

# Child and Volunteer Safety Policy of [Church Name]

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## Purpose

It is the goal of [Church Name] to provide:

1. A safe environment for all children involved in any church or school-sponsored program or activity.
2. Comfortable working conditions for all employees and volunteers working with children.

## Objectives

1. That all children be treated with courtesy, respect, and Christian love while attending the programs and activities of [Church Name].
2. That the activities and programs of [Church Name] are conducted in a safe and secure environment, and the children should be properly supervised while participating in these activities and programs.
3. That [Church Name] employees and volunteers who work with children receive appropriate training to properly supervise and conduct the activities and programs, and respond to and report dangerous or inappropriate situations.

## Introduction

All employees and volunteers who work with children at [Church Name] must comply with the Child and Volunteer Safety Certification Guidelines. The certification process includes, but is not limited to the following: the selection process used to secure employees and volunteers, supervision of employees and volunteers, established procedures for reporting abuse, a definition of abuse, signed statements from the applicant stating that the applicant has never been formally accused, found guilty, or entered a guilty plea in a court of law to any form of child abuse or neglect, and signed statements from the applicants that they will abide by the organization policies.

The volunteer worker certification process shall be deemed applicable for a period not to exceed 36 months; at such time, the volunteer will update application information.

The organization will follow the state law of Iowa (and any other respective state where an activity or travel is scheduled) then in effect for the reporting of suspected cases of child abuse and neglect.

References to:

1. Congregation, church, school or organization: [Church Name].

2. Child: all infants, children, and youth less than eighteen years of age (or reasonably assumed to be less than eighteen years of age).
3. Employee: general reference to all employees of [Church Name].
4. Staff member: specific individual employed by [Church Name].

## I. Definitions

### 1. Child

For the purpose of the Safety Committee, [Church Name] defines a child as “a person who is less than the age of eighteen (18) years or who is reasonably presumed to be less than eighteen (18) years of age.”

### 2. Employee/Staff Member

- a. Employed at [Church Name]
- b. Has completed employment application and job interview process prior to employment.
- c. Has attended educational programs (training) regarding child safety.

### 3. Level 1 Volunteer

- a. Will act as a coordinator/supervisor of other volunteers
- b. Must be at least 21 years of age
- c. Church member for at least six months with regular attendance at Sunday worship
- d. Has completed volunteer application, attended a training and orientation program, participated in the volunteer interview, completed a background screening, and been approved.
- e. Eligible to work with/or supervise children on a regularly scheduled activity or overnight activity (subject to procedures below)

### 4. Level 2 Volunteer

- a. Must be 6<sup>th</sup> grade or older
- b. Has completed volunteer application, completed a background screening, attended an age appropriate training and orientation program, and been approved
- c. Eligible to assist Staff Member or Level 1 Volunteer (subject to procedures below)

### 5. Single Event Volunteer

- a. Must be a member of congregation or a parent/guardian, or sibling of attendee
- b. Must be in 6<sup>th</sup> grade or older
- c. Has reviewed and signed Covenant of Responsibilities and Expected Behaviors
- d. Has completed Personal Identification Form
- e. Assigned to assist the Level 1 Volunteer in charge
- f. Will have limited/no unsupervised interaction with event attendees
- g. A person can use this “Single Event Volunteer” option only two (2) total times a year; further involvement necessitates full certification by the conditions of this Child and Volunteer Safety Policy as a Level 2 Volunteer.

## II. Procedures

[Church Name] will follow these procedures in the screening of persons working with children. All employees and volunteers working with children will go through a certification process and the following procedures will be followed:

1. The organization will appoint through the Church Council one of the staff members as the administrator of the Safety Committee.
2. A committee appointed by the administrator of the program will certify volunteers who work with children through the Child and Volunteer Safety process.
3. All [Church Name] employees shall attend educational programs concerning Child and Volunteer Safety as prescribed by the Safety Committee.
4. It is the responsibility of the respective staff member in charge of the children to ensure that all volunteers used in the activity have complied with the certification process and have been approved for such volunteer work. The administrator of the program will provide an “approved” list of volunteer workers for staff member reference.
5. The administrator of the program will ensure that all application forms, background screenings, references, and signed statements will be held confidential and preserved in a safe place for future reference.

## III. Volunteer Worker Guidelines

1. Level 1 Volunteers who work with children at [Church Name] must meet the following requirements:
  - a. Apply for certification through the Child and Volunteer Safety application and complete the designated training program and background screening.
  - b. Be members of [Church Name] for a period of at least six months with regular attendance at Sunday worship.

- c. A non-member who has faithfully served as a Level 2 Volunteer for at least two years at [Church Name] and has completed the interview process (i.e., a parent/grandparent who has been actively involved in our youth ministries)
- 2. Level 2 Volunteer who work with children at [Church Name] must meet the following requirements:
  - a. Apply for certification through the Child and Volunteer Safety application and complete a designated age appropriate training program and background screening.
  - b. Will in all cases work under the direct supervision of [Church Name] staff members or Level 1 Volunteer workers.
- 3. Single Event Volunteer will in all cases:
  - a. Participate under the direct supervision of [Church Name] Staff Members or Level 1 Volunteer workers.
  - b. Complete a Personal Identification Form at least 24 hours in advance of participating.
- 4. Any employee or volunteer worker who pleads guilty or is convicted in a court of law of any form of neglect, physical or sexual abuse of a child will be immediately, permanently, and completely disqualified from youth or children work in [Church Name] ministries. Persons who confess to any type of physical or sexual abuse of a child, but who have not appeared in a court of law can likewise be disqualified from youth and children work in [Church Name] ministries. Employees or volunteer workers will be suspended while such charges or allegations are investigated.

#### **IV. Certification Process**

1. All candidates of Level 1 and Level 2 Volunteers must complete a Child and Volunteer Safety application and background screening.
2. All volunteer workers who desire to work with children must attend an age appropriate Child and Volunteer Safety training program.
3. All candidates who desire to serve as a Level 1 Volunteer shall participate in the Child and Volunteer Safety interview.
4. The Safety Committee will recommend the certification status of each candidate.
5. Updating of volunteer status is necessary after thirty-six (36) months.

#### **V. Activity Guidelines**

1. The Common Sense Rule

The overlying principle of all activity guidelines is dictated by the Common Sense Rule. Common sense dictates that, except in special circumstances, a one adult and one

child alone situation is to be avoided. It is also common sense to provide extra adult supervision at high risk activities (such as athletics) to ensure the safety of the participants. Volunteers are to use common sense and do “what a reasonable parent would do” in any situation.

## 2. The Open View Rule

Classroom and meeting room doors with a window should have an unobstructed view of the room through the window; the door may be open or closed. Doors without a window should be left open during the activity.

## 3. The Instruction Rule

- a. Each instructional activity shall be under the leadership of a Staff Member or Level 1 Volunteer.
- b. Each respective ministry area will define its age appropriate adult-to-child ratio for an instructional activity.
- c. Staff Members and Level 1 Volunteers may be used as sole instructors.
- d. Level 2 Volunteers may be used in instructional roles under the direct supervision of a Staff Member or Level 1 Volunteer.
- e. As a general principle, no instructional activity shall intentionally include a situation involving one adult and one child alone together. This instructor must be a Staff Member or Level 1 Volunteer. This shall be considered part of the “Common Sense” Rule.

## 4. The Supervision Rule

- a. Each supervision activity shall be under the leadership of a Staff Member or Level 1 Volunteer.
- b. Each respective ministry area will define its age appropriate adult-to-ratio for a supervision activity. Recommended ratio levels are: babies to 23 months, 1:4; 2 year olds, 1:6; 3 year olds, 1:8; 4 year olds, 1:12; 5 year olds and up, 1:15.
- c. Staff Members and Level 1 Volunteers may be used in individual supervision roles.
- d. Level 2 Volunteers may be used in supervision roles under the direct supervision of a Staff Member or Level 1 Volunteer.
- e. As a general principle, no supervision activity shall intentionally include a situation involving one adult and one child alone together. This supervisor must be a Staff Member or Level 1 Volunteer. This shall be considered part of the “Common Sense” Rule.

## 5. The Family or Intergenerational Activity Rule

Any event promoted as a “family” or “intergenerational” activity (examples: Rally Day, Family Retreat, Fellowship Activities) shall not require all participants to be certified as a Level 1 Volunteer. It will be assumed that parents/guardians will be responsible for supervising their children and the guests that they may bring. If specific activities within the main event are planned for children, the other rules of this Child and Volunteer Safety Policy shall apply. Organizers of the event shall make provisions for dealing with children who arrive without parental supervision in keeping with the other rules of this Child and Volunteer Safety Policy.

6. The Congregation Activity Rule

Any event held for the entire congregation (such as worship or meetings) shall not be subject to the requirements for supervision.

7. The Counseling Rule

Counseling situations in which one child and one adult will be alone together should be arranged in an “open view” area (visible access; no concealed area).

8. The Transportation Rule

Any program of [Church Name] that includes the transportation of children off the main campus of the church will observe the following procedures:

- a. A parent or legal guardian must provide advance written permission for the child to be transported to or from any scheduled activity.
- b. Staff Members, Level 1 and Level 2 Volunteers should be used to transport children to or from the scheduled activity. Level 1 and Level 2 Volunteers must be 21 years of age with a valid driver’s license and insurance. Single Event Volunteers may be utilized to drive when circumstances require it. The Single Event Volunteer will not have fewer than two children in the car and should be considered as an attendee once the destination is reached.
- c. All drivers will provide a copy of their current driver’s license and proof of insurance.
- d. All drivers must sign the Driver’s Covenant before the event to verify that they have read and agree to obey the driving expectations. In the case that a different driver is picking up from the off-campus location, the Staff Member or Level 1 Volunteer should collect the Driver’s Covenant before the trip.
- e. Drivers shall at all times follow the law, including the vehicle capacity and the use of safety restraints and/or booster seats.
- f. [Church Name] may use professionally certified transportation where appropriate.
- g. Staff and the ministry organizing the event reserve the right to ask a volunteer not to drive on the spot or beforehand.

## 9. The Overnight Rule

Any program of [Church Name] that includes the supervision of children during overnight activities (any activity which extends beyond 10:00 p.m.) will observe the following procedures:

- a. A sign in/sign out sheet will be kept at the location of the program.
- b. All those over the age of 18 who attend the overnight portion of an activity will either have a Level 1 or Level 2 volunteer certification or be included in the participant count for supervision ratios. There will be two Staff Members or Level 1 Volunteers on site with the participants at all times during the event.
- c. Children will not be allowed to leave the location of the overnight event with anyone except a parent or legal guardian. Children may leave with a non-parent/legal guardian only if permission is secured in advance from parents/legal guardians, including the name of the person with whom the child may leave.
- d. Children will not be allowed to leave the location of the overnight event early without the advance permission of the parent or legal guardian.
- e. Lodging: Prior parental consent must be secured related to all lodging arrangements.

## 10. The Discipline Rule

- a. No [Church Name] employee, volunteer, or adult participant may use physical punishment to discipline a child in the course of [Church Name] activities.
- b. An adult other than the parent or legal guardian may physically restrain the child only when the child is in danger of injuring himself or someone else. Staff Members or Volunteers will contact parents or legal guardians before restraining whenever possible.
- c. Staff Members or Volunteers will use other methods to provide discipline. Removal of privileges, time out, and verbal correction can be used to preserve order and safety in the programs and activities of the organization.
- d. In difficult cases, Staff Members or Volunteers will request the parent or legal guardian to assist in forming a discipline plan for the child whose behavior is frequently disruptive.

## 11. The Suspicious Behavior Rule

Any inappropriate conduct or interaction between an adult and a child or between a child and child will be confronted immediately. A report of the incident and any other official documents required by law will be filed with the administrator of the Safety Committee and any organization required by law.

## 12. The Multi-Congregational/Organization Rule

In the case where an event is held jointly with another congregation or organization, [Church Name] volunteers are responsible for our participants only. The other congregation(s)/organization(s) are responsible for their own participants and should be notified by the [Church Name] lead volunteer for this event. [Church Name] volunteers are encouraged to help responsibly when needed.

## VI. State Law

### 1. Iowa State Law

Iowa law places an obligation upon individuals to report suspected abuse or neglect of a child. The law defines abuse/neglect and specifies who must report and how a report is to be made. Any suspected criminal behavior against a child will be reported to the appropriate official as required by the laws of the state of Iowa.

### 2. Other States

If the children's activity includes travel to other states, the laws of the state where the alleged abuse occurred will also be followed.

### 3. Abuse/Neglect

The manner in which the above law defines abuse/neglect is to define "Child abuse" or "abuse" as set out in Iowa Code 232.68:

- a. Any non-accidental physical injury, or injury which is at variance with the history given of it, suffered by a child as the result of the acts or omissions of a person responsible for the care of the child.
- b. Any mental injury to a child's intellectual or psychological capacity as evidenced by an observable and substantial impairment of the child's ability to function within the child's normal range of performance and behavior as the result of the acts or omissions of a person responsible for the care of the child, if the impairment is diagnosed and confirmed by a licensed physician or qualified mental health professional as defined in section 622.10.
- c. The commissions of a sexual offense with or to a child pursuant to chapter 709, section 726.2, or section 728.12, subsection 1, as a result of the acts or omissions of the person responsible for the care of the child. Notwithstanding section 702.5, the commission of a sexual offense under this paragraph includes any sexual offense referred to in this paragraph with or to a person under the age of eighteen years.
- d. The failure on the part of a person responsible for the care of a child to provide for the adequate food, shelter, clothing or other care necessary for the child's health and welfare when financially able to do so or when offered financial or other reasonable means to do so. A parent or guardian legitimately practicing religious beliefs who does not provide specified medical treatment

for a child for that reason alone shall not be considered abusing the child; however this provision shall not preclude a court from ordering that medical service be provided to the child where the child's health requires it.

- e. The acts or omissions of a person responsible for the care of a child which allow, permit, or encourage the child to engage in acts prohibited pursuant to section 725.1. Notwithstanding section 702.5, acts or omissions under this paragraph include an act or omission referred to in this paragraph with or to a person under the age of eighteen years.
- f. An illegal drug is present in a child's body as a direct and foreseeable consequence of the acts or omissions of the person responsible for the care of the child.
- g. The person responsible for the care of the child has, in the presence of the child, as defined in section 232.2, subsection 6, paragraph "p," or in the presence of the child possesses a product containing ephedrine, its salts, optical isomers, salts of optical isomers, or pseudoephedrine, its salts, optical isomers, salts of optical isomers, with the intent to use the product as a precursor or an intermediary to a dangerous substance.
- h. The commission of bestiality in the presence of a minor under section 717C.1 by a person who resides in a home with a child, as a result of the acts or omissions of a person responsible for the care of the child.
- i. Cohabitation with a person on the sex offender registry under chapter 692A in violation of section 726.6 or supervision.

The legal definition of sexual abuse varies from state to state. In most cases sexual abuse generally includes any form of sexual contact or exploitation in which a minor is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator. The National Resource Center on Child Abuse defines sexual abuse as follows: "Any sexual activity with a child - whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day care situation, a foster/residential setting, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child, provided the [offending] child is four years older than the victim." For the purpose of [Church Name], any sexual activity with a child is considered abuse.

Child sexual abuse may be violent or non-violent. It may include touching, but does not necessarily need to include touching to be classified as sexual abuse. Any form of physical or verbal sexual activity with a child will immediately, completely, and permanently disqualify any person from working with children or youth at [Church Name].

## **VII. Incident Reporting**

1. Any Staff Member, volunteer worker, or adult participant who has knowledge of or suspicion of alleged abuse of a child is under obligation to report the abuse to the response team in charge of the activity within twenty-four (24) hours.

2. Reporting in “good faith” releases the reporter from any liability if the report proves to be unfounded. On the other hand, willful failure to report opens an individual to criminal or civil liability.
3. Upon reporting, the reporter must complete the Reporting Party Form (available from a Staff Member or Response Team member). This is a confidential report; information must be specific and detailed.
4. Give the completed form to the administrator of the Safety Committee, who in turn, will initiate the appropriate procedures.
5. A member of the Response Team will contact the reporting party within 24 hours of receipt of the incident report. If this does not happen, the reporting party should attempt to contact the administrator of the program to ensure the receipt of the report.
6. The Response Team will not contact the reporter of an incident concerning the outcome of the investigation due to confidentiality issues.
7. To ensure the confidentiality of the persons involved and the nature of the alleged incident, no information can be shared by the reporter beyond the initial oral and written report. Refer all questions and concerns to the Response Team.
8. Sample response statement: “This is a very difficult situation. [Church Name]’s Safety Committee is in place. Our responsibility is to ensure the safety and supervision of our children. All questions should be directed to the administrator of our Child and Volunteer Safety Committee.” - OR - “I can’t respond to that. Please contact *the name of the current administrator of the program.*”

## VIII. Response Team

1. Response Team
  - a. A Response Team shall be formed under the jurisdiction of the administrator of the Safety Committee to ensure that the allegation response procedures are implemented.
  - b. Response Team members may include professionals trained in child protection issues, such as attorneys, social workers, counselors, and law enforcement officers.
  - c. Members of the Response Team shall receive appropriate training in the current legal and ethical procedures for investigating and reporting any inappropriate behavior toward children.
  - d. If an incident of abuse occurs, a Response Team of at least three (3) members shall convene and designate a team member in each case to coordinate and oversee the implementation of policies and procedures. The Response Team Coordinator shall consult with and report the case resolution to the

administrator of the Child and Volunteer Safety if the administrator is not part of the Response Team.

- e. A Response Team member that may have a direct conflict of interest (as determined by the Response Team) with any incident investigation or follow-up will be excused from participation in the respective process.

## 2. Response Team Guidelines.

The Response Team shall ensure that the reporting and follow-up procedures are implemented and documented (not inclusive, not in priority order):

- a. Secure the safety of the alleged child victim and other children.
- b. Remove the alleged abuser from any activity involving children.
- c. Work to maintain the privacy of all involved.
- d. Listen to the reporting party; secure a written statement, if possible.
- e. Listen to the victim and/or the representative if age or ability limits a written report.
- f. Notify the respective child's parent.
- g. Notify the proper authorities, if appropriate.
- h. Notify the organization's attorney and organization's insurance carrier, if needed.
- i. Prepare a statement for the press, if needed. The Response Team will authorize a Staff Member, Elder, or appropriate legal counsel to act as the official spokesperson for the organization if necessary. Only the authorized person or persons can speak for the organization to the news media, government agencies, attorneys, or others.
- j. Consult with appropriate professionals (counselor, social worker, law enforcement, etc.) as needed.

## 3. Allegation Response Procedures.

- a. All allegations of child abuse or neglect shall be taken seriously; no allegation shall be ignored.
- b. The Response team will be notified as soon as possible in all cases of suspected child abuse or neglect and when the reporting procedures have been initiated. All procedures shall be documented and kept confidential.
- c. All investigative and reporting steps taken will be initiated within twenty-four (24) hours. The investigation will be documented, including a log of phone calls, personal visits, and written reports. Whenever possible, there shall be at

least two Staff Members involved so that there can be verification of the activity. If no Staff Member can be found, the person who witnesses the abuse should report to one of the members of the Response Team.

- d. If an incident of abuse occurs, file the report by calling the Centralized Intake Unit at 1-800-362-2178. This is a 24/7 active number. Speak with a child protection case manager; in the event that all case managers are away from the office, the supervisor or another Staff Member will accept the report.
    - i. Examples of the kind of information that will be asked for when the report is made include: name and age of the child, name of the parent, name of the alleged perpetrator of the abuse or neglect, addresses and phone numbers of these individuals, and a description of the alleged abuse or neglect situation.
  - e. The parent or legal guardian of all children involved will be notified, unless the parent or legal guardian is the person suspected of the abuse. The phone call or visit will be documented.
  - f. In emergency situations involving physical injury to a child, the parent or legal guardian shall be notified as soon as possible. Emergency medical services shall be arranged immediately pending approval by the parent or legal guardian. All arrangements shall be documented.
  - g. The appropriate official shall be notified by a Staff Member or member of the Response Team as soon as possible in cases of suspected criminal activity involving a child. The phone call or other type of notification shall be documented.
4. Summary
- a. Any Staff Member, Volunteer Worker, or adult participant who has knowledge of the alleged abuse of a child is under obligation to report the abuse to the respective Staff Member in charge of the activity within twenty-four (24) hours. The Staff Member will immediately contact a member of the Response Team to inform of the situation.
  - b. If the respective Staff Member in charge of the activity cannot be located within twenty-four (24) hours, the Staff Member, Volunteer Worker, or adult participant must report directly to a member of the Response Team, who in turn will report to the appropriate official as required by the laws of the state of Iowa (or any other applicable state law).
  - c. The parent or legal guardian of the child involved will be notified by a Staff Member or member of the Response Team.

## **IX. Documentation Guidelines**

1. [Church Name] will maintain a file on each Volunteer Worker and Staff Member.

2. These files are the property of [Church Name] and access to the information they contain is restricted.
3. The file shall be kept in a secure cabinet, accessible by the administrator of the Child and Volunteer Safety Committee.
4. The file contains information on the Volunteer Worker or Staff Member, including the application form completed by the Volunteer or Staff Member, the reference check notes, and any other items used in certifying the Volunteer.
5. Only the Interview Team, the Response Team, and the administrator of the Child and Volunteer Safety Committee who have legitimate reasons may review the information in the file after submitting a request in writing to the administrator of the Child and Volunteer Safety Committee stating the reason for the need for the access.
6. Volunteer Workers or Staff Members who wish to review their own personal file may request in writing to the administrator of the child and Volunteer Safety Committee to view the file. This review is done in the presence of the administrator; the Volunteer may not alter, copy, destroy, or supplement any information contained in the file. However, the Volunteer may request a note to be placed in the file regarding any problems or concerns the Volunteer Worker or Staff Member may have with the contents.
7. [Church Name] may follow up on all reference checks and inquiries pertaining to Volunteer Workers and Staff Members. If these checks indicate that additional factual substantiated information needs to be added to the Volunteer Worker's file, the administrator of the Child and Volunteer Safety Committee will approve this insertion.
8. The administrator of the Child and Volunteer Safety Committee will retain these records in the active file as long as the Volunteer Worker or Staff Member remains a member of the congregation or actively participates in congregational activities. The file will be placed in a permanent inactive file and be kept indefinitely after the Volunteer Worker or Staff member ceases to be a member of or actively participates in the activities of the congregation; accessible only by the administrator of the Child and Volunteer Safety Committee.
9. The records of Volunteer Workers or Staff Members who are denied certification will be retained in a rejected file indefinitely.
10. The summary list of classifications will be available to individuals who need the information for verification or certified Volunteer Workers or Staff Members.