

Sample Screening Policy #1

Attached to this letter are recommendations for child protection guidelines. Please review this package. Each local church must establish guidelines and inform all employees and volunteers who work with children and/or youth of the guidelines and how to implement them. Once a church has adopted guidelines it must provide comprehensive training annually. Not providing the training could be considered a breach of duty and could lead to civil liability.

As you review, please keep in mind the following concerns:

1. The main objective is to provide a documented safe and secure environment for children who are entrusted to your church.
2. The second very important objective is to reduce legal risk and liability exposure.

Keep in mind also that incidents of abuse can occur in any church. Churches that have received advice from legal, social work, and/or insurance sources to establish screening procedures, and have not done so, would have little, if any defense, in civil court proceedings. The decision not to implement, in the face of competent advice to the contrary, would likely be viewed with derision by a civil court.

In addition to this document we recommend that you refer to a professional background screening services provider to assist you with implementing and maintaining these screening procedures.

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Child Protection Guidelines
adopted by
(Church)
(Date)

1. All adults and youth, both employed and volunteer, who work with minors must be screened and undergone a criminal background check prior to beginning work. All persons who work with minors must undergo a Screening Process. The steps and checklist to be used in the Screening Process are labeled "Appendix A".
2. Adults who have been convicted of either sexual or physical abuse of children/youth or those who have a history of inappropriate conduct with children will not be employed and shall not volunteer service in any church-sponsored activity or program for minors.
3. Adult survivors of childhood sexual or physical abuse need and will receive the love and acceptance of our church family.
4. Employees and volunteers who work with children and youth shall observe the "two-person rule" or the "open door policy" at ALL times. The "two-person rule" requires that employees and volunteers and supervisors shall make every reasonable effort to avoid situations where an employed or volunteer worker is alone with children or youth without a partner. The "open door policy" requires the door be open at all times. The "TWO-PERSON RULE" will be MANDATORY for all employees and volunteers with our NURSERY and KINDERGARTEN AGE CHILDREN.
5. All employees and volunteers working with children and youth are required to be members or active constituents of _____(Church) for a minimum of six months before they begin their work.
6. Our guidelines and procedures for reporting suspected incidents of abuse, or any behavior, which seems abusive or inappropriate are labeled "Appendix B". Our guidelines and procedures for responding to reported incidents of abuse are labeled "Appendix C".

IMPLEMENTATION:

We recommend that these guidelines and procedures be implemented within thirty (30) days of their adoption, with the completion of the initial screening process and background checks within ninety (90) days of adoption.

The _____(Committee) will have the responsibility to implement and enforce these guidelines and procedures, including the training of employees and volunteers, maintaining confidential records, and implementing the screening process.

Appendix A

(Church) Child Protection Guidelines

Checklist for Employees and Volunteers

- Been an active member of our church for at least six (6) months.
- Stressed importance of having a witness present when dealing with children one-on-one (alternative: use open areas, leave door open, install windows in doors).
- Given copy of instructions for handling child abuse cases.
- Completed application for ministry.
- Checked references and conducted a personal interview (keep written documentation).
- Completed a criminal background check.

(Checked by)

(Date)

Note: This form to be posted in each worker's file. No worker is to be assigned until completion of the checklist.

Appendix B

(Church) Child Protection Guidelines

REPORTING PROCEDURES

The law requires a person to immediately report suspected and reported child abuse to the authorities and, in organizations such as _____(Church) to the appropriate individual in charge. A person who fails to do so can be prosecuted for a Class B misdemeanor or, in extreme circumstances, may be subject to civil liability for money damages. Therefore, all employees and volunteers at _____(Church) must adhere to the following procedures:

1. In the event of suspected, reported or discovered child abuse or violation of the child Protection Guidelines of _____ (Church), the employee or volunteer shall immediately notify the pastor or, in the absence of the pastor, a person designated by the pastor and approved by the Church Council (Administrative Board or Council). In the event of suspected, reported or discovered child abuse or neglect, an employee or volunteer will also immediately make a report to the local child protection service or law enforcement agency (telephone number: _____).

* Physical signs of molestation may include:

- lacerations and bruises
- irritation, pain or injury to the genital area
- difficulty with urination
- discomfort when sitting
- torn or bloody underclothing
- venereal disease

* Behavioral signs of molestation may include:

- nightmares
- anxiety when approaching the church building or nursery or preschool area (beyond normal separation anxiety)
- nervous or hostile behavior toward adults
- sexual self-consciousness or acting out of sexual behavior
- withdrawal from church activities and friends

* Verbal signs of molestation may include statements such as:

- “I don’t like _____.”
- “_____ does things to me when we’re alone.”
- “I don’t like to be alone with _____.”
- “_____ fooled around with me.”

* Adapted from Child Abuse: Governing Law and Legislation by I. Sloan (1983)

2. Reports shall be documented in writing with the date of the report, the time of the report, the telephone number to which the report was made, the name of the recipient of the report, and a brief synopsis of the report. If at all possible, all oral reporting will be done in the presence of a recorded witness.
3. All church employees and volunteers working with minor children will receive training at the beginning of each church administrative year regarding the signs of child abuse, including child sexual abuse, and the steps to report any and all suspected child abuse.

Appendix C
(Church)
Child Protection Guidelines

RESPONSE PROCEDURES

1. The official spokesperson for _____(Church) shall be the Pastor, or in the absence of the Pastor, the previously designated spokesperson. All inquires or requests for information from the media, attorneys or any other parties shall be referred to the official spokesperson. No person other than the official spokesperson is to release any information regarding any alleged incident of child abuse without the express approval of the official spokesperson.
2. The official spokesperson shall immediately report any alleged incident of child abuse to the appropriate local Child Protection Services agency of the county, our insurance carrier, the Conference or District Superintendent.
3. The care and safety of the victim is our first priority. We will not confront the accused without the approval of the Child Protection Service or law enforcement authorities.
4. We will not prejudge any person accused, but we will take any allegation of child abuse seriously and will reach out in Christian love and support to the victim and the victim's family, extending whatever pastoral care resources are needed. We will fully cooperate with any authorities investigating an allegation of child abuse.
5. We will treat the accused with dignity and respect. If the accused is a church worker, that person shall be temporarily relieved of his or her duties until the investigation is finished and the person cleared by the authorities. If the accused is a paid employee of our church, his or her income will be maintained, until allegations are cleared by authorities or until criminal charges are filed.
6. All communication by the official spokesperson to the media, congregation, and public will protect the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.
7. All efforts in responding to the alleged incident of child abuse shall be documented by the Pastor or, in the absence of the Pastor, by the previously designated spokesperson, and maintained in a secure and confidential file.