

# Safe Sanctuaries



Prepared by the Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ  
to encourage and resource churches to create a safe environment  
for our children and youth.

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# *Creating a Safe Sanctuary Program*

## INTRODUCTION

### RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF ALL FAITHS ARE ESTABLISHING:

- **policies** declaring their congregation's intention to protect its children and youth,
- **training programs** for paid and volunteer staff,
- **procedures** in the hiring and recruiting of paid and volunteer staff who work with children and youth,
- **an appropriate response plan** when a complaint is made (not if, but when) concerning the possible misconduct of one of its staff or volunteers,
- **an on-going continuing education** program for paid staff and volunteers to **protect** the children our sanctuaries serve.

This manual provides information a ***TASK FORCE*** may use to raise the issue, propose policies, procedures, a response plan and design a congregational-wide educational program.

### THREE IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER:

1. **MAINTAIN A "SUNSHINE" RULE:** Keep your congregation informed about what you are doing. Newsletter articles, one-minute summaries during announcement time, and verbally sharing your work with various groups of your congregation, keeps the mystery out of what you are doing.
2. **ASK FOR A VOTE ON WHAT YOUR TASK FORCE HAS DONE:** When the time is right (You will know it), submit your work (The policies, screening application process, training materials and response documentation) to the decision making process of your congregation.
3. **INVOLVE CURRENT STAFF AND VOLUNTEER WORKERS:** Once policy, screening application process, and training program have been approved, require current paid staff and volunteers to submit to the screening process. This will let the congregation know that the persons entrusted with the care of their children are completely behind the goals of your ***Safe Sanctuary Program***.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS & SUGGESTED RESOURCES

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We of Wisconsin Conference are indebted to the Rhode Island Conference, particularly Dr Ira S. Williams, Jr., Associate Conference Minister for preparing and testing the material in this manual and for their willingness to share it with other conferences for the good of Christ's Church.

### PRINTED, VIDEO AND CURRICULUM RESOURCES

- ***Reducing the Risk: Making Your Church Safe from Child Sexual Abuse.*** A kit which includes an excellent introductory video, cassette for church leaders, and manual.
- Paterson, John, ***Child Abuse Prevention Primer for Your Organization.*** Produced by Non-Profit Risk Management Center. Phone: 202-785-3891
- ***Strong Kids-Safe Kids.*** A 42-minute video starring Henry Winkler. Entertaining and educational. Designed to be used by parents and their children (ages 3 to 12). (Available through many commercial video stores.)
- ***Hear Their Cries: Religious Responses to Child Abuse.*** A program series produced by the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence. Phone: 206-634-0115
- ***Bless Our Children.*** The story of one congregation's efforts to include sexual abuse prevention in their children's religious education. A program series produced by the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence. Phone: 206-634-0115
- Barry, Joy, ***Sexual Abuse: Alerting Kids to the Danger Zone.*** Word Press, Waco, Texas 1984. Beautifully illustrated book that gives simply explained information about sexual abuse, with identification of strategies used by abusers and assertive behaviors for children. (\$12.95)
- Cummings, Louise, ***Eyes Wide Open,*** Wood Lake Books, 1994. Spiritual resources for healing from childhood sexual assault. Illustrated by Margaret Vouladakis. Available through Logos Production, Inc., 800-328-0200 (\$14.95).
- Leeham, James, ***Pastoral Care for Survivors of Family Abuse,*** Westminster/John Knox Press.

- Newman, Susan, *Never Say Yes to a Stranger: What Your Child Must Know to Stay Safe*, Putnam Books.
- Ostermiller, Ken, *Talking with Your Children about Sexuality* from the "Growing Together Series, Parenting," United Church Press.
- Plummer, Carol, *Preventing Sexual Abuse Learning Books*. Activities and strategies for those working with children and adolescents.
- Reid, Kathryn Goering with Marie Fortune, *Preventing Child Sexual Abuse: Ages 9-12*, United Church Press, New York, 1989.
- Reid, Kathryn Goering, *Preventing Child Sexual Abuse: Ages 5-8*, United Church Press, New York, 1994. Although designed for Sunday morning church school, the 13 and 10 session courses can easily be adapted for other settings.
- Fortune, Marie M., *Sexual Abuse: A Study for Teenagers*. United Church Press
- Melton, Joy, *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church*, Discipleship Resources, 1998.

## THE STEPS IN BRIEF

(In-depth commentary on following pages)

- **Step One: Appoint, Draft, Select, Solicit, and Recruit a Task Force!**
- **Step two: Design Policy:** The first is to design policy statements. The samples provided are gleaned from various congregations. An attempt has been made to couch the focus and intent of each policy statement in generic terms. It will be necessary to make the suggested wording fit the polity constraints of your particular religious body. Make the language appropriately strong enough to declare that your congregation has made every reasonable effort to protect your children and youth.
- **Step Three: Design Code of Behavior:** This code of behavior is essential in establishing an environment which protects children, youth and those who work with them.
- **Step Four: Design a Response Plan:** If, or more likely, when an allegation of sexual misconduct occurs, all of your staff and Advisory Panel will need to know how to respond. The suggestions are designed to protect the victim as well as the alleged perpetrator.
- **Step Five: Create Primary Screening Application Kit:** Look carefully at the suggested material that needs to be included in a "Primary Screening Application Kit."
- **Step Six: Continue to Explain:** Prepare to work with youth! When policies, application process, training material and response plan become part of the operational life of the congregation, continue to explain it and sell it to all parties concerned. Make it part of any church growth inquiry materials. Materials found in this section are especially useful with those persons working with youth.
- **Take the Next Steps:** That's right! Next, not finally! The task of becoming a safe sanctuary for your children and youth begins with establishing policy and procedures. The on-going task is to maintain the will to make it all happen.

## STEP ONE: CREATE A TASK FORCE

- It is called a task force for when its job is done, it ceases to exist. Its work has been turned over to the entities of the church which have been assigned the task to carry out the intent of its work. Recruit representatives from your:
  - a. Religious Education
  - b. Spiritual Life
  - c. Building and Grounds
  - d. Clergy (Chair)
  - e. Finance Departments
  - f. If you have a lawyer and a member of law enforcement in your congregation, solicit their *pro-bono* participation on the task force.
- Immerse the task force in the information available which raises the issue and gives credence to what the task force is doing. When a member of the task force speaks, insure they know what they are talking about. See Appendix for general information and bibliography.
- With your "*legal eagle*" at your side or available to review your work, design policy. Remember! It is strongly recommended that all policy statements, application process, training materials and response procedure be adopted by the religious body to protect your children, youth and the congregation's financial stability and those persons who:
  - a. do the hiring,
  - b. are hired,
  - c. entrust their children to your congregation's care.

## **STEP TWO: DESIGN POLICY**

Suggested language for policy statements which may become part of the congregation's constitution and by-laws.

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:** The congregation of (name of congregation) aspire to be a God centered fellowship. Here, all can seek a closer relationship with God in a trusting, nurturing place. As part of this mission, one of our goals is to provide a safe environment for the children and youth who are entrusted to our care as they participate in our programs and use our facilities. We want our congregation to be a haven, free of sexual misconduct or harassment. To help reach these goals, we have adopted the following policies, procedures, and educational programs to reduce the possibility of child sexual or physical abuse, or any type of sexual misconduct or harassment from occurring in our congregation. The educational aspect will make us aware of potential problems, and the implementation of prudent policies should help safeguard our children, youth, and members. While not all policies can anticipate and prevent all misfortune, they can state a purpose and provide guidance to achieve the purpose. These policies express our keen interest in protecting our children and youth, while maintaining the trusting atmosphere of our congregation for the entire congregation, adults and children alike.

**SECTION ONE: RECRUITING CONGREGATION WORKERS:** Our congregation welcomes staff and volunteers who have been part of our membership for at least six months to become involved with the Educational and Youth Programs at various levels of commitment. The (Title of the STAFF PERSON responsible who, by his/her role in the congregation been assigned the right of client confidentiality,) shall be responsible for screening applicants for such volunteer and staff positions. There are two levels of screening: primary and secondary.

1. **PRIMARY SCREENING PROCEDURE:** Those workers such as teachers and youth group leaders who will have appointed and frequent contact with children and/or youth must undergo the primary screening procedure by reviewing this policy and completing the attached application form. Current congregation volunteers and staff members are requested to submit to screening procedure to signal to the entire congregation their support of the steps being taken. Furthermore, volunteers and/or paid staff or anyone with anticipated unmonitored contact with youth or children will complete a screening application and authorize a Criminal Records Background Check.

The (STAFF PERSON) will review the submitted forms and conduct a personal interview. The (STAFF PERSON) will arrange for a Criminal Records Background

Check, when applicable, and will check the references listed on the survey. Once all the information is compiled, the (STAFF PERSON), in consultation with the (title of the individual or name of committee responsible for making appointments of staff and/or volunteers), will confirm the applicant's suitability to serve.

2. **SECONDARY SCREENING PROCEDURE:** Applicants who will have limited contact with children or youth over the course of a year, such as the occasional nursery assistant or youth group driver, mission trip sponsor, are asked to review this policy, its code of behavior, and return a signed acknowledgment indicating such a review to the (STAFF PERSON) or his/her designee.

Any person known to have committed previous acts of sexual misconduct with children or youth shall be strictly prohibited from serving our children or youth.

All persons will have read and agreed to abide by all Policies and Procedures herein. Signature upon the appropriate primary or secondary application denotes a willingness to remain in compliance with these or their successors.

**SECTION TWO: EDUCATION AND TRAINING:** The (STAFF PERSON) or his/her designee will be responsible for the implementation of procedures designed to educate volunteers, staff and congregation members regarding these policies and procedures. As part of each new congregation employee's orientation, each employee will review these policies, procedures and code of behavior. The (STAFF PERSON) will insure that the Religious Education Board and the Youth Board define and implement procedures designed to further the intent of these policies, and educate volunteers and staff on these procedures through regular training programs. The (Name of body in charge of Building and Grounds.) shall design and maintain procedures related to building use which uphold the intent of this policy. Annual training programs will teach staff and volunteers how and when to report a possible sexual misconduct incident and how to discuss questionable behavior with the (STAFF PERSON) A Code of Behavior, Application Process and Response Plan will be appended to this Policy and are subject to annual review.

**SECTION THREE: MAINTENANCE OF RECORDS:** Records of all actions required by this policy and any material pertinent to it, including reports, workers' surveys, and application and acknowledgment forms, shall be kept for a legally appropriate time in a secure and confidential place, the location and security measures to be determined by the (STAFF PERSON)) and Advocacy Panel.

**SECTION FOUR: ADVOCACY PANEL:** An Advocacy Panel shall be established for two purposes. In the event that a volunteer, congregation member or staff member is uncomfortable reporting an allegation of sexual misconduct to the (STAFF PERSON) that

person may take the allegation or concern to the Advocacy Panel. The Panel will also serve to support staff members charged with confirming the suitability of volunteers and carrying out the Response Plan.

The Panel will be composed of three people, including at least one female and one male, appointed by the (Name of lay-leader) for indefinite terms. The Panel will be a formally constituted congregation committee and its members may serve on other (Name of the general term given committees serving the congregation.). Panel members will be noted on documents related to this policy and changes will be announced promptly in congregation publications. All members of this panel shall maintain a strict code of confidentiality.

### STEP THREE: DESIGN A CODE OF BEHAVIOR

This code will be part of an initial and on-going training program.

This Code of Behavior would be attached as an Appendix to the policies and posted.

Volunteers who have taken active part of the life of the congregation for at least **SIX MONTHS** may be invited to become involved with the Educational and Youth Programs at various levels of commitment. During this time, those planning to be directly involved in the life of the congregation shall receive training and accept the intentions provided by the following code of behavior. New employees, having satisfied the Primary Screening Process, employed to work with children and youth, may assume their position immediately. They shall pay close, if not restrictive attention to the code of behavior.

- **The Two Adult Rule:** The children and youth in both the educational and youth fellowship program of our congregation shall be under the care and supervision of two adults, one of whom may be a high school aide. An exception in the education department would exist if classes are so constructed as to provide constant visual access and frequent observation by the department's director, superintendent, or their designee. Furthermore, no teacher, advisor, aide or anyone else working with our children or youth should place themselves in a compromising situation by being alone with a child or with children out-of-sight of other teachers, advisors, aides, or parents. Finally, no teacher, advisor, or aide shall be alone with a child in the bathroom for purposes of full, clean-up from craft or art projects, or care of illness or injury (See below).
- **Specific Guidelines for Adult Supervision:**  
Adult leaders for a youth ministry activity function as representatives of the church and as such are held to different standards than when acting as a parent or adult in their own family. The rules and guidelines of the church must be followed by all leaders at all events, thereby providing appropriate supervision for the youth. Illegalities and irresponsibility cannot be allowed. Supervision must be consistent, reasonable and prudent.

Adults are encouraged to remember that they will be providing both supervision and modeling adult Christian behavior for the youth in their care, and should endeavor to see that the example they set is consistent with the value and expectations of the church community.

There is no church-sanctioned event in youth ministry that permits one adult to be alone with youth. There must always be a minimum of two adults present.

The following chart outlines minimal levels of adult supervision necessary for youth ministry activities. These Guidelines are supplied by the Insurance Boards of the United Church of Christ and the American Camping Association.

AGE GROUP	COUNSELOR/YOUTH RATIO
Infants and toddlers	Presence of parent/legal guardian required.
6 - 8 years old	1 adult counselor per 6 youth
9 - 14 years old	1 adult counselor per 8 youth
15 - 18 years old	1 adult counselor per 10 youth
When an activity/trip involves overnights, there shall be at least two adult chaperones of the same sex in the youth sleeping quarters.	

- **Five Year Separation Rule:** When utilizing high school and young adults in the Educational Department, Youth Programs and Off-site Activities there shall be five year separation between these young persons and those they supervise. Every attempt will be made first to use youth who have reached the age of 18 as workers with children/youth.
- **Regarding Bathroom Supervision of Educational Department Children:** Normally teachers, advisors, or aides who accompany a child to the bathroom, should remain outside the bathroom while the child is inside. If a child needs assistance with zipping, buttoning, buckling, clean-up, wiping, etc., two adults need to be present, one of whom may be a high school aide. A note describing the help needed and the people present shall be hand-delivered to the department supervisor. If, for any reason, a teacher or aide is left alone in a classroom, the teacher in the nearest or neighboring classroom should be so informed. Diapering of infants and toddlers may be done in the classroom if two people are present, one of whom is an adult. If anything unusual occurred during this assistance, a note describing the help given and persons present should be written and handed to the department supervisor at the close of educational program day.
- **Parental Consent:** Those working with children and youth shall have signed, written consent of a parent or guardian before attending, chaperoning or supervising activities or programs away from our facilities.
- **Discipline:** The purpose of discipline with children and youth is to maintain order in a manner consistent with the teaching of religious responsibility, respect and cooperation. No child shall be disciplined by the use of spanking, hitting, slapping, or any form of physical punishment. Verbal reprimands shall not include destructive criticism, insult or shouting. Teachers, advisors and aides and others helping in the classroom are encouraged to listen to the child, communicate expectations of appropriate behavior, use time-outs or give alternate choices. If a child is disruptive, a teacher or aide from the class or a neighboring class may be sent to locate the

Director of Education. If the DE is not readily available, a parent should be contacted and brought to the room.

- **Overnight Rule:** Any and all adult chaperons supervising overnight stays at our facilities or on congregational sponsored trips shall have been cleared to do so by the (*STAFF PERSON*) or other designated official. At least, one adult male will dorm with boys and one adult female with girls; and should these adults be husband and wife, a third adult advisor is to be present. Further, a signed written consent form is required, which lists the names of the advisors to be present. Last minute substitute or additional advisors are permissible as long as parental permission of child/youth participants is secured (either signed or witnessed phone contact).
- **Youth Group Activities:** Physical contact such as wrestling, horseplay, sardines or other high contact games are not appropriate recreational activity . No adult leader, staff or volunteer, should initiate or encourage physical or intimate contact with children or youth. Setting boundaries is the responsibility of the adults. The Youth Group is a group ministry. All participants are expected to remain with the group throughout the times listed in congregation publications. No pairing, or otherwise separating off from the group to other parts of the building or grounds is permitted.
- **Youth Members of Boards and Committees:** No youth member of a Board, Committee, Subcommittee, or Task Force, shall be in attendance at a meeting with less than three adult members present, or the youth's parent.
- **Leaving and Locking:** The last three people, including the staff person locking the door, will leave our facilities together. We avoid situations where one adult and one youth or child are left at the facility's door waiting to be picked up by parents at the end of an evening activity . Parents are encouraged to respect concluding times.
- **Key Assignment:** When a key to the areas frequented by children/youth is assigned to staff or volunteer, an appropriate request form shall be filled out. It is understood that said key will not be loaned out to anyone else, nor will a duplicate key be made. The assigned person shall take full responsibility for the security of the key(s) and will return it when he/she no longer has the responsibility which required the use of said key.
- **Drugs, Tobacco, Alcohol:** The use of any drugs, tobacco or alcoholic products on or in congregation facilities or at congregation sponsored youth events is not permitted.
- **Transportation:** Staff and adult leaders or teachers cannot transport children or youth between congregation facility and home. Transportation for field trips, to activities, or for events is by groups and to/from the congregation facility except with written parental permission.
- **Parental Guidelines:** We strongly encourage parents, when on the premises with their

children, to know at all times where their children are, who they are with, and what they are doing. It is strongly encouraged that children 10 or under do not play in unsupervised areas.

- **Visitors On-site:** The staff or volunteers serving our congregation shall be aware of who is visiting our facilities. Visitors are welcomed and shall be accompanied on their visit to the areas frequented by our youth and children by a member of our staff.
- **Reporting Responsibilities:** Any inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult worker and a child or youth shall be promptly reported to the (*STAFF PERSON*) or member of the Advocacy Panel.
- **If You Suspect a Violation of the Code:** If a suspected case of abuse has either been reported to you or is suspected by you to have occurred at a congregational-related function or program, immediately contact the (*STAFF PERSON*) and this person only. In the case where this person cannot be contacted, call the judicatory head of your conference or diocese. If the alleged abuser is the (*STAFF PERSON*), report the allegation to a member of the Advocacy Panel and the judicatory head of the conference or diocese.

**Abuse can include:**

- Sexual remarks
- Inappropriate kissing
- Fondling
- Touching parts of the body which would be covered by a swimsuit.
- Watching any sexual activity
- Intercourse
- Showing pornography

If you are unsure whether or not your suspected case falls under this definition, it is strongly recommended that you err to the side of caution and report your suspicion immediately.

## STEP FOUR: DESIGN A RESPONSE PLAN

Suggested procedure when allegations of sexual misconduct and sexual harassment are suspected.

### PRELIMINARY RESPONSE BY PRE-ASSIGNED TRAINED STAFF PERSON

- All allegations will be taken seriously.
- Alleged complainants must not be held responsible in any way.
- Response to allegations must be handled with due respect for **EVERYONE'S** privacy and confidentiality.
- Care and safety of alleged complainants (and family) are the first priority. Extend whatever pastoral resources needed. Notify parent of alleged complainant if appropriate.
- When questionable or inappropriate behavior related to possible sexual misconduct or sexual harassment between adults is observed, it should be reported to the (*STAFF PERSON*) and/or the Advocacy Panel. The incident will be documented by the (*STAFF PERSON*) and/or the Advocacy Panel who will discuss it and make an initial response.
- When a case is reported, the (*STAFF PERSON*) receiving the report is asked to interview the primary supervisor of the Education or Youth Ministries departments and to share all pertinent information with him/her. A low level, discrete investigation of the charges is to be taken as soon as possible. This will include speaking to both the alleged perpetrator and victim.
- Document all activity involved in handling the incident; note date, time, persons involved as well as the content of what was done. All documentation will be held confidential. (Sample Incident Form on page 24)

### IF DEEMED NECESSARY:

- If, after an initial investigation by the (*STAFF PERSON*) and/or Advocacy Panel, the charges are deemed valid, steps will be taken to immediately comply with all state laws. All incidents involving children shall be reported to the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Bureau of Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention (608-261-4973), the congregation's insurance writer and attorney and the judicatory head of the conference or diocese shall also be notified.
- Should it become necessary, full cooperation will be given to civil authorities under guidance of the congregation's attorney. The attorney must be present while any investigative questions from the police or applicable agencies are being answered by anyone. If a report is made to Wisconsin Department of Health and Family services, the Advocacy Panel must carefully document all steps taken, contact legal counsel, congregation president, the Conference or Diocesan Head, and the congregation's insurance agent.

- Treat the accused with dignity and respect and offer support. If the accused is a congregation worker, he/she should be relieved temporarily of his/her duties until the investigation is completed. If the accused is a paid employee, a decision will be made to maintain or suspend his/her income, as appropriate, until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.
- Be prepared to issue a public statement to inform the congregation and respond to press inquiries. This statement should communicate that the congregation regards these allegations seriously and offers responsible action, concern, and support for all involved. No details of the accusation will be released. Do not deny that the incident occurred; do not assign blame; do not minimize the situation (e.g. "It wasn't that serious."). No statement will be issued until it has been approved by the congregation's attorney.
- The Advocacy Panel will appoint one official congregation spokesperson to deal with any and all media inquiries.
- When it is deemed prudent, the investigative team should share appropriate information, with the wider congregation, in all cases respecting the privacy of the individuals involved.

#### **CHECK LIST FOR FIRST RESPONDENT:**

- \* Document your efforts.
- \* Report the incident immediately.
- \* Contact the proper civil authorities.
- \* Notify the parents.
- \* Do not confront the accused until the safety of the child is secured.
- \* Do not prejudge the situation.
- \* Treat the accused with dignity and support.
- \* Use the prepared public statement to answer the press.

#### **CHECK LIST FOR ADVOCACY TEAM RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE:**

No course of action is going to be 100% effective. If or when it may happen, a plan needs to be developed to respond to sexual abuse allegations.

#### **Remember to:**

- \* Treat all allegations seriously.
- \* Handle the situation with respect to everyone's privacy and confidentiality.
- \* Immediately contact your insurance carrier.
- \* Give full cooperation to civil authorities with the guidance of your congregation's attorney.
- \* Adequate care must be shown for the well being of the victim.
- \* The victim should not be held responsible in any way.

## **Create a Response Plan**

- Maintain Adequate Records.
- Select a spokesperson to speak with the media and your congregation.
- Know your state's reporting requirements.
- Use a reporting procedure.
- Prepare a position statement.
- Do not engage in denial, minimization or blame.
- Use an attorney.
- Don't accuse in public interviews.
- Work with your denomination and insurance company.

Notes:

## STEP FIVE: DESIGN PRIMARY and SECONDARY APPLICATION SCREENING PROCESS

### Primary Screening Process

Paid Staff Persons  
Full Time Volunteers

### Secondary Screening Process

Part Time Volunteers  
Event Volunteer

### Information Provided in the Primary Screening Process

- ” Cover letter explaining the congregation's rationale and need for having a screening process. Page 20
  - a. Clearly state intentions for screening process!
  - b. Make clear that applicants and recruits leaving the Background Criminal Investigation Authorization Form unsigned will not be considered for any position which puts them in contact with children or youth.
  - c. Request that applicant read all the information provided prior to submitting Application or Signing Covenant!

☞ Application /Covenant Statement/BCI authorization form Page 21

☐ Copy of the church policies pertaining to persons working with children/youth See Step Two

☐ Code of Behavior for children and youth workers adopted by the congregation See Step Three

☐ Response Plan of the procedure the congregation will follow if there is an allegation of abuse See Step Four

### Information Provided in the Secondary Screening Process:

- ☐ Cover letter explaining the congregation's rationale and need for having a screening process Page 20
  - a. Clearly state intentions for screening process!
  - b. Indicate that the information requested will assist in providing a safe environment for the children or youth they will be working with.
- ☐ Information form which seeks their address, phone, emergency phone, auto insurance coverage, drivers license number Page 32
- ☐ Copy of the church policies pertaining to persons working with children/youth See Step Two
- ☐ Code of Behavior for children and youth workers adopted by the congregation See Step Three
- ☐ Response Plan of the procedure the congregation will follow if there is an allegation of abuse See Step Four

It is assumed that each recruit or applicant would have read all the information and provided a completed Application/Screening form before an interview is granted for paid staff.

## STEP SIX: CREATING THE NECESSARY FORMS

- ✦ **SAMPLE COVER LETTER WHICH HAS CONGREGATION'S LETTERHEAD** Page 20
- ✦ **SUGGESTED LANGUAGE FOR PRIMARY SCREENING PROCEDURE** Page 21
- ✦ **SUGGESTED INCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORT FORM** Page 24
- ✦ **SUGGESTED POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR KEY REQUESTS WHEN SITUATIONS WARRANT** Page 26
- ✦ **SAMPLE PERMISSION AND TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION FORM TO BE ON FILE IN THE CHURCH OFFICE AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH PROGRAM YEAR!** Page 27
- ✦ **REQUEST FOR PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE IN A SPECIAL ACTIVITY/TRIP** Page 28
- ✦ **SUGGESTED WORDING FOR A TRANSPORTATION FORM** Page 29
- ✦ **FOR CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK AND AUTHORIZATION** Page 30
- ✦ **SCREENING STATEMENT FOR EVENT VOLUNTEERS** Page 31
- ✦ **INFORMATION SHEET FOR OCCASIONAL VOLUNTEERS** Page 32
- ✦ **SUGGESTED ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED IN CODE OF BEHAVIOR FOR THOSE PARTICIPATING IN A CHURCH SPONSORED PROGRAM, TRIP OR EVENT** Page 33
- ✦ **SUGGESTED WORDING FOR A COVENANT STATEMENT BETWEEN YOUTH PARTICIPANT AND THE SPONSORING CHURCH AND ADVISOR** Page 34

## SAMPLE COVER LETTER WHICH HAS CONGREGATION'S LETTERHEAD

(Date)

*"People were bringing even infants [Jesus]. . . and when the disciples saw it they sternly ordered them not to do it. But Jesus called for them and said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a child will never enter it.'" (Luke 13: 15-17 NRSV)*

Dear Youth/Child-Care Worker Applicant,

One of the great joys of being a part of a faith community is learning from children and youth about what it means to be a child of God, no matter what the age. They give adults the precious gifts of innocence, enthusiasm, curiosity and are visible signs that God is not yet through with Creation.

They give so much to us. So as adults we are asked to give to them. Attached to this letter is the new Application/Screening Form for Children and Youth Workers here at **(name of congregation)**. Carefully created by professional staff and the Christian Education Committee, it represents our Congregation's firm commitment to give children and youth the chance to spiritually learn and grow in the safest and most secure environment we can provide.

The call to work with children and youth carries with it great responsibilities. We are all too aware of incidents of sexual abuse or inappropriate behavior within congregations and other organizations, where the safety of children and youth has been threatened, and the sacred trust between adults and young people broken.

Therefore, with God as our guide, the Congregation commits to a more organized and thorough process of volunteer/staff recruitment. Let "the bottom line" be crystal clear, we want to ensure that children and youth can "come to Christ" at **(name of congregation)** and be safe, honored, loved and respected. As well, we want parents to have full confidence in the adults that care for their children.

We are aware that such a form asks for your extra commitment and the sharing of personal information by you. Please be assured that all the information provided will be kept in strict confidentiality, and will be seen only by the senior and/or associate minister in consultation with the Christian Education Chair.

As you commit to taking this added step in ministering to our young people, know that the Congregation commits to keeping this process humane and sensitive.

*"Let the children come to me and do not stop them."* This is Christ's command and challenge to us to make our Congregation home safe, secure and nurturing. In this spirit, thank you in advance for being a partner in ministry and with our children and youth.

## SUGGESTED LANGUAGE FOR PRIMARY SCREENING PROCEDURE

This confidential statement will be retained by the *STAFF PERSON* or his/her designee

### NAME OF THE CONGREGATION

This application is to be completed by all applicants for any position (volunteer or compensated) involving the supervision or custody of minors. It is being used to assist this congregation in providing a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities. Information provided will be kept strictly confidential and shared only among ministerial staff and the Religious Education chairperson.

### PERSONAL HISTORY

Date:	Home Phone ( )
Name:	
Present Address:	
City/State/Zip:	
Please indicate the type of youth or children's work you prefer:	
Please indicate the date you would be able to begin:	

### RELIGIOUS HISTORY AND PRIOR YOUTH WORK

Name of Religious institution of which are currently a member/attend:
List name and address of other religious institutions you have attended during the past five years.

List all previous religious work involving youth/children (list each institution's name, type of work performed, dates and a contact person with his/her phone number).

List all previous non-religious institution work involving youth/children (list each institution's name, type of work performed, dates and a contact person with his/her phone number).

List any gifts, callings, training, education, or other factors that have prepared you for youth/children's work:

Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a crime?  Yes  No

If yes, please explain:

Do you have a current driver's license?  Yes  No

If yes, please list your driver's license number and state issued:

Personal References (Not former employees or relatives):	
Name:	Name:
Address:	Address:
City/State/Zip:	City/State/Zip:
Phone:	Phone:

### APPLICANT'S STATEMENT

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize the **(name of the religious institution)** to contact any references or religious institutions listed in this application to obtain information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for children or youth work.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the Bylaws and Policies of the **(name of the religious institution)**, refrain from unscriptural conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the congregation, and to the following covenant which governs children and youth work at **(name of the institution.)**

- ☞ *To honor each child's integrity and worth as a child of God.*
- ☞ *To provide a nurturing and safe environment for children and youth to grow socially, and spiritually.*
- ☞ *To continue to grow and nurture my own personal faith.*
- ☞ *To work in partnership with the professional staff, volunteers, and Christ as a part of the larger Christian community.*

I state that I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE FOREGOING RELEASE AND KNOW THE CONTENTS THEREOF AND I SIGN THIS RELEASE AS MY OWN FREE ACT. This is a legally binding agreement I have read and understand.

I further understand that if any of the information on this form is false, I will be removed upon such discovery from work with children and youth and possibly from the membership of the **(name of the religious institution)**.

---

(Signature)

(Today's Date)

## SUGGESTED INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Name of Person Reporting Incident

Phone Number:

Relationship to Congregation:

Date of Incident:

Time of Incident

Date of Notification:

Time of Notification:

In what manner was the incident reported

Name of person(s) involved in incident: (Name, address, phone number)

Minor  Adult

Minor  Adult

Minor  Adult

Minor  Adult

Minor  Adult

A separate report is being made for each minor involved.

Location of the incident

Witnesses to incident: (Name, Address, Phone)

Witnesses to incident: (Name, Address, Phone)

Witnesses to incident: (Name, Address, Phone)

Description of Incident:



**SUGGESTED POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR KEY REQUESTS  
WHEN SITUATIONS WARRANT**

DATE OF REQUEST:

I hereby request a key or keys to the **(name congregation)**. This request is made for the following reason(s):


If I am assigned a key or keys, I promise that I will not lend it/them to anyone else, nor will I have a duplicate key or keys made. I will be entirely responsible for the security of the key(s) and I will return it/them to the office when I no longer have the responsibility I now have which requires the use of said key(s).

Furthermore, the undersigned agrees that he/she or any other adult will not be in the facility building alone with a child that is not his/her own at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

**(name of entity in charge of building management)**

Assigned Key Number: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Party issuing the key)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date assigned)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of person receiving the key  
when above party is finished with it.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date returned)

**SAMPLE PERMISSION AND TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION FORM TO BE ON FILE IN THE CHURCH OFFICE AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH PROGRAM YEAR!**

(Date)

Dear Parent/Guardian

We are excited about your child's/youth's interest in participating in our youth fellowship program this year. To protect our youth and those who serve them, please:

- 👉 Give **permission** for your child/youth to participate in this important youth ministry program and information concerning who will be providing **transportation** your child/youth to the regular meetings of the fellowship.
- 👉 Please fill out the attached **Medical Release Form**

**PERMISSION SLIP FOR MINORS INVOLVED IN A YEARLY CHURCH YOUTH FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM**

I give my permission for \_\_\_\_\_ to attend the following the youth fellowship program of (Name of Church):

**IN CASE OF EMERGENCY**

I can be reached at the following number: \_\_\_\_\_ Or \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/Guardian (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent or Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

In case I cannot be reached, contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Instructions: \_\_\_\_\_

**TRANSPORTATION FORM FOR MINORS INVOLVED IN A YEARLY CHURCH YOUTH FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM**

- Ⓢ I will be transporting my child/youth to and from regular and specially called meetings of the youth fellowship.
- Ⓢ If I am unable to pick-up my child/youth following a meeting, the following person has permission to pick-up my child and will provide the appropriate identification and will use the following password.
- Ⓢ Name of person: \_\_\_\_\_ Password: \_\_\_\_\_
- If I or the person listed above cannot pick-up my child/youth, I will call the church and provide the name of the person who will provide transportation. He/she will show appropriate identification and use the stated password.

Signature of Parent or Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- Please print the name of Parent or Guardian

**REQUEST FOR PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE IN  
A SPECIAL ACTIVITY/TRIP OF THE  
(NAME OF CHURCH SPONSORING THE EVENT)**

Please refer your questions to.... (Name of event leader and phone number)

We are sponsoring the following special activity/trip will be:

The cost to the child/youth for this trip will be \$

Your child/youth will need to bring:

**ACTIVITY OUT OF TOWN**

Our departure time is:  AM  PM on:

Our return time is:  AM  PM on:

The trip will be chaperoned by:

Adult driver(s) will be:

Method of Transportation

**AN OVER-NIGHT ACTIVITY IN TOWN OR ONE OFF PREMISES**

The event will begin at  AM  PM on

The event will end at  AM  PM on

The location of the event will be at:

The event will be chaperoned by:

Adult driver(s) will be:

Method of Transportation:

(Save information above and return attached permission slip.)

**PERMISSION SLIP FOR MINORS INVOLVED IN A CHURCH RELATED ACTIVITY**

I give my permission for: (name of student)

... to attend the following activity:

**IN CASE OF EMERGENCY**

I can be reached at the following number:

Or

Name of Parent/Guardian (Please Print):

Signature of Parent or Guardian:

Date of Signature:

In case I cannot be reached please contact:

Phone:

Special Instructions:

### SUGGESTED WORDING FOR A TRANSPORTATION FORM

For the safety of your youth, (Name of church or organization) is required to obtain a signed Transportation Form. Please provide the following information and bring this form with you.

Name of Youth:

Event Name:

My child/youth will be transported to the event/departure site by: (Name and Phone)

My child/youth will be picked up following the event by: (Name and Phone)

If, for some reason, I or the person listed above is not able to pick-up my child/student at the end of the event, I will call (The name of activity leader or local contact) and identify the responsible party who will do so. This person will provide appropriate identification and use the following password:

Signature of Parent/Guardian Date Signed:

I understand that church policy does not allow for less than two adult supervisors to be left alone with the youth of the church. If an adult supervisor finds himself/herself alone with your child after an activity or at the pick-up site, he/she will be forced to wait outside the premises until you arrive. Your prompt arrival would be appreciated. Thank you.

**BACKGROUND CRIMINAL AUTHORIZATION FORM**

The (church's name) reserves the right to run and have access to a criminal records check if the need should arise. Signing and agreeing to this does not mean such a check will be run automatically. It may be run if deemed necessary by the minister and/or his/her designee.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature (Parent or Guardian if applicant  
is under 18 years of age.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Maiden Name if applicable

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth

\_\_\_\_\_  
Social Security Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Place of Birth

Print all Aliases:  
  
\_\_\_\_\_

I agree to be bound by the Policies and Code of Behavior of the (name of the Church). **I shall** refrain from unscriptural conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church, I covenant with (Church Committee) which programs children and youth work in the church:

- To honor each child's integrity and worth as a child of God.*
- To provide a nurturing and safe environment for children and youth to grow socially, and spiritually.*
- To continue to grow and nurture my own personal faith.*
- To work in partnership with the professional staff, volunteers, and Christ as a part of the larger Christian community.*

I state that I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE FOREGOING RELEASE AND KNOW THE CONTENTS THEREOF AND I SIGN THIS RELEASE AS MY OWN FREE ACT. This is a legally binding agreement I have read and understand.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Today's Date)

<b>SCREENING STATEMENT FOR EVENT VOLUNTEERS</b>
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Signature (Parent or Guardian if counselor  
is under 18 years of age.)

Print Name of Counselor

---

Print Maiden Name if applicable

Date of Birth

---

Name Event

Beginning and Ending Dates of Event

I agree to be bound by the Policies and Code of Behavior of the (name of the Church). **I shall** refrain from unscriptural conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church. I covenant with (Church Committee) which programs children and youth work in the church:

- 👍 To honor each child's integrity and worth as a child of God.
- 👍 To provide a nurturing and safe environment for children and youth to grow socially, and spiritually.
- 👍 To continue to grow and nurture my own personal faith.
- 👍 To work in partnership with the professional staff, volunteers, and Christ as a part of the larger Christian community .

---

(Signature)

(Today's Date)

**INFORMATION SHEET FOR THOSE PARTICIPATING OCCASIONALLY  
IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROGRAMS OF THE CHURCH**

Name:	Address:
Phone:	City/State/Zip:
E-mail Address	Drivers License
Emergency Contact:	Their Phone #:

- ⑧ I have a drivers license.
- ⑧ I have chauffeur's license
- ⑧ I have insurance which covers me while driving a vehicle different than my own.
- ⑧ My ability to drive is restricted in the following ways:

## SUGGESTED ITEMS TO BE INCLUDED IN CODE OF BEHAVIOR FOR THOSE PARTICIPATING IN A CHURCH SPONSORED PROGRAM, TRIP OR EVENT

A successful event in our church is dependent upon the cooperation of all those participating in it. Please read the list of expectations which have been designed to insure a good experience for all of us. The brush strokes are intentionally broad so as to eliminate any creative loopholes one might think is there. Your adult advisor is the person to interpret the boundaries of conduct. Trust them. They may surprise you! Live in doubt and seek permission.

Assuming that the following list gives one a license to stretch the boundaries without seeking permission will only bring one to an abbreviated halt to their participation in the activity. The adult advisors will trust participants to embrace the boundaries until otherwise demonstrated.

During this (year, trip, program or event) I will:

- 👉 Not possess and/or use alcohol or other controlled substances nor purchase same.
- 👉 Respect the property of all other participants and advisors. This includes not touching things that are not mine.
- 👉 Attend all scheduled programs unless specific permission is given for me to be elsewhere.
- 👉 Join in group work, play, study, activities without undue complaint.
- 👉 Take my turn in the support and feeding chores of our community.
- ☐ Respect myself, God, the other members of our group, and the people we meet on our way. Conduct included in such an acts of respect would exclude:
  - a) Self or other person directed put downs.
  - b) Abusive or vulgar language.
  - c) Inappropriate touching.
  - d) Activity which separates an individual (or couple) from the GROUP.
  - e) Placing adult advisors in uncomfortable and potentially vulnerable situations.
  - f) Any non-scheduled activity which has not received permission from an adult advisor.

Please go over these expectations with a parent or legal guardian and sign the attached Covenant Statement. Please note the *One Strike and You're Out Rule* which is described on the Covenant Statement.

**SUGGESTED WORDING FOR A COVENANT STATEMENT BETWEEN YOUTH PARTICIPANT AND THE SPONSORING CHURCH AND ADVISOR**

**"ONE STRIKE AND YOU'RE OUT RULE."** This covenant statement assumes that the sponsoring organization has clearly stated what the behavioral expectations are of the participants and adult supervisors participating in (year round or special event) of the church. The expectations have been:

- ☞ Stated in writing,
- ☞ Sent to the participating youth and their parents or legal guardian,
- ☞ Reviewed by a parent/guardian/youth at the beginning of the year or before the trip.
- ☞ And shall be received by the adult advisor of the Program, Trip or Event)

In this way, any violation of the expectations shall result in an **immediate conclusion** of the young person's participation in the stated (Program, Trip or Event). Second chances would require exceptional circumstances. No inch...no mile makes for a good experience for all.

***Covenant Statement***

⑥ I have read the information provided as to what is expected of me when I participate in the forthcoming (Program, Trip or Event). I understand that failure on my part to live up to these expectations will end my participation in the (Program, Trip or Event). Blatant disregard of these expectations may result in suspension of future experiences.

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

⑥ We have read the information provided and reviewed it with our child. We understand what is expected and accept the "One Strike and You're Out Rule". We will assume all costs involved in our child's return home.

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

⑥ I give my permission for my child/youth to be photographed/video taped and have said image downloaded on our churches Web Site with the understanding that in no way such images will include identifying names, phone numbers, e-mail or physical addresses. Furthermore, print images and negatives will not be available for any type of distribution or promotion without additional consent on my part.

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

⑥ I have verbally confirmed that the child/youth and his/her parents or guardian have reviewed the information provided and that they are willing to accept the expectations stated.

Signature of (Program, Trip or Event) Adult Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_