

1 Volunteer Management & Screening Guidelines
2 For Children and Youth Ministries of the
3 Seventh-day Adventist Church – North American Division
4

5 *RECOMMENDED: To revise Section 578-03N under NAD Guidelines, Local*
6 *Church and School Volunteer Management & Screening Guidelines, to read as*
7 *follows:*
8

9 **1. Objectives:**

10 a. The Seventh-day Adventist Church desires to make its worship and
11 educational environments free from abuse of all kinds. To achieve this goal in its
12 ministry and educational programs the following Guidelines have been developed
13 for implementation throughout the North American Division.
14

15 b. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is committed to providing a safe
16 environment to help children learn to love and follow Jesus Christ. At this time,
17 the disturbing and traumatic increase and recognition of physical and sexual
18 abuse of children has claimed the attention of our nation, our society and the
19 Church. Adventist churches and schools which conduct programs for children
20 and youth are not insulated from those individuals who abuse kids.
21

22 c. In keeping with the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual and in concert
23 with the local conference, it is the responsibility of the local church or school to
24 select, screen and manage trustworthy individuals to fill volunteer positions in
25 ministry for children and youth activities.
26

27 *“The local church should take reasonable steps to safeguard children engaged in*
28 *church-sponsored activities by choosing individuals with high spiritual and moral*
29 *backgrounds as leaders and participants in programs for children.”* SDA Church
30 Manual – Revision 2000 page 120
31

1 d. The work of volunteers is essential to the successful accomplishment of
2 the Church's mission and ministry. In selecting individuals for volunteer
3 positions, only persons who support the mission of the organization should be
4 recruited. The management policies and procedures employed to supervise the
5 work of volunteers must be consistent with your mission and must support its
6 successful achievement. Individuals who are unwilling to support the volunteer
7 management policies and practices should not be allowed to serve.

8
9 e. Therefore, the Seventh-day Adventist Church believes that it is important
10 to ensure that, to the best of their ability, the local conference, church, school
11 [Hereafter: the Church] and programs they sponsor, are safe and provide a
12 joyful experience for children and youth.

13
14 **2. Organizational Responsibilities:**

15
16 a. The Church has both a moral and civil duty to protect the children
17 entrusted to our care from harm caused by abuse. The local community has an
18 expectation that the Church will provide a safe haven for children who participate
19 in the ministries of the Church.

20
21 b. It is recommended that appropriate levels of adult supervision shall be
22 provided at all times.

23
24 c. The Church will exercise reasonable care in the selection and supervision
25 of volunteers that will include:

26 1.) Careful selection of individuals needed to supervise a specific
27 ministry or activity.

28 2.) Appropriate training and orientation of individuals in order to
29 provide proper supervision of the ministry or activity.

1 3.) Each volunteer will receive a written copy of the policies and/or
2 expected code of conduct required by the Church.

3 4.) The Church will be expected to provide proper oversight and
4 management of volunteers.

5 5.) The Church shall take appropriate corrective action to either
6 discipline, counsel, or remove volunteer(s) when necessary.

7 6.) The Church has a duty to report all incidents of suspected child
8 abuse in accordance with the law.

9

10 **3. Volunteer Selection & Management**

11

12 a. It is the responsibility of the Church to select individuals who will serve in
13 volunteer positions.

14

15 b. All volunteers should be appropriately screened before they are allowed to
16 supervise children.

17

18 c. The Church should adopt a practice that no adult will be considered for a
19 volunteer leadership role in a Church sponsored ministry or activity until they
20 have held membership in the congregation or been known by the organization
21 for a minimum of six (6) months.

22

23 d. All volunteers should be invited to participate in a volunteer service
24 orientation program conducted by the Church and submit to a screening
25 procedure that will include the completion of a signed Volunteer Ministry
26 Information Form. Individuals who submit incomplete forms will not be
27 considered for a volunteer position.

28

1 e. The Church should establish a Volunteer Service Committee of 3-5
2 members. This committee will review Volunteer Ministry Information Forms
3 submitted and approve individuals to serve in a volunteer capacity.

4

5 f. All volunteer positions should be evaluated to determine the appropriate
6 level of screening based on the potential level of interaction with children; i.e.
7 one-on-one activity, off-site programs and over-night activities in which the
8 volunteer may be involved.

9

10 g. The appropriate level of screening should be completed before the
11 volunteer is allowed to serve. In some cases the local conference may provide
12 assistance in the volunteer screening process.

13

14 h. The Volunteer Service Committee will notify the appropriate ministry
15 leader and the volunteer when the screening process is complete.

16

17 i. All volunteer leaders regardless of their previous experience shall
18 participate in the screening program.

19

20 j. The Volunteer Service Committee shall periodically review the
21 performance of all volunteers. Volunteer information on file at the Church should
22 be updated every three (3) years.

23

24

25 **4. Protecting Confidentiality of Information & Records**

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27 a. It is the duty and responsibility of all individuals involved in the screening,
28 interviewing and selection process of volunteers to conduct themselves with
29 utmost integrity and confidentiality. The information received concerning

1 individuals who volunteer their services to Church will be maintained at all times
2 on a confidential basis by the organization. Information contained on the
3 Volunteer Ministry Information Form will only be released to other church
4 organizations upon the request and written authorization of the applicant.

5
6 b. All information received during the volunteer screening process, including
7 the Volunteer Ministry Information Form, will be maintained by the Church on a
8 confidential basis and kept in a locked file.

9 c. All allegations of inappropriate conduct involving a child with a volunteer
10 will be promptly investigated by the leadership of the Church. The Church will
11 respect the rights of all parties involved in the alleged incident and treat all
12 matters concerning the situation discreetly, confidentially and in accordance with
13 local child abuse reporting laws.

14 15 **5. Levels of Screening for Volunteer Service:**

16 17 a. Basic Level – All Volunteers

18
19 1. Personal interview of the volunteer applicant by the leader of the
20 ministry.

21 2. Complete and sign the Volunteer Ministry Information Form.

22 3. Applicants shall provide three (3) personal references.

23 4. The Volunteer Service Committee shall review the Volunteer
24 Ministry Information form and contact and document the personal references
25 provided by the applicant.

26 Example: Children Sabbath School, School Room Mothers and other
27 volunteer positions conducted on site with numerous individuals present.

28 29 b. Comprehensive Level – Regular Interaction with Children & Off-site Trips

30 1. Complete all elements of the Basic Level screening.

1 2. State and/or FBI Criminal History & Sex Offender Registry Check –
2 Criminal background checks may be required of the applicant. This action
3 requires fingerprinting and additional written permission from the applicant to
4 obtain access to this information from law enforcement or other agencies.

5 Example: Regular one on one interaction with children or youth
6 including off-site or over-night trips. Youth, Pathfinder and Adventurers
7 leaders, Teacher aids, athletic coaches at churches or schools.

8

9 c. Cost of Screening Procedures

10 All volunteers must complete the Basic Level of screening. The Church is
11 responsible for the cost of implementing these screening procedures. The local
12 conference may provide assistance with or conduct the formal screening of
13 applicants at the Comprehensive Level.

14

15 d. Minimizing Resistance to Screening & Achieving Cooperation

16 1. The focus should always be on the mission.

17 2. Invite adults to apply for the privilege of volunteering in ministry
18 activities.

19 3. Conduct an orientation program for volunteers.

20 4. Jesus placed a high value on the protection of children (Matthew
21 18:1-6), therefore child protection is an essential element in all Church
22 sponsored children's activities. Volunteers will be expected to conduct
23 themselves at all times in accordance with Biblical principles.

24 5. Resist prolonged discussion of volunteer screening procedures.
25 Handle these questions in a private meeting with the individual raising the
26 objection.

27 6. Personally invite a volunteer applicant to complete any missing
28 information on the application form and resubmit for consideration.

29 Individuals will not be allowed to serve as a volunteer until the screening
30 process is complete.

1 **6. Screening for Volunteer Service:**

2
3 *“Effective screening of volunteers requires considering the mission of the organization*
4 *and the activities of volunteers necessary to accomplish that mission. Designers of*
5 *effective screening must also consider the willingness of volunteers to give up some of*
6 *their privacy for a greater good. Screening must be thorough enough to impact child*
7 *abuse, but should not intrude on the privacy of volunteers more than required for the*
8 *safety of the children with whom they work. Every youth-serving organization should*
9 *understand that even well screened volunteers may still pose a threat to the children with*
10 *whom they work.”* – The National Collaboration for Youth – Screening Volunteers to Prevent Child
11 Abuse: A Three Step Action Guide – Page 3.
12

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14 **7. Orientation for Volunteers:**

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16 Jesus loved to minister to children. Today, we have the privilege of volunteering
17 our time, talents and service in numerous ways to help fulfill the Gospel
18 Commission. As a volunteer you have the privilege of working with children, one
19 of God’s most precious gifts. Beyond protecting our children from abuse we also
20 desire to empower volunteers to help kids grow in their experience and
21 understanding of Jesus and his saving grace. So we encourage you to walk with
22 God daily, letting his love fill you up and spill over to the kids you serve.
23

24 Therefore, volunteers must receive orientation and training in the following areas
25 to effectively serve the Church.

26 a. Provide all volunteers with an understanding of the ministry’s mission and
27 the expectation you have for its accomplishment in a safe and abuse-free
28 manner.
29

30 b. Explain and provide in writing the expectations, code of conduct and rules
31 that will be followed by volunteers in relation to supervision and interaction
32 with children.

1 c. Conduct awareness education on child abuse (physical and sexual) and
2 the necessary steps to prevent the occurrence of child abuse incidents.
3 Reaffirm that alleged incidents of child abuse will be investigated and
4 reported to authorities in accordance with local law.

5
6 d. Conduct training on appropriate physical contact to affirm children.

7
8 e. Always provide appropriate supervision for children. Never leave children
9 alone without supervision. Wherever possible a minimum of two adults
10 will be present to supervise activities involving minor-aged children.

11
12 f. If an activity is in a room without an interior viewing area, the door should
13 remain open to allow observation of the activity.

14
15 g. Make it clear that failure to comply with the established volunteer
16 guidelines and code of conduct may result in the individual being asked to
17 terminate participation in the ministry.

18
19 h. Plan volunteer orientations to include knowledgeable individuals and in-
20 service materials to help with the training of volunteers in order to bring
21 credibility and support for your child protection efforts.

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23 **NAD Volunteer Mgmt & Screening Guidelines**

24 **Recommended Revision – 2005**

25 **Draft #1**

26 **March 1, 2005**

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1 **Code of Conduct and Guidelines for Volunteers**

2 **Revised 2005**

3
4 **Acknowledgement:**

5
6 Because our society is filled with pain, problems and litigation caused by
7 improper conduct of individuals working with children and youth, it is imperative
8 that those working with children have meaningful guidelines for conduct – to
9 protect both themselves and those under their care. As a ministry volunteer, you
10 want parents and others to feel comfortable and confident with you.

11
12 **My Commitment to Volunteer Ministry:**

13
14 *I will,*

- 15
- 16 1. Never leave child or group of children for whom I am responsible
17 unattended. I will provide appropriate supervision at all times.
 - 18 2. Always have at least one other adult, 18 years or older to help with the
19 supervision of children. If you find yourself in a situation where you
20 are the only adult present, UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES should you
21 allow yourself to be alone with one child.
 - 22 3. Always ask a child's permission before physically touching them
23 anywhere, even when responding to an injury or problem. This is
24 especially true for any areas that would normally be covered by a T-
25 shirt and/or shorts. If an injury is within this area, make sure another
26 adult works with you as care is provided.
 - 27 4. Refrain from physical and verbal attacks and corporal punishment
28 which is inappropriate behavior and should never be used as discipline.
29 "Time outs" or "sit-in-that-chair" may be helpful discipline methods to
30 use with children.

