of imminent danger to self or others.

Youth Volunteers: We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for the assistance of volunteers who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for youth during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to such workers:

* Youth volunteers must be at least age 10.
* Youth volunteers will be screened as specified above (with the exception of a background check, which can’t be conducted on minors).
* Youth volunteers must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

Appropriate Behavior with Children: Adult workers should avoid the appearance of impropriety—such as sitting older children on their lap, kissing, or inappropriate touching, etc.

Open Door Policy: Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it.

Restroom Guidelines: Children five years of age and younger should utilize a classroom bathroom, if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, adult 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. The adult workers should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom stall and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child requires assistance, the adult workers should leave the bathroom stall door open as s/he assists the child.

For children over the age of five, at least one adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female should take girls. The adult worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that the bathroom is empty, then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, workers 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 each class.

Check-In/Check-Out Procedures: Adult workers should arrive at least 15 minutes before a scheduled activity. For youth sixth grade and below, a secure check-in/check-out procedure will be followed. The children will be signed in by a parent or guardian, who will receive a “child check” for the child similar to a claim check. The parent/guardian must present the “child check” in order to sign out the child from our care. In the event that a parent/guardian is unable to present the “child check,” the ministry designee will be contacted. The ministry designee will be responsible for releasing the child to the care of a parent/guardian after discussing the surrounding circumstances with the parent/guardian. No youth should be released to find their parents or wait unattended for transportation. Adult workers are to release youth in their care only to parents, guardians, or persons specifically authorized to pick up the child.

Illness Policy: It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the youth at YOUR CHURCH NAME. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to be considerate of other youth when deciding whether to place a youth under our care.

Persons who are ill (with a fever, or a communicable disease that can be transmitted by cough or by touch) will not be permitted to participate in any ministry activity. In general, youth with the following symptoms should NOT be placed in the care of YOUR CHURCH NAME adult workers:

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

Youth should be returned to their parent/guardian as soon as the illness is discovered. If immediate return is not possible, then the youth who is ill should be isolated in a manner that allows an adult worker to monitor the participant until s/he can be returned to a parent/guardian.

Reasonable steps should be taken to avoid contact with blood, saliva, or other bodily fluids. YOUR CHURCH NAME does not mandate extraordinary physical healthcare, medical treatment, or disease prevention policies without the knowledge and agreement of the child’s parent(s).

Medication Policy: It is the policy of YOUR CHURCH NAME not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the youth under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent/guardian at home.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of youth with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such youth should address their situation with the ministry leader to develop a plan of action.

Accidental Injuries: Ministry leaders who become aware of an injury to an adult worker or youth will take steps to ensure that proper medical attention is given to the injured person and provide for continued monitoring of the remaining activity participants.

Persons who have received an injury that is obviously minor should be given first aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate. The individual’s parents/guardians will be notified of the injury when they pick up the injured person from our care.

Any injury that may require medical treatment beyond simple first aid should be given immediate attention. The parents/guardians of the injured person should be notified immediately, along with the ministry leader. If warranted by the injury, emergency medical personnel should be called.

Once the injured person has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

Discipline Policy: It is the policy of YOUR CHURCH NAME not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents/guardians have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of youth. Adult workers should consult with the ministry leader if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

TRAINING

YOUR CHURCH NAME will provide training on this child protection policy to all new adult workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All adult workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

An administrator, employee, or regular servant of YOUR CHURCH NAME shall individually complete training in child abuse and neglect identification. This California specific training will cover types of abuse and neglect, how to spot evidence of child abuse, examples of different types of abuse, how to report abuse to a ministry leader, and more. Individuals classified as mandated reporters will receive training in what is required of them by the law, how to report abuse, and what happens after a report is filed.

This training must be completed prior to employment or regularly serving at YOUR CHURCH NAME. This training requirement will be met by completing the free, self-administered training available at <https://mandatedreporterca.com/>. A certificate of completion must be returned to the ministry designee.

* Employees must complete the General Training (4 hours). *Employees will be paid for this training.*
* Clergy (those that are ordained, licensed, or commissioned) must also complete the additional training specific for clergy.
* Volunteers who are not classified as mandated reporters are not required to complete the two-hour training.

Reporting: Though California’s AB506 law does not specifically require all people covered under our Child Protection Policy to be mandated reporters, it does require two mandatory reporting adults to be present for any program or event where youth are under YOUR CHURCH NAME supervision. For this reason, YOUR CHURCH NAME will require all individuals serving with youth to report internally to the ministry designee, and when appropriate, report to authorities.

Those working with youth may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the youth under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of youth at YOUR CHURCH NAME becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a youth under his or her care, this should be reported immediately to the ministry leader for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

Mandated reporters must report to a county child welfare department or to local law enforcement (police or sheriff’s department) immediately by phone. A written report must then be sent within thirty-six (36) hours by fax or electronically (if available). Written reports must be submitted on the California Suspected Child Abuse Form 8572, found here <https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/childabuse/ss_8572.pdf>.

More information on mandated reporting can be found here: <https://mandatedreporterca.com/about/faq>.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at YOUR CHURCH NAME, or during YOUR CHURCH NAME sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent(s)/guardian(s) of the individual will be notified within twenty-four (24) hours of receiving a full report.

2. The individual alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave pending an investigation. S/He will be instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation and 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 to handle all inquiries from the news media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquires or releasing information about the situation to the congregation.

Our spokesperson will be the only person to convey information concerning the situation, doing so in a prudent manner to avoid compromising an ongoing investigation and to maintain the privacy of the individuals involved. All other representatives of the organization are not authorized to speak to the media.

6. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it. This should be for the purpose of providing pastoral support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.

7. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

VIOLATION OF POLICY OR PROCEDURES

Employees and volunteers must promptly notify their ministry leader when they or others violate the procedures mandated by this policy.

Ministry leaders who become aware of a violation of the procedures set by this policy are required to take all necessary steps to ensure future compliance with them. In the process of ensuring compliance with this policy, it may become necessary to remove employees or volunteers from their positions.

I have read and been informed about the content, requirements, and expectations of the Child Protection Policy for employees and volunteers at YOUR CHURCH NAME. I have received a copy of the policy and agree to abide by the policy guidelines as a condition of my employment/servanthood and my continuing employment/servanthood at YOUR CHURCH NAME.

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 First & Last Name Custodian of Records First & Last Name

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Signature Custodian of Records Signature

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Date Date