

CHILD PROTECTION PLAN

Church Manual Statements

Children's Ministries

Children's ministries develops the faith of children from birth through age 14, leading them into union with the Church. It seeks to provide multiple ministries that will lead children to Jesus and disciple them in their daily walk with Him. It cooperates with the Sabbath school and other departments to provide religious education to children and fulfills its mission by developing a variety of grace-oriented ministries for children that are inclusive, service-oriented, leadership-building, safe, and evangelistic.

"Too much importance cannot be placed on the early training of children. The lessons that the child learns during the first seven years of life have more to do with forming his character than all that it learns in future years."

- Child Guidance - pg 193.

"It is still true that children are the most susceptible to the teachings of the gospel; their hearts are open to divine influences, and strong to retain the lessons received. The little children may be Christians, having an experience in accordance with their years. They need to be educated in spiritual things, and parents should give them every advantage, that they may form characters after the similitude of the character of Christ."

- Desire of Ages - pg 515.

"Children of eight, ten, or twelve years are old enough to be addressed on the subject of personal religion If properly instructed, very young children may have correct views of their state as sinners and of the way of salvation through Christ."

- Testimonies Volume 1 - pg 400.

"When Jesus told the disciples not to forbid the children to come to Him, He was speaking to His followers in all ages - to officers of the church, to ministers, helpers, and all Christians. Jesus is drawing the children, and He bids us, Suffer them to come; as if He would say, They will come if you do not hinder them."

- Desire of Ages - pg 517.

Children's Ministries Coordinator and Committee - The church elects a children's ministries coordinator to develop ministries that nurture the faith of children. The coordinator should have leadership ability as well as experience and passion for working with children. The children's ministries coordinator works with the pastor and board to establish a children's ministries committee to provide ministries for children. The committee should consist of individuals with interest and experience in working with children. Ordinarily the members include Sabbath school division leaders, Vacation Bible School leader, Adventist Junior Youth leaders, and two to three others who have a passion for ministry to children. If the church has a children's ministries department, Vacation Bible Schools, children's branch Sabbath schools, Neighborhood Bible Clubs, and Story Hours, they will come under the direction of children's ministries.

Everyone involved in work with children must meet Church and legal standards and requirements, such as background checks or certification. Local church leaders should consult with the conference, which will ascertain and advise as to what background checks and certifications are available and/or required. (See Notes, #7, pp. 167, 168.)

- (2010 Church Manual pgs. 84 - 85)

Safeguarding Children - Church should be a safe place to bring our children. Everyone involved with children who are minors must meet all Church and legal standards and requirements. In order to safeguard our children, churches are encouraged to adopt policies that would provide a measure of safety and protection for children. Such policies should include the following:

- a. Two-Adult Policy - Have two adults present in children's classrooms or activities.
- b. Open Door - Discourage private or one-on-one contact and encourage an open-door policy in all situations. Where an open door is not possible, station a second adult at the door.
- c. Volunteer Screening - Have all volunteers complete a volunteer information form, check their references, and, if required by law, do a police background check.
- d. Six-Month Policy - Require a waiting period of six months for newly baptized or transferring members who have indicated a willingness to work with children.
- e. Training - Provide regular training for teachers and volunteers to help them understand and protect children and how to nurture their faith. Local church leaders should consult with the conference in order to ascertain conference procedures and requirements, including local legal requirements for individuals working with children.

Source: 2010 Church Manual pgs. 167 - 168

Additional resources are available from Adventist Risk Management at www.adventistrisk.org.