

Volunteer Handout

Child Safety & Abuse Prevention in the Local Church

Our Commitment

We are committed to creating ministry environments where children are safe, seen, loved, and protected. Safety is not just a policy. It is part of our discipleship, leadership, and witness.

Core Safety Rules

1. Avoid one-on-one isolation.

Never be alone with a child or student in a private, unobservable setting.

2. Stay visible and accountable.

Use open doors, windows, public spaces, and approved ministry areas.

3. Follow check-in and release procedures.

Only release children to authorized adults with proper pickup verification.

4. Maintain healthy physical boundaries.

Use age-appropriate, public, non-forced affection. Avoid wrestling, tickling, lap sitting with older children, or comments about a child's body.

5. Keep digital communication accountable.

Avoid secret/private ongoing messaging with minors. Use parent-visible or church-approved communication.

6. Report concerns immediately.

Do not investigate. Do not delay. Do not handle it quietly.

If a Child Discloses Abuse

Say "I'm really glad you told me."

"You did the right thing."

"I can't keep this a secret because I want to help keep you safe."

Do:

- Stay calm.
- Listen carefully.
- Write down the child's exact words.
- Notify ministry leadership immediately.
- Report according to church policy and state law.
- Call 911 if the child is in immediate danger.

Do not:

- Interrogate.
- Promise secrecy.
- Minimize the concern.
- Confront the accused person.
- Investigate on your own.

Warning Signs to Take Seriously

- Sudden fear of a person or place
- Sexualized behavior or language
- Withdrawal, aggression, anxiety, or depression
- Unexplained injuries
- Fear of going home
- Signs of neglect
- A concerning statement from a child

Final Reminder

A safe church does not happen by accident.

It is built by trained adults, clear policies, wise boundaries, and courageous reporting.

CHILD SAFETY SYSTEM CHECKLIST

SCREENING (Everyone is vetted)

- Volunteer application completed
 - Interview conducted
 - Background check completed
 - 6-month attendance rule (if applicable)
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POLICIES (Clearly defined + written)

- Child Safety Policy in place
 - Bathroom procedures defined
 - Check-in / check-out system active
 - Classroom ratios established
 - Zero-tolerance policy communicated
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SUPERVISION (Protects kids AND leaders)- Reducing the Risk

- Two-adult rule enforced at all times
 - No isolated 1-on-1 environments
 - Open doors or visible classrooms
 - Hallway monitoring in place
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DOCUMENTATION

- Injury Report Form used for ALL injuries
 - Incident Report Form used for ALL concerns
 - Reports are stored securely
 - Parents are informed when needed
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TRAINING

- All volunteers trained before serving
- Annual safety training completed
- Leaders understand reporting process
- Scenarios reviewed with team

CONSISTENCY

- Policies applied to EVERY volunteer
 - Forms used EVERY time
 - System reviewed annually
 - Background checks updated regularly
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FINAL CHECK:

- "Would our system protect a child AND our church?"

VOLUNTEER TRAINING SCRIPT

TRAINING TITLE: “Creating a Safe Ministry”

● OPEN (2 MIN)

“Thank you for serving. What you do matters more than you know—not just spiritually, but physically and emotionally for every child.”

“Our goal is simple: every child safe, every leader protected.”

● WHY THIS MATTERS (2 MIN)

- Kids trust us
- Parents trust us
- God entrusts them to us

“We don’t do this because something happened—we do this so nothing happens.”

● EXPECTATIONS (4 MIN)

1. Two-Adult Rule

- Never be alone with a child
 - Always have another screened adult present
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2. Appropriate Boundaries

- No private messaging students
 - No unnecessary physical contact
 - No being alone in bathrooms
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3. Follow Procedures

- Use check-in system
 - Follow classroom ratios
 - Stick to assigned roles
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● REPORTING (3–4 MIN)

Say this clearly:

“If something happens, you are REQUIRED to report it.”

You must report:

- Injuries
 - Concerning behavior
 - Boundary violations
 - Anything that “feels off”
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Forms:

- Injury Report = physical issue
- Incident Report = behavior or concern

“You are not investigating—you are reporting.”

● CLOSE (1 MIN)

These policies don’t limit you—they protect you.”

- “When we follow the system, we create a place where kids can encounter Jesus safely.”

LEADER BUY-IN SCRIPT (When Volunteers Push Back)

SITUATION: “This feels like too much...”

RESPONSE:

“I totally get that—it can feel like a lot at first. But every policy we have exists because somewhere, something went wrong.”

SITUATION: “I’ve been here for years—you can trust me.”

RESPONSE:

“And we do trust you—that’s exactly why we want to protect you too. These systems aren’t about distrust, they’re about accountability and protection for everyone.”

SITUATION: “Do we really need to fill out a form for this?”

RESPONSE:

“Yes—because consistency is what protects us. If we only document big things, we miss patterns.”

SITUATION: “This feels impersonal...”

RESPONSE:

“Actually, it’s the opposite—this is how we love families well. Safety builds trust, and trust builds ministry.”

SITUATION: “This has never been a problem before.”

RESPONSE:

“That’s exactly why we do this—so it stays that way.”