



CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION PROGRAM

DESIGNED FOR HOUSE OF WORSHIP ACCOUNTS WITH WEEKLY ATTENDANCE OF 75 OR FEWER



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INTRODUCTION

The information within this document is designed to assist houses of worship with weekly attendance at services of 75 or fewer persons to develop a child and youth protection program.

One of the most significant legal risks facing churches today is negligent selection of employees and volunteers. Negligence is being defined as carelessness or a failure to exercise reasonable care in screening/hiring employees and volunteers. Negligent selection can involve hiring individuals with poor driving records to operate the HOW van or bus. Poor selection might include hiring an individual with a criminal history to handle financial matters of the HOW. But the most significant risk occurs in the selection of employees and volunteers who will be working with youth and children. Many churches have been sued on the basis of negligent selection because an inadequately screened employee or volunteer sexually molested a child. One method of reducing the probability of a child being molested, a member of the HOW being falsely accused of such and/or a lawsuit claiming negligent employee or volunteer selection is through the development of a Child and Youth Protection Program.

It is in the best interest of a house of worship and its children/youth to adopt policies, procedures, and practices to assist the house of worship in protecting the children/youth from physical, mental, and emotional harm.

It will be the responsibility of the house of worship to educate ministers, house of worship staff, and volunteers in the identification and prevention of sexual and physical misconduct. In many cases, sexual or physical misconduct will violate criminal statutes and may lead to the prosecution and imprisonment of offenders.

The house of worship should establish a policy of zero tolerance for sexual or physical misconduct and should aggressively pursue investigation of reports of misconduct.

The information provided in this document includes items that each house of worship should consider as they adopt procedures. There are some guidelines that can establish clear directions, but the information is general and allows each house of worship to expand upon or develop specific content of policies and procedures that can be implemented according to the particularities of the house of worship.

The information contained in this document is not all inclusive. It should be discussed with the house of worship leadership and the information adopted according to the religious beliefs and activities of the house of worship.

Contained in **Appendix A** of this document is an example of a Child and Youth Protection Program. Where appropriate, the house of worship should adapt the various portions of a policy or policies.

GENERAL POLICIES & GUIDELINE CONSIDERATIONS

VOLUNTEER & PAID STAFF SELECTION

1. A screening policy should be adopted by the house of worship for screening of employees and volunteer applicants wishing to participate in activities involving children or youth.
2. An employment application form for all volunteers and paid staff should be developed by your legal counsel. The application should include a section requesting the applicant provide your House of Worship permission to conduct a background check on the employee or volunteer. The application form should include questions as they relate to the individual's previous work with children and youth, the reason for wanting to work with children and youth, their area of interest in working with children and youth, etc.
3. Prior to implementation, your house of worship's legal counsel should be asked to review all policies, procedures, application forms and components of your hiring/screening program to confirm they are in compliance with state and federal employment laws.
4. An individual should have lived in the community for at least 6 months and provide references they are a person of good standing in the community.

5. If the individual is new to the community or a new member, before working with children or youth, they must provide at least 2 references, including his/her previous pastor indicating the member's good community standings for at least 1 year in the previous community. References should be checked and documented.
6. The volunteer or paid staff person should have an in-person interview. This interview could be conducted by the senior pastor and at least one trustee, a member of your leadership team or a committee designated by the senior pastor.
7. Background records should be checked and documented on all employees and volunteers. Those records could include, but not limited to, criminal records, sex offender registry, child abuse registry, etc.
8. Those convicted of sexual or physical abuse should not be accepted for volunteer or paid service in any house of worship sponsored activity or program for children or youth.
9. The house of worship shall provide annual training to all house of worship staff and volunteers, focusing on the house of worship's policies and practices on the child/youth safety policy and be trained on other current issues related to child and youth protection. Attendance at these sessions should be required for those who have direct contact with children or youth.
10. Volunteer and paid staff should be required to sign a statement that they have read and understood, and also agree to abide by the house of worship's Child/Youth Protection Policy. Note **Appendix B** for an example of an Acceptance of Policy.
11. Volunteers or paid staff are prohibited from the use, possession, distribution, or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of prescription drugs while participating in or assisting with programs or activities specifically for children or youth.

POLICIES/SUPERVISION WHEN WORKING WITH CHILDREN/YOUTH

1. Supervision of all child/youth religious education classes should be accomplished through one of the following options:
 - Two adults (at least 21 years of age). Non-related preferred but not required.
 - One adult (at least 21 years of age) within a classroom if the following criteria are met:
 - Each wall separating the classrooms from a common corridor are required to have at least one viewing window present measuring 24 inches x 24 inches.
 - At least one door into the classroom from a common corridor. At least one viewing window measuring a minimum of 12 inches by 12 inches must be present within the door and the door should remain unlocked when the room is occupied and/or the door into the classroom must remain open at all times when children/youth are present. An adult should be located within the common area/corridor outside the classrooms. This individual should be assigned the duty of monitoring the activity within each classroom.
 - Every effort possible should be made to limit youth activities within the classroom to those areas visible from outside the room through the open doors or windows located within the doors.
 - One adult (at least 21 years of age) and a non-related young adult at least 18 years of age.
2. Any youth helper or youth teacher (youth could be defined as youth under the age of 18) must present written parental/guardian permission to the adult supervisor of the activity before being authorized to work with children or youth.
3. Volunteers or staff of the house of worship may visit and observe children or youth programs at any time.

4. Anytime a paid staff member or volunteer is required to be alone with a child or youth, parental or guardian permission should be obtained. If contact with a parent/guardian cannot be made, another adult should be notified. Only volunteers or paid staff members who have been authorized will be allowed to chaperone overnight activities.
5. Pre-school children needing to use the bathroom should be accompanied by 2 adults. The adults may enter the bathroom, if the child needs assistance or supervision, but should not enter the stall with the child unless there is an emergency. If the child needs assistance or there is an emergency with any child, the stall door and bathroom door should be left open.
6. A sign-in/sign-out procedure should be established. Parents/guardians or other persons responsible for children from infant through 2nd grade should record via sign-in procedure on the nursery registration form with the staff/volunteer on duty as to whom the child may be released. If the person picking up the child is unknown to the staff/volunteer person, a picture ID should be requested to verify the release person's identity. A child should not be released to a person not previously authorized via the sign-in procedure, which will be on the registration form. The sign-in procedure should require an emergency contact number for parents/guardians. Also, the registration form should note allergies or any special needs of the child.
7. In a nursery setting a minimum of 2 adults, non-related preferred but not required, must be present when changing children's clothing.
8. Make certain there is enough help in the nursery to provide enough attention to each child's needs.
9. An appointed monitor should check each nursery room to make sure it is properly staffed and that things are running smoothly. This person can also monitor hallways for unwanted visitors and help supervise restroom breaks.
10. There should be a communications system established to call the parent/guardian to the nursery during worship or other house of worship activities.
11. Children and youth must have completed an information and consent form for involvement in house of worship-sponsored programs and activities away from the house of worship location. The person in charge of each trip and/or retreat shall carry completed medical release forms, including permission for emergency medical care, including medication prescribed, and information on how to reach a parent/guardian in an emergency.
12. The following rules apply when transportation by volunteers or paid staff is being provided for children or youth for designated house of worship activities from the house of worship to a house of worship sponsored event and back:
 - a. The designated leader of the event will not permit any adult to drive who appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
 - b. Driver must be at least 21 years of age and have a clear driving record.
 - c. Driver must have proof of insurance, if their personal vehicle is used.
 - d. Parents/guardians must complete written permission forms before house of worship personnel transport children and youth for a house of worship sponsored activity or for any purpose.
 - e. Driver must have read and signed an acknowledgment indicating that the Child/Youth Protection Policy has been read and will be followed.
 - f. A copy of the valid driver's license and insurance card must be filed with the house of worship Office Administrator, before a driver is approved to drive on house of worship sponsored activities.

RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS

1. All allegations of incidents involving improper touching, physical abuse, or sexual abuse of a child or youth during the course of any and all house of worship sponsored activities must be immediately brought to the attention of the senior pastor or the appropriate committee within the house of worship. Exception: if the alleged perpetrator is within this reporting chain, that person shall be bypassed and the report made to another individual or individuals in the reporting chain. See **Appendix C** for an example of an Incident Report.
2. If an incident is reported, it is the responsibility of the senior pastor or other individual in the authority chain to see that proper notification is made to the following: parents/guardian, legal and social welfare authorities as may be mandated by state law, and insurance company (in accordance with the insurance contract).
3. All allegations of sexual misconduct should be fully and fairly investigated and corrective and/or disciplinary action taken as warranted.
4. The house of worship should not attempt to perform a detailed investigation of any alleged incident on its own, but should cooperate fully with all legal entities involved.

PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH A REGISTERED SEX OFFENDER

Any person having been placed on a sex offender registry as the result of a sexual misconduct or molestation offense will be allowed to attend church services under the following conditions:

1. The conditions of their parole allow them to do so;
2. They agree to periodic meetings with the (Senior Religious Leader) or his/her designee for the purpose of imposing conditions and reviewing compliance with such;
3. They agree to be accompanied by an assigned (HOW) member whenever on (HOW) property;
4. They are not allowed to use the (HOW) restrooms, unless accompanied by an Usher or their assigned member;
5. They are not allowed off-premises social interaction with any (HOW) children or youth;
6. They are not allowed to ask for, or have (HOW) keys in their possession;
7. It is understood they will never be hired as a (HOW) employee or work with the (HOW's) children or youth in any way.
8. The registered sex offender is to be presented with a written copy of their restrictions and by their affixed signature, must agree to abide by these conditions. It is also understood that if they violate any of these conditions, their attendance privileges may be revoked.

(NAME OF HOUSE OF WORSHIP)

CHILD

&

YOUTH

PROTECTION PROGRAM

(NAME OF HOUSE OF WORSHIP) CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY POLICY

*A designate of the **(Name of, if applicable)** Council, a designate of the Staff-Parish committee, the Christian Education Director, the Youth Coordinator, an attorney, the Chair of Education Ministry, the senior pastor, and the associate pastor shall comprise an administrative body referred to as "The Child and Youth Safety Committee" [hereinafter "Committee"]. The Committee's purpose shall be to guide the house of worship in promulgating and enforcing policies, procedures, and practices concerning the safety of our children/youth when in the care of paid and volunteer child and youth workers at the **(Name of house of worship)**[hereinafter "Policy"]. The Committee is empowered to select a chairperson and adopt such rules as is appropriate to execute the purposes expressed in this Policy. Replacement Committee members designated from a house of worship Committee shall be selected by that Committee. The attorney shall be selected by the senior pastor. The **(Name of, if applicable)** Council will confirm this Committee and its members.*

MISSION STATEMENT

It is in the best interest of our house of worship, our children, and our youth to adopt policies, procedures, and practices to assist our house of worship in protecting the physical, mental, and emotional well being of the children and youth who participate in house of worship sponsored activities at the **(Name of house of worship)**. Volunteers or paid staff with convictions of abuse crimes will not be permitted to work with children or youth. The kinds of convicted criminal behavior which disqualify an applicant include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following: 1) Child molestation, 2) Incest, 3) Rape, 4) Assaults involving minors, 5) Physical abuse of a child, and 6) Child pornography.

It is with this mission in mind that the Committee proposes the following policies, procedures, and practices.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The **(Name of, if applicable)** Council, with the input from house of worship leaders and staff, has explored the need for child and youth safety policies, procedures, and practices. It determined that, given the size of **(Name of house of worship)**, the wide range of house of worship sponsored activities involving our children and youth, and the overarching care and concern this house of worship has for its children and youth, a safety policy is indicated. The following Policy seeks to address that need.

(NAME OF HOUSE OF WORSHIP) CHILD AND YOUTH SAFETY POLICY

The **(Name of house of worship)**, through its people, believe it is in our house of worship's, our children's, and our youths' best interests to adopt policies, procedures, and practices to assist in protecting the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of our children and youth when they participate in house of worship sponsored activities. These policies, practices, and procedures proceed from the following core decisions:

1. Adults convicted of sexually or physically abusing a child will not be accepted for volunteer or paid service in any house of worship sponsored activity or program for children or youth.
2. Adult survivors of childhood sexual or physical abuse need the love and acceptance of this house of worship family. Individuals who have such a history shall discuss their desire to work with children or youth with the senior pastor or associate pastor prior to engaging in any volunteer or paid service. The Christian Education Director will be involved at the option of the senior pastor or associate pastor.
3. A volunteer or paid staff member must have lived in this community for 6 months and provide references indicating he or she is a person of good standing in this community. In the event the

volunteer or paid staff member is a new member of constituent, he or she must provide at least two (2) references, including his or her previous pastor, indicating the volunteer's or paid staff member's good community standing for at least one (1) year in the previous community.

4. At least two (2) adults, non-related preferred but not required, (over the age of 21) will be assigned to and be present at all house of worship sponsored activities involving children or youth. If youth helpers are conducting house of worship sponsored activities, at least one (1) adult (over the age of 21) must be assigned to and be present at that activity. "Youth helpers" are defined as youths under the age of 18 and who have successfully completed the screening process set forth in this Policy.
5. Youth helpers or youth teachers must present written parental/guardian permission to the adult supervisor before being authorized to work with children.
6. Volunteers and paid staff members must submit a completed application form at the inception of their service and in January of every calendar year ending with "5" or "0" thereafter. In addition, each must agree to training and be trained in accordance with the procedures set forth by the Committee before being authorized to work with children or youth in house of worship sponsored activities.

[THIS POLICY SHALL BE ATTACHED TO THE APPLICATION FORM]

GENERAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

I. Administration of Policies and Procedures

The Committee shall administer the policies and procedures herein. The **(Name of, if applicable)** Council will approve this original policy and any futures revisions.

II. Volunteer and Paid Staff Worker Selection Policies

A. Screening

1. *Risk Management for an Occasional Volunteer and Paid Staff Worker*

- a. Occasional volunteers and paid staff include:** Individuals who volunteer or work in a classroom with a group of children infrequently as a parent/guardian or youth helper or substitute.

Occasional volunteers and paid staff will qualify if:

- (1) They complete an Employment Application Form; and
- (2) They satisfactorily meet the criteria set forth in the application

2. *Risk Management for Volunteers and Paid Staff Workers of Regular On-Going Child or Youth Settings*

- a. Regular volunteers and paid staff include:** Individuals who volunteer or work and are paid on a weekly or monthly basis for 1 to 1-1/2 hours.

Regular volunteers and paid staff will qualify if:

- (1) They complete an Employment Application Form; and
- (2) They are a member for at least 6 months with references; or
- (3) They are an active, participating non-member (constituent) for at least one (1) year with references; or
- (4) They become members on Confession of Faith after 6 months and provide two (2) references, one from their former pastor, indicating their good community standing in their previous community for one (1) year; and
- (5) They transfer or become an associate member after 6 months and provide two (2) references, one from their former pastor, indicating their good community standing in their previous community for one (1) year; and
- (6) They participate in a personal interview with a house of worship staff member or with the committee responsible for recruitment (this shall be a personal one-on-one interview).

3. *Risk Management for Volunteer and Paid Staff Workers for Special Events with Higher Probability of Risk*

- a.** For all purposes in this Policy, “infants” are defined as being under the age of 4; “children” are defined as being between the age of 4 and 12; and “youths” are defined as being ages 12 to 18.

(1) High Risk Volunteers and Paid Staff include:

- (a) Positions which involve working with infants 1 to 1-1/2 hours weekly; or
- (b) Supervision of off-campus or overnight activities; or
- (c) One-on-one situations alone with individual children/youth; or
- (d) Driving children or youth to activities off campus

(2) High Risk Volunteers and Paid Staff will qualify if:

- (a)** They complete an Employment Application Form; and
- (b)** They permit a criminal records check; and
- (c)** They indicate prior positive experience, skill, training, or work related to children and/or youth; and
- (d)** They have a positive personal interview with an authorized house of worship staff member and one (1) other person or authorized members of the Committee or the recruiting committee.

4. Satisfactory Completion of Screening Requires:

- a.** No known history or criminal record of or relating to child abuse or molestation or other findings of a criminal record involving injury to another; and
- b.** Positive references; and
- c.** Experience working with children or satisfactory demonstration of ability to learn and understand the position for which the individual applied; and
- d.** Membership or constituency in the **(Name of house of worship)** as set forth above; and
- e.** Successful completion of a personal interview (interview does not reveal information of concern to interview team).

5. Unsatisfactory Completion of Screening and Exclusion from Service with Children or Youth includes:

- a.** Prior history, conviction, *Alford plea (nolo contendere)*, or guilty plea for child abuse or molestation;
- b.** Other findings of a criminal record;
- c.** Negative personal reference or interview: (evaluation on a case-by-case basis, with additional references, interview or follow-up information sought to confirm or disprove suspicions as necessary).

Individuals who do not satisfactorily pass screening may be offered opportunities to volunteer their services or work as paid staff in other areas of the organization. Pastoral guidance and counseling should be offered to these individuals to assist them in understanding the house of worship's obligation to provide the highest level of protection to its children, its youth, and its members.

A. Authorization of Approved Volunteers and Paid Staff

- 1.** Volunteers and paid staff may be authorized, **upon successfully completing screening**, to work with children/youth in activities where there will be two (2) or more adults, non-related preferred but not required, (such as Sunday school class, vacation bible school, summer camp, choir, after school programs, Sunday evening fellowship, Youth Program, Confirmation, and etc.).
- 2.** Volunteers and paid staff for high risk settings may be authorized, upon successful completion of screening, to work with children and youth in the following settings:
 - a.** Any overnight activity with youth/children (e.g. lock-ins, camping trips, choir trips);
 - b.** Any one-on-one activities or sessions with a child or youth
 - c.** Any work with infants; and
 - d.** Any positions involving transporting children or youth for any distance.

III. Worker Supervision Policies

A. Team Approach

House of worship activities involving children and youth will be supervised or conducted by two (2) adults, or one adult (21 or over) and a non-related youth helper.

B. Parental/Guardian Permission

Any time a paid staff member or volunteer is required to be alone with a child or youth, parental/guardian permission should be obtained. If contact with a parent/guardian cannot be made, another adult should be notified. Religious education registration forms will provide a place for parents/guardians to give signed approval for their child to be alone with a teacher or with a Faith Friend, if the youth is in religion class. Parental/guardian permission forms will be made available for other house of worship sponsored settings enabling parents/guardians to approve their child being alone with a teacher or leader.

C. Overnight Rule

Only volunteers or paid staff members who have been authorized for high risk positions will be allowed to chaperone overnight activities.

D. Nursery Identification

1. All infants will be signed into a designated room anytime they are left in the nursery room(s) for any child care activity (Sunday or other times child care is offered).
2. Parents/guardians will be given a claim check at the time they leave their child.
3. A parent/guardian can only pick up a child when a claim check is presented.
4. Youth nursery attendants must have written parental/guardian permission for supervising children.

E. Children in Classrooms Shall be Visible from Outside the Classroom

Children participating in indoor activities in classrooms should be visible from outside the classroom. If a door does not have a window, the door should be left open and be gated, if necessary. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

F. Prohibited Behaviors

1. A volunteer and/or paid staff member shall not place himself or herself in a situation where he or she is alone with a child absent proper parental/guardian authority.
2. A volunteer and/or paid staff member shall not use profanity, vulgarities, or emotionally abusive language, drugs or alcohol.
3. A volunteer and/or paid staff member shall not strike, hit, spank, or otherwise physically abuse a child or youth.
4. A volunteer and/or paid staff member shall not touch, fondle, or kiss a child or youth or physically or verbally engage in any inappropriate or sexual manner with a child or youth.

IV. Incident Reporting

All allegations of incidents involving improper touching, physical abuse, or sexual abuse of a child or youth during the course of any and all house of worship sponsored activities must immediately be brought to the attention of the senior pastor, or if he or she is not available, to the associate pastor, or, if he or she is not available, to the Committee attorney, or, if he or she is not available, to any member of the Committee, except that if the alleged perpetrator is within this reporting chain, that person shall be by-passed and the report shall be made to another individual or individuals in this reporting chain.

The reporting person shall:

1. Inform the senior pastor or other individual in the authority chain as set forth above, if he or she has not already been informed.
2. Assist the senior pastor or other individual in the authority chain as set forth above in investigating the allegation following the Incident Report guidelines.

3. Cooperate with the senior pastor or other individual in the authority chain as set forth above in insuring that the Incident Report **Appendix C** (the senior pastor has these forms) is completed and properly executed. The **person signing the report will be trained to know that he or she**, the senior pastor or the individual in the authority chain as set forth above, is responsible to see that proper notification is made to the following: parents/guardians, legal and social welfare authorities as may be mandated by state law, insurance company (in accordance with the insurance contract), or other authorities. The person notified should assist to insure that the proper procedure is followed and the necessary notification made, but because the person notified is not bound by this Policy, the person making the notification should clearly request all appropriate assistance to make sure the proper notification procedure is followed.

V. Response to Allegations

It will be the policy of **(Name of house of worship)** to deal with all allegations of improper conduct involving children and youth with respect and dignity for all parties involved. **(Name of house of worship)** will remain unbiased and supportive to all parties involved, recognizing that incidents of abuse allegations are devastating to both the accuser and the accused. Therefore, the above policies and incident reporting will be carried out tactfully, discreetly, and without bias on the part of the reporting agent.

Upon learning of the allegation of sexual abuse by any employee or volunteer of the house of worship, the Committee shall take steps to see that the person making the allegation is provided with information concerning:

1. The process of inquiry the Committee will follow; and
2. The availability/identity of counselors experienced in working with victims of abuse.

All reasonable attempts will be made to keep reports of allegations of misconduct confidential. Reporting agents will be instructed to maintain the confidentiality of all parties, to the extent allowed by law, with the following required reporting exceptions:

1. Parents/guardians
2. Legal and social welfare authorities
3. House of worship insurance and legal counsel

VI. Procedures for dealing with a Registered Sex Offender:

Each case will be evaluated on the basis of relevant facts, and a specific course of action will be determined. Any person having been placed on a sex offender registry as the result of a sexual misconduct or molestation offense will be allowed to attend church services under the following conditions:

1. The conditions of their parole allow them to do so;
2. They agree to periodic meetings with the (Senior Religious Leader) or his/her designee for the purpose of imposing conditions and reviewing compliance with such;
3. They agree to be accompanied by an assigned (HOW) member whenever on (HOW) property;
4. They are not allowed to use the (HOW) restrooms, unless accompanied by an Usher or their assigned member;
5. They are not allowed off-premises social interaction with any (HOW) children or youth;
6. They are not allowed to ask for, or have (HOW) keys in their possession;
7. It is understood they will never be hired as a (HOW) employee or work with the (HOW's) children or youth in any way;
8. The registered sex offender is to be presented with a written copy of their restrictions and by their affixed signature, must agree to abide by these conditions. It is also understood that if they violate any of these conditions, their attendance privileges may be revoked.

Appendix B

(Name of House of Worship)

ACCEPTANCE OF POLICY

By signing this document, I am stating that I have read and understand the Child/Youth Protection Policy of the **(Name of house of worship)**.

I further agree that I accept it and will abide by it. If incidence of child abuse or criminal activity is proved, I understand my role as volunteer and/or paid staff member will be terminated.

Signature of Staff or Volunteer

Signature of Witness

Printed Name of Staff or Volunteer

Printed Name of Witness

Date

Date

Appendix C

INCIDENT REPORT

Date of report: _____

Name of person(s) issuing this report: _____

Alleged perpetrator(s): _____

Witness(es): _____

Date, time, and location of incident: _____

Written description of incident: _____

- I am a mandatory reporter.
- I choose to remain anonymous regarding this incident.
- I have reported or intend to report this incident to criminal authorities.

THE ABOVE INFORMATION IS FREELY PROVIDED AND IS TRUE TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE.

Signature of person generating this report

Signature of person issuing this report to the receiving person (may be same as above)

Signature of person receiving this report

For more information, contact:

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