

Policies for Children And Youth Ministries

1. Objectives—

- a. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a moral and civil duty to protect the children and youth entrusted to its care. The local community also has an expectation that the church will provide a safe haven for children who participate in its ministries.
- b. The church is committed to providing safe worship and educational environments to help children and youth learn to love and follow Jesus Christ. “Church should be a safe place to bring our children. Everyone involved in work with children who are minors must meet all Church and legal standards and requirements.” (Church Manual, Edition 18, pages 168-169.)
- c. Jesus placed a high value on the protection of children (Matthew 18:1-6); therefore, child protection is an essential element in all church-sponsored children’s activities.

2. Volunteer Selection and Management—The work of volunteers is essential to the successful accomplishment of the Church’s mission and ministry. The management policies and procedures employed to supervise the work of volunteers must be consistent with the mission of the church or school and must support its successful achievement.

a. Selection and Screening of Volunteers

- 1) It is the responsibility of the local church and/or school to select, screen and manage trustworthy individuals to fill volunteer positions in ministry for children and youth activities.
- 2) In selecting individuals for volunteer positions, only persons who support the mission of the organization should be recruited.
- 3) The church shall adopt a practice that no adult will be considered for a volunteer leadership role in a church-sponsored ministry or activity until he/she has held membership in the congregation or has been known by the organization for a minimum of six (6) months.
- 4) All volunteers are required to participate in a screening procedure that will include a signed Volunteer Ministry Information Form, names of three (3) personal references and a criminal background check wherever possible. Individuals who submit incomplete forms will not be considered for a volunteer position.
- 5) Background screening should be completed before the volunteer is allowed to serve.
- 6) All volunteer leaders, regardless of their previous experience, shall submit to the screening procedure provided by the church. The volunteer screening procedure should be updated for each individual every three (3) years.
- 7) The local church or school is responsible for the cost of implementing these screening procedures. The local conference may provide financial assistance at their discretion.
- 8) It is the duty and responsibility of the church to maintain all volunteer information on a confidential basis at all times.

b. Supervision of Volunteers

1) Failure to comply with the established volunteer guidelines and code of conduct will result in the volunteer being asked to terminate participation in the ministry.

2) All allegations of inappropriate conduct involving a child or minor will be promptly reported in accordance with local child abuse reporting laws, and investigated by the leadership of the church. The church will respect the rights of all parties involved in the alleged incident and treat all matters concerning the situation discreetly and confidentially.

3) Appropriate corrective action — discipline, counsel, or removal from ministry — will be taken when necessary.

c. Orientation and Training of Volunteers

1) Provide all volunteers with an understanding of the ministry's mission and the expectation the church has for its accomplishment in a safe and abuse-free manner.

2) Explain and provide in writing the expectations, code of conduct, and rules to be followed by volunteers in relation to supervision and interaction with children and youth. Reaffirm that alleged incidents of child abuse will be investigated and reported to authorities in accordance with local law.

3) All volunteers will be required to participate in educational courses on child abuse (physical and sexual) and the necessary steps to be taken to prevent the occurrence of child abuse incidents.

4) Training should include instructions on appropriate methods of physical contact to affirm children.

3. Ministry to Sex Offenders within the Church—The Church has a responsibility to provide worship opportunities and ministry to individuals who have previously engaged in inappropriate sexual conduct or physical abuse involving children or youth. When an offender wishes to be actively involved with the Church the following practices will be followed:

a. The individual agrees to participate in and attend adult Sabbath School, worship services, and other church related activities on a chaperoned basis and will not interact on a personal basis with any child under the age of eighteen (18).

b. The individual will not be allowed alone in any building on church premises where activities involving children under the age of eighteen (18) are being conducted.

c. If a child in the congregation approaches the individual on church premises or in public during a church sponsored activity the person will politely and immediately excuse themselves from the situation.

d. The local church pastor and elders will meet personally with the individual and enter into a five-year covenant agreement that outlines the expected conduct to be followed at all times while on church premises or while involved in a church sponsored activity. Compliance with the conditions outlined in the covenant agreement will be reviewed on a periodic basis and maybe renewed at the end of the five year term. Inappropriate conduct or failure to comply with the terms of the covenant agreement may forfeit the individual's participation in church services or sponsored activities at any time.