

## 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](http://www.adventistrisk.org).

## **FB 20 Child Protection and Volunteer Screening Policies for Children and Youth Ministries**

### **1. Objectives**

- a. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a moral and civil duty to protect the children and youth entrusted to its care. The local community also has an expectation that the church will provide a safe haven for children who participate in its ministries.
- b. The church is committed to providing safe worship and educational environments to help children and youth learn to love and follow Jesus Christ.

“Church should be a safe place to bring our children. Everyone involved in work with children who are minors must meet all Church and legal standards and requirements.”

(Church Manual, Edition 18, pages 168-169.)

- c. Jesus placed a high value on the protection of children (Matthew 18:1-6); therefore, child protection is an essential element in all church-sponsored children’s activities.

### **2. Volunteer Selection and Management -The work of volunteers is essential to the successful accomplishment of the Church’s mission and ministry. 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.**

#### **a. Selection and Screening of Volunteers**

- i. It is the responsibility of the local church and/or school to select, screen and manage trustworthy individuals to fill volunteer positions in ministry for children and youth activities.
- ii. In selecting individuals for volunteer positions, only persons who support the mission of the organization should be recruited.
- iii. The church shall adopt a practice that no adult will be considered for a volunteer leadership role in a church-sponsored ministry or activity until he/she has held membership in the congregation or has been known by the organization for a minimum of six (6) months.
- iv. All volunteers are required to participate in a screening procedure that will include a signed Volunteer Ministry Information Form, names of three (3) personal references and a criminal background check wherever possible.

Individuals who submit incomplete forms will not be considered for a volunteer position.

- v. Background screening should be completed before the volunteer is allowed to serve.
  - vi. All volunteer leaders, regardless of their previous experience, shall submit to the screening procedure provided by the church. The volunteer screening procedure should be updated for each individual every three (3) years.
  - vii. The local church or school is responsible for the cost of implementing these screening procedures. The local conference may provide financial assistance at their discretion.
  - viii. It is the duty and responsibility of the church to maintain all volunteer information on a confidential basis at all times.
- b. Supervision of Volunteers
- i. Failure to comply with the established volunteer guidelines and code of conduct will result in the volunteer being asked to terminate participation in the ministry.
  - ii. All allegations of inappropriate conduct involving a minor will be promptly investigated by the leadership of the church. The church will respect the rights of all parties involved in the alleged incident and treat all matters concerning the situation discreetly, confidentially, and in accordance with local child abuse reporting laws.
  - iii. Appropriate corrective action - discipline, counsel, or removal from ministry - will be taken when necessary.

c. Orientation and Training of Volunteers

- i. Provide all volunteers with an understanding of the ministry's mission and the expectation the church has for its accomplishment in a safe and abuse-free manner.
- ii. Explain and provide in writing the expectations, code of conduct, and rules to be followed by volunteers in relation to supervision and interaction with children and youth. Reaffirm that alleged incidents of child abuse will be investigated and reported to authorities in accordance with local law.
- iii. All volunteers will be required to participate in educational courses on child abuse (physical and sexual) and the necessary steps to be taken to prevent the occurrence of child abuse incidents.
- iv. Training should include instructions on appropriate methods of physical contact to affirm children.

**3. Ministry to Sex Offenders within the Church - The Church has a responsibility to provide worship opportunities and ministry to individuals who have previously engaged in**

inappropriate sexual conduct or physical abuse involving children or youth. When an offender wishes to be actively involved with the Church the following practices will be followed:

- a. The individual agrees to attend adult Sabbath School, worship services, and other church related activities on a chaperoned basis and will not interact on a personal basis with any child under the age of eighteen (18).
- b. The individual will not be allowed alone in any building on church premises where activities involving children under the age of eighteen (18) are being conducted.
- c. If a child in the congregation approaches the individual on church premises or in public during a church sponsored activity the person will politely and immediately excuse themselves from the situation.
- d. The local church pastor and elders will meet personally with the individual and enter into a five-year covenant agreement that outlines the expected conduct to be followed at all times while on church premises or while involved in a church sponsored activity.

## CHILD PROTECTION PLAN RESOURCES

Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America



### NAD - YOUTH/CHILDREN'S MINISTRY VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT

#### Acknowledgment

Because I want the best possible environment for our children and youth to grow up in, it is important that those working with children have guidelines for conduct in order to protect both themselves and those under their care. As a ministry volunteer, I want parents and others to feel comfortable and confident with me.

#### My Commitment to Volunteer Ministry

As a Youth/Children's Ministry Volunteer, I will:

1. Provide appropriate adult supervision at all times for the children for whom I am responsible.
2. Have at least one other adult, eighteen (18) years of age or older, to help with the supervision of children. If I find myself in a situation where I am the only adult present, under no circumstances will I allow myself to be alone with one child (the "two-person rule"). This protects the child as well as protecting the adult from possible allegations.
3. Ask a child's permission before physically touching him/her anywhere, even when responding to an injury or problem. This is especially true for any areas that would normally be covered by a T-shirt and/or shorts. If an injury is within this area, make sure another adult works with you as care is provided.
4. Refrain from physical and verbal attacks and corporal punishment which are inappropriate behaviors and should never be used as discipline. "Time outs" or "sit-in-that-chair" may be helpful discipline methods to use with children.
5. Affirm children with appropriate touching by keeping hugs brief and "shoulder-to-shoulder" or "side-to-side." I will keep hands at (not below) the shoulder level. For small children who like to sit on laps, I will encourage them to sit next to me.
6. Provide extra care when taking small children to the restroom. I will take another adult along, or leave the door open.
7. Be aware of conducting activities in rooms that do not have an interior viewing area, or I will leave the door open during the activity to allow easy observation by others.
8. Cooperate with the volunteer screening process and complete the Volunteer Ministry Information form, as required by the church.
9. Be aware of the signs and symptoms of child abuse and aware of the legal requirements for reporting suspected cases of abuse. In addition to any legally required reporting, I agree that if I become aware of any behavior by

another individual which seems abusive or inappropriate towards children I am supervising, I will report that behavior to the church pastor, elder, or directly to the Conference Treasurer's or Risk Management Director.

10. Cooperate with church leadership in conducting children and youth ministries by being a volunteer who is loving, kind, firm, and always a thoroughly professional person. Working with children and youth is not only a privilege; it is also a serious responsibility that must be approached with utmost care.
11. Participate in orientation and training programs conducted by the church.
12. Uphold the standards of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

\* In the event I find it impossible to comply with the above, I will comply as closely as possible with the Code of Conduct and act in good faith for the welfare of the people involved.

**Thank You for your service as a Youth/Children's Ministry Volunteer**  
**Please retain a copy of this document and keep it for reference.**

# MINISTRY VOLUNTEER

## Interview Notes Form



### Interview Details

Volunteer's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Personal Reference Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Reference's Phone Number: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer Position Applied For: \_\_\_\_\_

Required Skills: \_\_\_\_\_

### Questions to Ask Reference

Question: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Question: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Question: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### Additional Notes



## ADVENTIST RISK MANAGEMENT

Executive  
Administration

## MEMORANDUM

FROM:

Arthur F. Blinci

Vice President,  
Chief Risk Management Officer

December 22, 2011

TO: Conference Presidents & Treasurers  
North American Division – Seventh-day Adventists

RE: **Shield the Vulnerable Program Information**

Thank you for your support for the new NAD Child Protection policy and the Shield the Vulnerable screening and training data base. ARM believes that this initiative to become proactive in protecting our Adventist children and youth ministries programs will have a very positive impact for good in our community.

Listed below are the key provisions and costs of the Shield the Vulnerable program that you will need to plan on for 2012:

Targeted Launch Date: 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2012

STV Program Set-up Plan: ARM is working with STV to establish the basic NAD-wide data base of denominational entities on a Conference by Conference basis. The STV data base will include the name of each location and be set-up for both employees and volunteer positions.

The cost for the NAD wide implementation is being covered by ARM and the Union Conferences.

STV Program Local Set-up: ARM and STV will be working directly with each Conference to verify the accuracy of the initial set-up of their local information. Each Conference will need to appoint an STV program administrator and a local administrator at every church and school. Once these individuals have been appointed, STV will conduct training on how the STV plan works, registration procedures, report writing etc.

### Adult Screening & Training Costs

Basic Background Screen	\$7.20
Adult Online Training Class	<u>4.50</u>

Adult Screening & Training	\$ 11.70
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Re-Screening & Training will be done on an every three year basis.

#### STV Program – Optional Training or Service Costs:

- |                                      |                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ▪ Training Classes for Students      | \$3.25 per seat cost for 12 months                               |
| ▪ Driver Record MVR Search           | \$2.50 per individual + State specific fees                      |
| ▪ Additional Court Record Search     | \$8.50 per search + Court related fees                           |
| ▪ Set-up Costs for Fingerprinting    | \$1.50 per individual (Does not include the fingerprinting fees) |
| ▪ Legacy Data Up-load of Information | \$0.50 per individual to enter names into the STV Database       |

STV will work directly with each Conference in arranging the set-up and cost for any of these additional services.

#### Advantages of the STV Screening & Training Plan:

- All services are provided online directly to the individual via the internet using a secure server registration process which is available on a 24/7 basis.
- The Conference does not have the responsibility for the confidential/protection of privacy risk.
- Provides a web-based platform for classroom training of adults and children and the ability to track compliance.
- All adult courses are specifically designed for the Adventist Church and will be based on the individual's status as an employee or volunteer, the type of position they hold and will be either State or country specific reporting laws based on the location where either the church or school is located.
- The STV Database will provide information portability by allowing access to the eligibility for service across the NAD.
- Compliance reports can be generated at all denominational levels to monitor compliance across the NAD.
- The STV program will provide the North American Division with a powerful screening and training platform on a very economical cost basis.

#### Local Conference Control in Determining Eligibility for Service:

All criminal background report information is released only to the local conference STV program administrator. It is the responsibility of the local conference administration to establish the criteria for allowable eligibility and to enter the decision on each individual's status into the STV database. STV personnel will work with the local conference to answer questions on criminal record reports and will provide the required legal notices to individuals who are determined to be ineligible for service.

The local church or school will only have access to the following information on any given individual:

- Application Pending – Either the individual has not yet completed the required training course or the background screening has not yet been completed.
- Eligible – The individual has completed both the training and screening and they are Eligible for service.
- Advisory – There is either outstanding information or issues on the individual. The local church or school STV program administrator will need to contact the Conference office and review the name to learn the nature of the situation.
- Ineligible – The individual has completed both the training and screening and it has been determined that they are Not Eligible for service in working with children or youth programs at the local church or school.

This is only a brief introductory overview of the Shield the Vulnerable/NAD Child Protection plan that will be launched during the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter of 2012. Your ARM Field Services representative and our STV account manager will be contacting each organization in the upcoming weeks, to answer your specific questions and work on an individual Conference-by-Conference plan to set-up this new program. In the meantime, if you have questions – email: [Ablinci@adventistrisk.org](mailto:Ablinci@adventistrisk.org)