

# ***Child Protection Policy***

***Killeen Seventh-day Adventist Church***

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***Child Protection Committee***

***Church Policy, Revised June 2010***

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## II. Introduction

*The congregation and staff of the Killeen Seventh-day Adventist Church are committed to providing a safe environment where children learn to love and follow Jesus. Recognizing the spiritual and public trust given to our congregation, we commit ourselves to being a true sanctuary that nurtures and protects its most vulnerable members and visitors and those who work with children and youth. Because churches are not insulated from those who prey upon children, our policies will reflect our commitment to the safety of the children and youth.*

*To help protect children, the Killeen Seventh-day Adventist Church (herein referred to as “KSDA Church” or “church”) has adopted the following Child Protection Policy. It is important that all KSDA Church paid staff and volunteer children’s ministry workers understand and implement these guidelines to help prevent any abuse against children.*

## III. Purpose

*These policies and procedures are designed to protect children and reduce the risk of child abuse in order to:*

- 1. Provide a safe and secure environment for children, youth, adults, members, volunteers, visitors, and paid staff.*
- 2. Assist Killeen SDA Church in evaluating a person’s suitability to supervise the activities of children and youth.*
- 3. Provide a system to respond to alleged victims of sexual abuse and their families, as well as the alleged perpetrator.*
- 4. Reduce the possibility of false accusations of sexual abuse against volunteer workers and paid staff.*

*Future revisions to this policy may be made with the authorization of the Child Protection Committee and confirmed by the church board.*

## IV. Definitions

- 1. The term “children”, “minor” or “youth” shall include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years.*
- 2. In ministry for children and youth activities, the term “worker” shall include all persons over the age of eighteen (18) years who direct, lead, teach, coordinate, supervise or regularly work with children and/or youth, whether employed or volunteer.*
- 3. For children’s ministry volunteers between the ages of 12 and 17 years, the term “worker-assistant” shall include all persons who assist, lend-aid and act under the direction of a worker. All volunteer-assistants must be at least 4 years older than the children they are assisting with, and in the judgment of a staff member, competent to assist in the activity. Worker-assistants will adhere to the screening, training, and policy requirements of a “worker”.*

## **V. Policy**

### **A. Suitability of Workers**

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

*“The local church should take reasonable steps to safeguard children engaged in church-sponsored activities by choosing individuals with high spiritual and moral backgrounds as leaders and participants in programs for children.” (Ch Man, Ed 17, p. 120.)*

#### **1. Screening procedures for leaders and volunteer workers**

- It is the goal of the KSDA Church to adequately screen persons desiring to work with children participating in any church programs. All volunteers who regularly work with children must complete an application form. References are to be provided by the applicants. Appropriate personnel or staff will check references and conduct a criminal background check including the sex offender registry.*

#### **2. KSDA Church Attendance**

- All volunteers who work with minors must be regular active attendees (minimum 6 months) of the KSDA Church. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children. Under certain circumstances, an exception to this rule for a specific planned event may be authorized by the Pastor or Associate Pastor.*

#### **3. Worker training**

- Prior to working with children/youth, workers will receive orientation regarding responsibilities and expected code of conduct, and training in prevention, recognition, and reporting of child abuse. Written guidelines including these policies will be provided to each worker.*

#### **4. Ministerial and staff oversight**

- The ministerial staff member responsible for each division shall coordinate with the program director to ensure selection, training and ongoing supervision of all workers. This should include regular unannounced visits into classes and other program sites.*

#### **5. Acknowledgement of church policies**

- Church guidelines concerning prevention and response to child abuse and neglect will be provided in the Child Protection Guidebook and will be given to each applicant. All applicants must acknowledge in writing that they understand the church’s policies and guidelines pertaining to the protection of children and that they agree to abide by them*

## **B. Safety of Children**

*It is the responsibility of all persons having contact with children participating in church programs to promote the emotional and physical safety of the participants giving regard to all factors and circumstances known to them. If in their opinion, an unsafe condition exists; such persons shall immediately take appropriate precautions under the circumstances to protect all children. Nothing contained in any other church policy, procedure or instruction shall be construed to relieve persons having contact with children from this responsibility.*

### **1. Vehicle safety**

- Persons who drive privately-owned vehicles for conducting church business or transporting children on a regular basis must maintain a current valid drivers license, provide proof of insurance in such amounts as may be required by the church and comply with all other church transportation policies.*

### **2. First aid training**

- It will be the goal of the church that most paid employees and program directors who work with children will maintain current certification in basic first aid and basic CPR (or the equivalent).*
- Volunteer workers are encouraged, but not required to get training if they frequently accompany children on activities such as recreational activities, camps, retreats, mission trips or any other activity with a higher element of risk.*

### **3. Identification of workers**

- All employees or volunteer workers who are engaged to work with children:
  - Must be photographed with copies of those photographs kept in their personnel file*
  - Are required to wear a pictured nametag whenever they are supervising children. These tags will be provided by the church and will show the worker's name and their picture.**

### **4. Confidential Counselor**

- KSDA Church will designate a "confidential counselor" to whom any minor can go at any time, without special permission, to discuss any problem he or she is having.*

### **5. Drop-off/Pick-up System**

- The church will have in place an identification system for drop-off and pick-up of children under the age of ten (10) years old (Kindergarten and Primary Sabbath Schools, Adventurers, VBS, childcare programs, etc.). The program director or teacher in charge shall maintain the system to identify persons authorized to pick up and take responsibility for young children leaving a church activity.*
- The identification system will not be necessary for children ten (10) years and older unless a parent specifically requests it in writing.*

***6. Two-adult rule***

- ***It shall be the goal of KSDA Church that a minimum of two adult workers will be in attendance at all times when minors are being supervised during a church activity regardless of the number of participants, location or activity (including Sabbath School classes and transportation).***
- ***At no time should an adult ever be in a room or an enclosed area alone with a child or youth.***

### *7. Observation of children*

- All children/youth programs and activities will be conducted in an area that is open or observable. If the door is closed, the room must be observable with a window.

### *8. Supervision*

- It is required that a reasonable ratio of adults to children is maintained at all times involving the supervision of children. The program director shall be primarily responsible for setting and maintaining a reasonable ratio of workers to children giving due regard to all factors present, including the number and age of the participants, the nature of the activities and the location where the activities are taking place.
- Children under the age of 10 years old shall not be allowed to wander around the church without adult supervision.

### *9. Release of claims*

- All offsite activities for minors must have the approval of the pastor and/or church board, especially over-night activities. Unaccompanied minors must have signed parental permission for each trip.

## **C. Organizational Responsibilities**

### *1. Ministerial and staff oversight*

- The ministerial staff member responsible for each division shall coordinate with the program director to ensure selection, training and ongoing supervision of all workers. This should include regular unannounced visits into classes and other program sites.

### *2. Child Protection Committee*

- The Child Protection Committee shall periodically review the KSDA Child Protection Policy and the definition of child abuse and neglect as defined by law and revise the church's policy concerning these crimes.
- The Child Protection Committee membership shall include the Senior Pastor, Associate/Youth Pastor, Pathfinder director, Adventurer director, VBS director, Director of Children's Sabbath School Division or Sabbath School Superintendent, and Family Life Leader.

### *3. Protecting Confidentiality of Information and Records*

- 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. 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.

### *4. Handling "Member" Perpetrators and Sexual Offenders*

- Killeen SDA Church may allow a person known to be a sexual offender to remain or become a member of the congregation if their victim(s) is not a member AND if they sign and adhere to the Texas Conference of SDA **"Church Attendance/Participation Agreement for Convicted Sex Offender"**. Those who have committed sexual offenses, whether or not convicted by a court, may not work in any church-sponsored activity or program for minors, nor hold other roles in congregational life.

### **5. Reporting Obligation**

- **Any person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect shall report the person's belief. Non-accusatory reports, that identify the victim whether or not the person responsible for the abuse is known, must be made to the local or state law enforcement agency or to the Texas Department of Human Services as follows:**
  - *The law requires an oral report must be made immediately on learning of the abuse or neglect*
  - *The law requires a written report must be made within five (5) days to the same agency.*
  - *All reports must contain the name and address of the child, the name and address of the person responsible for the care of the child and any other pertinent information.*
  - *This entire reporting policy is required as a condition of employment for both paid and volunteer worker*

### **6. Suspension of church related duties**

- **A person accused of child abuse or neglect will be suspended from all church related duties involving children. This would include all childcare, teaching, transportation or sponsorship duties. The Child Protection Committee is not authorized to conduct an investigation of the incident but is allowed to monitor any such investigation and receive confidential information concerning the incident as may be necessary to determine issues concerning continuation of employment and compensation.**
- **The person accused should be suspended (with 'paid leave' for employees) until the investigation is completed. This removal from duty should occur in such a way that an innocent person is not immediately deemed guilty.**
- **If the person in question is not convicted of sexual misconduct but is known to have offended or child abuse is confirmed by authorized officials of the agency to whom the suspected crime was reported, the church will immediately dismiss the worker from their position. A person who has committed sexual offenses, whether or not convicted by a court, may NOT work in any church-sponsored activity or program for minors, hold other church offices or perform any role in the congregation.**
- **If the allegation is determined to be completely unsubstantiated and legal documentation is obtained, the employee/worker can be returned to their prior position.**

## **VI. Source Acknowledgments**

**North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Children's Ministries; Adventist Risk Management; South Eastern California Conference, Family Ministries Child Protection Resource Book; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures; Reducing the Risk, Keep Your Ministry Safe From Child Sexual Abuse.**