

CHILD PROTECTION PLAN

Seventh-day Adventist Church



1. Statement of Purpose

- 1.1. The _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church affirms its acceptance of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Statement on the Nurture and Protection of Children
- 1.2. Statement on the Nurture and Protection of Children¹

Seventh-day Adventists place a high value on children. In the light of the Bible they are seen as precious gifts from God entrusted to the care of parents, family, community of faith and society-at-large. Children possess enormous potential for making positive contributions to the Church and to society. Attention to their care, protection and development is extremely important.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church reaffirms and extends its longstanding efforts to nurture and safeguard children and youth from persons - known and unknown - whose actions perpetrate any form of abuse and violence against them and/or sexually exploit them. Jesus modeled the kind of respect, nurture, and protection children should be able to expect from adults entrusted with their care. Some of His strongest words of reproof were directed toward those who would harm them. Because of the trusting nature and dependence of children upon older and wiser adults and the life-changing consequences when this trust is breached, children require vigilant protection.

Redemptive Correction

The Seventh-day Adventist Church places a priority on church-based parent education that helps parents develop the skills necessary for a redemptive approach to correction. Many children experience harsh punishment in the name of a biblical approach to discipline. Correction characterized by severe, punitive, dictatorial control often leads to resentment and rebellion. Such harsh discipline is also associated with heightened risk for physical and psychological harm to children as well as increased likelihood the youth will resort to coercion and violence in resolving their differences with others. By contrast, examples from Scripture as well as a large body of research confirm the effectiveness of more gentle forms of discipline that allow children to learn through reasoning and experiencing the consequences of their choices. Such milder measures have been demonstrated to increase the likelihood children will make life-affirming choices and espouse parental values as they mature.

¹Approved and voted by the Executive Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) and released by the Office of the President, Ted N. C. Wilson, on June 23, 2010, and released at the General Conference Session in Atlanta, Georgia, June 24-July 3, 2010.

Making Church a Safe Place for Children

The Church also takes seriously its responsibility to minimize the risk for child sexual abuse and violence against children in the congregational setting. First and foremost, church leaders and members must themselves live by a strict code of ethics that precludes even the appearance of evil as regards the exploitation of minors for the gratification of adult desires. Other practical measures toward making church a safe place for children include attention to the safety of the church facility and its surroundings and the careful supervision and monitoring of children and their environment during all church-related activities. Education regarding what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate interaction between adults and children, the warning signs of abuse and violence, and the specific steps to be followed should inappropriate behavior be reported or suspected are vitally important. Pastors and church leaders who are visible and approachable play an important role in prevention as well as in responding well to the needs of children whose safety may have been jeopardized. Regular updates are needed regarding their moral and legal responsibility to report child abuse to appropriate civil authorities. The designation of trained personnel and specific protocols at wider levels of Church organization will help to ensure appropriate action and follow-through when abuse is reported within the church setting.

Because of the complex nature of the problem of child sexual abuse and violence against children, intervention and treatment of perpetrators requires resources beyond the scope of ministry provided by the local church. However, the presence of a known perpetrator in a congregation calls for the highest levels of vigilance. While perpetrators should be held fully responsible for their own behavior, the supervision of persons with a history of inappropriate behavior is necessary to ensure that such persons maintain appropriate distance and refrain from all contact with children during church-related activities. Provision for alternative opportunities for perpetrators to grow spiritually in settings where children are not present greatly enhances child protection.

Fostering Emotional and Spiritual Healing

Children who have been personally victimized or who have witnessed disturbing events need the care of adults who treat them with sensitivity and understanding. Practical support that helps children and families maintain stability in the midst of turmoil empowers victims and their families and promotes healing. The Church's commitment to breaking the silence frequently associated with child sexual abuse and violence, its efforts toward advocacy and justice for all victims, and deliberate action to safeguard children from all forms of abuse and violence will contribute much toward the emotional and spiritual recovery of all concerned. The Church regards the nurture and protection of children as a sacred trust.

(This statement has been informed by the principles expressed in the following biblical passages: Lev. 18:6; 2 Sam. 13:1-11; 1 Kings 17:17-23; Ps. 9: 9, 12, 16-18; 11:5-7; 22:24; 34:18; 127:3-5; 128:3-4; Prov. 31:8-9; Is. 1:16-17; Jer. 22:3; Matt. 18:1-6; 21:9, 15-16; Mark 9:37; 10:13-16; Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21; 1Tim. 5:8; Heb. 13:3.)

- 1.3. In recognition of its desire to nurture and protect children, the _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church adopts this Child Protection Plan, which incorporates and expands, as appropriate, the Child Protection and Volunteer Screening policies (FB 20) as voted by the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists²

2. Objectives

- 2.1. The _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church desires to make its worship and educational environments free from abuse of all kinds
- 2.2. The _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church is committed to providing a safe environment to help children learn to love and follow Jesus Christ
- 2.3. The _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church acknowledges its responsibility, in concert with the _____ Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, to select, screen, train and manage trustworthy individuals to fill volunteer positions in ministry for children and youth activities³
- 2.3.1. The _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church understands that the work of volunteers is essential to the successful accomplishment of its mission and ministry
- 2.3.2. In selecting individuals for volunteer positions, only persons who support the mission of the _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church shall be recruited
- 2.3.3. The management policies and procedures employed to supervise the work of volunteers must be consistent with the mission of the church or school and must support its successful achievement
- 2.3.4. Individuals who are unwilling to support the volunteer background screening and training policies shall not be allowed to serve
- 2.4. The _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church endeavors, through the implementation of this Child Protection Plan, to ensure that the programs it sponsors are safe and provide a joyful experience for children and youth
- 2.5. To achieve these objectives in its ministry programs, the _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church implements this Child Protection Plan

3. Organizational Responsibilities

- 3.1. The _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church undertakes to protect children entrusted to its care from harm caused by abuse

² NAD Working Policy - FB 20 as voted in November 2011.

³ "Everyone involved in work with children must meet Church and legal standards and requirements, such as background checks or certification." (Church Manual, 18th Edition, 2010 – page 85.)

- 3.2. Appropriate levels of adult supervision shall be provided at all times
- 3.3. The _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church will exercise reasonable care in the selection and supervision of volunteers, including:
 - 3.3.1. Selecting and recruiting appropriate individuals needed to supervise a specific ministry or activity
 - 3.3.2. Training and orientating volunteers in order to provide proper supervision of the ministry or activity
 - 3.3.3. Providing each volunteer with a written copy of the policies and/or expected code of conduct required by the _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church
 - 3.3.4. Providing proper oversight and management of volunteers
 - 3.3.5. Taking appropriate corrective action to either discipline, counsel, or remove volunteer when necessary
 - 3.3.6. Reporting all incidents of suspected child abuse to proper authorities in accordance with the child protection laws as required by the jurisdiction where the church is located
 - 3.3.6.1. Mandated reporters will report physical injury, child sexual abuse, willful cruelty or unjustified punishment, unlawful corporal punishment or injury, or neglect
 - 3.3.6.2. Where practicable, a member of the _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church pastoral staff will be involved in the reporting process

4. Volunteer Selection and Management

- 4.1. It is the responsibility of the _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church to select individuals who will serve in volunteer positions
- 4.2. No adult will be considered for a volunteer leadership role in a church-sponsored ministry or activity until the volunteer has been known to the members of the _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church for a minimum of six (6) months
- 4.3. All volunteers shall provide the _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church three (3) personal references and submit to a screening procedure that will include a signed Volunteer Ministry Information Form⁴
- 4.4. Individuals who submit incomplete Volunteer Ministry Information Forms will not be considered for a volunteer position

⁴ Appendix A, hereto.

- 4.5. All volunteers shall be appropriately trained and background screened using Shield the Vulnerable before they are allowed to supervise children
- 4.6. The _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church Volunteer Service Committee is responsible for volunteer selection and management and will appoint a local administrator for the Shield the Vulnerable program
- 4.7. The Volunteer Service Committee will notify the appropriate ministry leader and the volunteer when the screening process is complete
- 4.8. All volunteer leaders, regardless of previous experience, shall submit to the screening procedure required by the church
- 4.9. The Volunteer Service Committee shall periodically review the performance of all volunteers (volunteer background screening and training will be updated every three (3) years)

5. Protecting Confidentiality

- 5.1. It is the duty and responsibility of all individuals involved in the screening, interviewing, and selection process of volunteers to conduct themselves with utmost integrity and confidentiality
- 5.2. The information received concerning individuals who volunteer their services to the church will be maintained at all times on a confidential basis by the church
- 5.3. All information received during the volunteer screening process, will be maintained by the church on a confidential basis and maintained on the Shield the Vulnerable password-protected secure electronic database
- 5.4. Cost of Screening - The _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church is responsible for the cost of implementing these background screening and training procedures in accordance with the policies of the _____ Conference of Seventh-day Adventist
- 5.5. All allegations of inappropriate conduct involving a child with a volunteer will be promptly referred to the appropriate investigative agency by the leadership of the church⁵
- 5.6. The church will respect the rights of all parties involved in any alleged incident and treat all matters concerning the situation discreetly, confidentially, and in accordance with local child abuse reporting laws

6. Orientation for Volunteers

⁵ The _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church does not undertake by this Child Protection Plan to investigate allegations of misconduct and hereby limits the responsibility of its personnel and volunteers to reporting reasonable suspicion of abuse to the appropriate governmental agency.

- 6.1. The _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church will conduct orientation meetings to train volunteers on its ministry expectations towards children and youth
- 6.2. Orientation will cover to following areas:
 - 6.2.1. The church's mission and the expectation the church has for its accomplishment in a safe and abuse-free manner
 - 6.2.2. The expectations, code of conduct, and rules to be followed by volunteers in relation to supervision and interaction with children
 - 6.2.3. Appropriate physical contact with children
 - 6.2.4. Appropriate supervision of children
 - 6.2.5. Openness and observation of activities
- 6.3. The _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church will provide orientation meetings at appropriate intervals during each calendar year

7. Volunteer Service Committee

- 7.1. In order to carry out the objectives of this Child Protection Plan, the _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church creates and empowers the Volunteer Service Committee
- 7.2. The Volunteer Service Committee is responsible for implementing the provisions of this Child Protection Plan to and administer the Shield the Vulnerable program for the church
- 7.3. Composition
 - 7.3.1. A pastor or member of the pastoral staff, chair, ex officio
 - 7.3.2. Church Safety Officer, ex officio
 - 7.3.3. Local Shield the Vulnerable program administrator
 - 7.3.4. Minimum of one additional church member
 - 7.3.5. Nominated to serve by the _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church Nominating Committee, with vacancies filled by the Church Board
- 7.4. Responsibilities

- 7.4.1. Ensure that the _____ Seventh-day Adventist Church Child Protection Plan is followed, including review of applications, communication with personal references and completion of the Shield the Vulnerable training and background screening
- 7.4.2. Coordinate training and orientation activities for volunteers
- 7.4.3. Recruit appropriate volunteers to assist in ministry programs in coordination with the Church Nominating Committee process
- 7.4.4. Report to the Pastor and/or pastoral staff on program compliance

8. Code of Conduct and Local Church Guidelines for Volunteers⁶

- 8.1. The Code of Conduct and Guidelines for Volunteers shall be electronically signed by all volunteers as part of the Shield the Vulnerable training
- 8.2. Shall be kept on file within the Shield the Vulnerable database for each volunteer
- 8.3. In addition to the Code of Conduct and Guidelines for Volunteers, all volunteers are expected to adhere to the following local church rules:
 - 8.3.1. General Conduct
 - 8.3.1.1. Physical punishment of children is not permissible under any circumstances
 - 8.3.1.2. Verbal abuse of children or telling jokes of a sexual nature in the presence of children is unacceptable.
 - 8.3.1.3. Being alone with a child or young person should be avoided
 - 8.3.1.3.1. If an emergency situation arises where it is necessary to be alone with a child, another responsible adult should be informed immediately, by telephone if necessary
 - 8.3.1.3.2. Once it is possible and safe, the child's parent or guardian must be informed of the one-on-one interaction and the reason for it
 - 8.3.1.4. Volunteers should not travel alone with a child or young person
 - 8.3.1.4.1. If only one adult is available, there should be a minimum of two children or young people present for the entire journey

⁶ Appendix B, hereto.

- 8.3.1.4.2. If an emergency situation arises where it is necessary to travel alone with a child, the child's parent or guardian should be informed as soon as possible and safe
- 8.3.1.5. Children and young people should not be permitted to remain on church property unless two adults are present
- 8.3.1.6. All children and young people must be treated with equal respect; favoritism is unacceptable
- 8.3.1.7. Volunteers should not engage in or tolerate any behavior - verbal, psychological or physical - that could be construed as bullying or abusive
- 8.3.1.8. A disproportionate amount of time should not be spent with any particular child or group of children
- 8.3.1.9. Under no circumstances may volunteers give alcohol, tobacco or drugs to children or young people
- 8.3.1.10. Alcohol, tobacco or drugs must not be used by any individual on church premises or during a sponsored activity
- 8.3.1.11. Only age-appropriate language, material on media products (such as camera phones, internet, video) and activities should be used when working with children and young people (sexually explicit or pornographic material is never acceptable)
- 8.3.2. Volunteers must not engage in inappropriate physical contact of any kind - including rough physical play, physical reprimand and horseplay (this should not prevent appropriate contact in situations where it is necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of a child)
- 8.3.3. Privacy
 - 8.3.3.1. Children's need for privacy should be respected at all times
 - 8.3.3.2. Particular care regarding privacy must be taken when young people are in locations such as changing areas, swimming pools, showers and restrooms
 - 8.3.3.3. Photographs of children or young people must never be taken while they are in changing areas (for example, in a locker room or bathing facility)
 - 8.3.3.4. Tasks of a personal nature (for example, helping with toileting, washing or changing clothing) should not be carried out for children or young people if they can undertake these tasks themselves
- 8.3.4. Trips

- 8.3.4.1. All trips, including day trips and overnight stays, need careful advance planning, including adequate provision for safety in regard to transport, facilities, activities and emergencies
 - 8.3.4.2. Adequate insurance through the _____ Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and with appropriate insurance companies should be in place prior to any trip
 - 8.3.4.3. All trips must be pre-approved by the Church Board
 - 8.3.4.4. Written consent by a parent or guardian specifically for each trip and related activities must be obtained well in advance
 - 8.3.4.5. A copy of the trip itinerary and contact telephone numbers for leaders should be made available to parents and guardians
 - 8.3.4.6. There must be adequate, gender-appropriate, supervision for boys and girls
 - 8.3.4.7. Arrangements and procedures must be put in place to ensure that rules are followed and appropriate boundaries are maintained
 - 8.3.4.8. The provision of appropriate and adequate sleeping arrangements should be ensured in advance of the trip
 - 8.3.4.9. Sleeping areas for boys and girls should be separate and supervised by two adults of the same gender as the group being supervised
 - 8.3.4.10. If, in an emergency situation, an adult considers it necessary to be in a child's sleeping areas without another adult being present he or she should immediately inform another adult in a position of responsibility
- 8.3.5. Failure to adhere to these rules will be cause to immediately remove an individual from volunteer service

Approved by

Date

Pastor/Family Ministries: _____

Church Board: _____

Effective: _____

