

COURSE # 6 PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM ABUSE

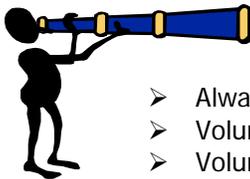
Establishing a Safe and Caring Ministry for Children (Presenter's Notes)



Adventist Risk Management, Inc.

The risk management service of the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide

Safeguarding Children's Ministries Volunteer Management - Best Practices



Focus On Mission

- Always keep your MISSION the primary focus
- Volunteer orientation is Mission driven
- Volunteer practices and policies are Mission focused
- Volunteer dismissal is in support of your Mission

Opportunity for Best Practices in Children's Ministries

“The local church should take reasonable steps to safeguard children engaged in church-sponsored activities by choosing individuals with high spiritual and moral backgrounds as leaders and participants in programs for children.”

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Churches Are Vulnerable

- Community of Trust
- Ignorance of Facts concerning Child Abuse
- Lack of Safeguards to protect children
- Numerous Opportunities to work with children
- Easy Access to children without screening requirements
- Constant Need for Volunteers to work in Children and Youth ministries



Organizational Responsibilities

- Duty to Protect all Children from Harm
- Safe Participation in Church or School Activities
- That all Activities are properly supervised by trained employees or volunteers
- Proper Maintenance of Facilities to limit opportunities for Harm
- Duty to Exercise Reasonable Care in Staffing that will include:

- Careful Selection of Employees and Volunteers
- Appropriate Training of staff members and volunteers
- Proper Supervision of staff members and volunteers
- Appropriate Action when it is necessary to remove staff members
- Duty to Report all incidents of suspected child abuse in accordance with the law

Responsibility to Children & Adults

- Children will be supervised by adult(s) at all times
- Children's programming will be conducted on an abuse free no-harassment tolerated basis at all times
- Adults with known prior acts of child abuse or other inappropriate conduct will not be allowed to participate in church-sponsored children's ministry programs
- Appropriate steps will be taken to avoid the suspicion of adults involved in supervision through the use of the following protective measures:
 - The Six month rule will be used to get acquainted with new volunteers
 - Two Adult rule will be practiced at all church sponsored activities
 - Require all adult volunteers to participate in an annual child abuse awareness program
 - All allegations of inappropriate conduct will be promptly investigated by the church and appropriate corrective measures taken
- If allegations are made against an adult for inappropriate conduct with a child we will respect the individuals rights and treat all matters involving the situation on a confidential basis
- We have a duty to conduct all activities in harmony with the counsel of Matthew 7:12



Six Month Rule & Volunteer Selection

- Adopt the practice that no adult will be considered for a volunteer leadership role in a church sponsored children's ministry program until they have been a member of the congregation for a minimum of six (6) months
- Require all adult volunteers to complete a Volunteer Service Information Form in order to be considered as a candidate for volunteer service at your church
- Appoint a small committee (3-5 members) Volunteer Service Review Committee to conduct the evaluation of all volunteer applicants for children's ministry programs.
- Determine the appropriate level of volunteer screening required for all volunteer positions involving children's ministry programs
- Conduct a basic level of screening for all adult volunteers that would include the following elements:
 - Personal interview of the volunteer applicant by the leader of the children's ministry department i.e. Sabbath School department leader, Pathfinder Director, Adventurer's Director etc...
 - Completion of the required Volunteer Service Information Form in full and signed by the adult volunteer
 - Personal reference checks by the Volunteer Service Review Committee

- If additional level of screening is warranted for the volunteer position it should be completed before the adult is allowed to work in the program
- The Volunteer Service Review Committee will notify the appropriate leader and the adult volunteer when their application for volunteer service has been approved
- All information received and the Volunteer Service Information Form will be maintained by the local church on a confidential basis and kept in a locked file



Levels of Screening for Volunteer Service

Basic – All Volunteers

- Personal interview of volunteer applicant
- Completion of Volunteer Service Information Form w/signature
- Personal reference checks by screening committee

Intermediate – Volunteers with high level of interaction with children including the involvement of off-site activities

- All of the element of Basic screening plus
- Home visit and Observation
- State Criminal History check and State Sex Offender Registry check – this may require finger printing and the written permission of the applicant to obtain access to this information from law enforcement agencies

Comprehensive – Volunteers with direct one-on-one personal interaction with children i.e. Big brothers, In-home or over night care etc...

- All of the elements of Basic & Intermediate screening plus
- FBI Criminal History check
- National Child Abuse Registry check
- Psychological Evaluation

Effective screening of volunteers requires considering the mission of the organization and the activities of volunteers necessary to accomplish that mission. Designers of effective screening must also consider the willingness of volunteers to give up some of their privacy for a greater good. Screening must be thorough enough to impact child abuse, but should not intrude on the privacy of volunteers more than required for the safety of the children with whom they work. Every youth-serving organization should understand that even well screened volunteers may still pose a threat to the children with whom they work.

Source: The National Assembly of National Volunteer Health & Social Welfare Organizations – National Collaboration for Youth – Screening Guide for Volunteers

Resource Tools for Volunteer Service

- Volunteer Service Information for Children’s Ministry (Church Model)

- Child Protection Policy & Procedures Guidelines (Church Model)
- Children's Ministries Staff Volunteer Service Information Form – North American Division – Children's Ministries Department

A Caring Ministry ~ Minimizing Resistance to Achieve Cooperation

- Always keep your FOCUS on your Mission
- Invite adults to apply for the privilege of volunteering in your children's ministry program and conduct an orientation program to acquaint interested individuals in your ministry
- Jesus placed a very high value on the protection of children (Matthew 18:1-6), therefore child protection is an essential element in all children's ministries and adults will be expected to conduct themselves at all time in accordance with Biblical principles in their dealings with children at your church
- Set the example by having all children's ministries leaders participating in the screening program even if they have been a volunteer for many years at your church
- Resist becoming involved in a prolonged discussion of why screening of volunteers is a mandatory requirement at your church. Handle these types of questions in a private meeting with the individual who is raising the objection to the screening process
- Carefully review all Volunteer Service Information Forms to be sure that they are completely filled out including the signature of the applicant
- Personally invite a volunteer applicant to complete any missing information and resubmit their form for consideration. Any objections to specific questions on the form should be addressed and the applicant encouraged to participate in the screening process in order to maintain the integrity of your program. Keep the FOCUS on your mission.
- Don't short cut the screening process. All volunteers need to complete a minimum basic level of screening
- If the applicant continues to refuse to cooperate with your established screening process they should not be allowed to serve in a volunteer position involving children.

Key Elements for Volunteer Training



- Education on the Mission of your Children's Ministry program
- Understanding of the expectations, code of conduct and rules that will be followed in your program in relating to and interacting with children
- Awareness education on child abuse (physical and sexual) and what steps your church has taken to prevent the occurrence of child abuse incidents in your program
- Good Touch – Bad Touch education and training on how to affirm children in an appropriate manner
- Education on how to determine the appropriate level of supervision to conduct your program in a safe manner at all times
- Make it clear that failure to comply with the established code of conduct and rules may result in the volunteer being asked to no longer participate in your program
- Use professional members (teachers, physicians, attorneys, social workers etc...) of your church family and invite them to help you conduct the training of volunteers in order to bring credibility and support for your child protection efforts

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