



The Church of God

Child Protection Policy

Overview, Forms & Resources

Introduction

The Ministries of The Church of God, South Carolina seek to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect children from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers (workers) from false accusations.

The Spiritual and Moral Responsibility of the Church

The Gospel of Mark records that when people brought little children to Jesus, He took them in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them. As a church, it is our desire to bring children to Jesus, too.

In the church, we recognize that we are a reflection of God's love to those in our care, and we take our responsibility to them seriously. In our ministry to children, we must follow carefully what the Scriptures teach:

1. "Avoid every kind of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22 NIV).
2. "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people" (Ephesians 5:3 NIV).
3. "But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matthew 18:6 NIV).
4. "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan . . ." (Matthew 18:15–17 NIV).

These guidelines are therefore set forth to provide a safe and nurturing environment in which we can bring our children to the Savior. We seek to provide quality care and instruction in our ministry to the family. All of our guidelines are designed to protect and promote growth in God for each child and adult involved.

In making sure that the Church of God in South Carolina is a safe place, we endeavor to the following:

- Protect God's children—the creation of a secure, safe environment for our children/youth is of utmost importance (Matthew 18:1-6).
- Protect the workers from false accusation, litigation, and potential loss of ministry/career.
- Protect the congregations, State/regional Offices and General Headquarters.

Understanding the Need

Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse

The Church of God has a mandate to minister to individuals, families, adults, youth, and children. In that context, it stresses the sanctity of human life and the importance and worth of each individual as a child of God.

The disturbing and traumatic rise of physical and sexual abuse of children has claimed the attention of our nation and society. Unfortunately, churches that have children's programs are not insulated from this alarming trend, and we have, therefore, developed the Child Protection Policy. We believe that childhood innocence is a gift given by God. Children are naturally trusting. Children readily place their faith in adults who care for them. It is our responsibility as a Church to safeguard that trust.

It Can Happen In Any Church

Incidents of abuse can occur in any church—including ours. Churches have traditionally accepted the services of anyone expressing an interest in working as a volunteer with children or youth. Churches are by nature trusting and unsuspecting institutions. Asking sensitive questions of those who are giving their time and talent can be seen as distasteful by church leaders. No one wants to offend potential workers, especially longtime church members with a history of good service. These qualities can make a church susceptible to incidents of child abuse. There are few topics that create more emotion than that of child abuse, especially if it is sexual in nature.

Impact

A single incident of child abuse can devastate a church and divide the congregation. Members become outraged and bewildered. Parents question

Ted begins attending First Church. After a few weeks, he volunteers to work with the youth group. Church staff members do not know Ted, but they are delighted to have another worker. He is put to work immediately. The youth group has an overnight activity a few months later. Following the activity, two minors report that they were sexually molested by Ted. The parents of one of the minors contact a lawyer, and a \$3 million lawsuit is brought against Ted, the church, and the church board. The parents claim that the church (and the church board) acted negligently by not doing any background investigation before using Ted as a volunteer worker.

whether their own children have been victimized. The viability of the church's youth and children's programs is jeopardized. And church leaders face blame and guilt for allowing the incident to happen. Such incidents often result in massive media attention, sometimes on a national scale. Television stations conduct live interviews from church property on the evening news. Frontpage stories hit the local paper. Community residents begin to associate the church with the incident of abuse. But far more tragic is the emotional trauma to the victim and the victim's family, and the enormous potential legal liability the church faces. If a trial ensues, the issue stays alive in the media for months, sometimes even years.

Understanding Child Abuse

"Child abuse" is defined as follows:

- It can be physical, emotional, or sexual.
- All child abuse involves the misuse of power.
- Misuse of power takes place when people take advantage of the authority or power they have over vulnerable people.
- Vulnerable people include adults with physical or mental disabilities and children.

Physical Abuse is using physical force or action that results, or could result, in injury to a child or youth. It is more than reasonable discipline. Sometimes, injury is caused by over-discipline. Injuring a child or youth is not acceptable, regardless of differing cultural standards on discipline.

Emotional Abuse is a pattern of hurting a child's feelings to the point of damaging his or her self-respect. It includes verbal attacks on the child, insults, humiliation, or rejection. A child or youth who is emotionally harmed may demonstrate severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, or self-destructive or aggressive behavior.

Sexual Abuse occurs when someone uses a child or youth for sexual stimulation or gratification. Sexual activity between children or youth may also be sexual abuse if older or more powerful children or youth take sexual advantage of those who are younger or less powerful.

Child sexual abuse includes behavior that involves touching and non-touching aspects.

Types of sexual abuse that involve touching include the following:

- Fondling—this includes the suggestion that an adult should see and/or touch a child’s body to monitor development.
- Oral, genital, and anal penetration
- Intercourse
- Forcible rape

Types of sexual abuse that do not involve touching include the following:

- Verbal comments
- Pornographic videos
- Obscene phone calls
- Exhibitionism
- Allowing children to either hear about or witness sexual activity

The Church’s Legal Vulnerability

Why Churches Are Susceptible

Churches have unique features that can make them susceptible to incidents of child abuse. This risk increases dramatically for overnight activities.

1. **Access:** Child abusers are attracted to an institution in which they have immediate access to potential victims in an atmosphere of complete trust.
2. **Need:** Most churches struggle to get adequate help for children and youth programs. Recruiting nursery workers, for example, can become an unending effort. Turnover among volunteer workers is also high. A willing volunteer worker provides welcome relief.

Churches need to understand the extent of their liability. Churches are not “guarantors” of the safety and well-being of children. They are not absolutely liable for every injury that occurs on their premises or in the course of their activities. Generally, they are responsible

only for those injuries that result from their negligence. **Victims of abuse who have sued a church often allege that the church was negligent in not adequately screening applicants or for not providing adequate supervision.**

The Civil and Legal Liability of the Church

Increasingly and often more dramatically, the church and its personnel (i.e., staff, directors, officers, and ministers) are being held accountable for the acts of individual abusers within the church even though neither the church nor its leaders were aware of the abuse or condoned it. Churches are being sued in civil courts for damages sustained by victims and their families. Those victims and their families are attempting to hold churches accountable by alleging that

- the church is vicariously liable for the acts of its personnel, be they paid staff or volunteer staff, regardless of whether the church was itself negligent or even knew of the abuse
- the church was negligent in its hiring or accepting personnel, whether paid or volunteer
- the church was negligent in the supervising or monitoring of its personnel or membership

Sex Offender Access to Church and Ministries

When it becomes known that a registered sex offender is attending, the church can choose one of the following three responses:

- Do Nothing
- Totally excluding sex offenders from the church
- Allow Conditional attendance, according to a signed agreement

There is too much liability, and the church would not be exhibiting due diligence in protecting the church to do nothing. This leaves exclusion and conditional attendance as the only options.

Exclusion:

Although it may appear harsh and unforgiving, this is a valid option that depends on the severity of the person's crimes. There are different categories of the crimes for which a person can be placed on a state's sexual offender registry.

Some states use different tiers may classify sex offenders in other ways. Other states categorize sex offenders by level, from Level 1 to Level 3, based on the risk of reoffending.

- Level 1 offenders have a low risk to re-offend.
- Level 2 offenders have a moderate risk of re-offending.
- Level 3 sex offenders have a high risk of re-offending.

At the highest level or tier, the best response is to exclude them from attending. Even if the crime(s) occurred decades ago, consider the age of the victim(s); if the incident(s) involved pre-pubescent or early-pubescent children. It should not matter how long ago it occurred, since such a person may be a pedophile (someone with a sexual preference for prepubescent or early pubescent minors).

According to an FBI profile, pedophiles are promiscuous, predatory, and have a high recidivism rate. From a liability standpoint, the risk to minors and to the church in allowing a pedophile to attend may be too high. In addition, exclusion may be the proper response in cases where the victim(s) of the sex offender's crimes attend the same church. The church may agree to provide ministerial support, prayer, and counseling off church property. In these situations, the two-person rule will apply.

Conditional Attendance:

This means that the person is allowed to attend provided he or she complies with the conditions of a written agreement. This is sometimes viewed as a more merciful response. Worded properly, this can put the church in a position to be viewed as having acted reasonably under the circumstances, which means that it may not be considered negligent. However, a couple of things must be kept in mind if this course is chosen. First, this document should be drafted by an attorney and comply with any requirements under state law. Second, careful thought must be given as to the

conditions stated in the policy. The following conditions often are inserted in such documents:

- The offender may not work with minors in any official capacity.
- The offender may not transport minors.
- The offender may not attend children's or teens' functions at church.
- A chaperone must be designated to observe the person at all times while on church premises, never letting the person out of sight. Restrooms, in particular, pose a risk. Many documented cases of child molestation have taken place in a restroom. Always have the chaperone follow the offender into the restroom. In general, the spouse of a sex offender would not be a good choice for a chaperone. Ushers or Greeters are good candidates. In the case of a minor who has sexually molested another minor, the parents or legal guardians could act as chaperones. In their absence, another designated chaperone may be appointed.

When conditional attendance is approved, The Church of God will have a Zero Tolerance Policy for violation of a conditional attendance agreement. Even a single violation will result in the individual no longer being permitted to attend. In addition, it is best to contact the insurance agent or company to review the agreement after it is drafted and reviewed by an attorney. Often, insurance companies require this type of disclosure if there is a clause in the general liability policy pertaining to sexual misconduct.

Before adopting an attendance agreement, a check with the individual's probation officer (if they have one) will be completed. Many registered sex offenders have been released from incarceration as a result of a probation or parole agreement. Some probationary agreements prohibit offenders from attending church, and if this is the case, it is essential for church leaders to know it.

The welfare of the congregants and visitors at The Church of God, be they adults or children, is a commitment not taken lightly. Adherence to the procedures described above is central to achieving a church community that is welcoming and safe.

Child, Youth, and Worker Protection Policy

The policy is intended to clearly state that The Church of God will not tolerate child abuse or neglect. Your cooperation in this policy not only reflects your concern about children's safety, but also your willingness to take steps toward halting child abuse and its detrimental effects. For the safety and protection of our children and workers, all people who participate in Church-sponsored activities with children will be required to comply with this policy.

Definitions

In this policy, the following definitions will apply:

1. **Child:** Any person under the age of 18.
2. **Special-Needs person:** Any adult or child requiring direct adult supervision as a result of mental or physical limitations.
3. **Adult:** Any person age 18 and over.
4. **Child abuse and neglect:** Physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or neglect of a child by an adult or adolescent caregiver responsible for the child's welfare.
5. **Physical abuse:** Maltreatment that results in physical injury, including, but not limited to, bruises, cuts, welts, fractures, and internal injuries.
6. **Emotional abuse:** Maltreatment that results in impaired psychological growth and development, including, but not limited to, belittling, rejection, constant unequal treatment, verbal assaults, excessive demands on child's performance, and isolation from normal social activities.
7. **Sexual abuse:** Maltreatment that consists of sexual contact or interactions with a child, including, but not limited to, physical contact (fondling, genital/oral stimulation, sexual intercourse) and non-physical contact (exhibitionism, child prostitution, pornography, and voyeurism).
8. **Neglect:** Failure or inattention on the part of the caregiver to provide for a child's basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and supervision.
9. **Compensated workers:** Hourly, salaried, part-time, or full-time employees who work with children at any Church-sponsored activity.
10. **Volunteer workers:** Any non-compensated individual who works with children at any Church-sponsored activity.
11. **Caregiver:** Any compensated or volunteer worker, seventh grade or older.
12. **Mandated reporter:** Any person with responsibility for the care of children is a mandated reporter. If a caregiver has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or may be subjected to abuse or neglect, or observes a child being subjected to conditions or circumstances that would reasonably result in abuse or

neglect, that person shall immediately report or cause a report to be made to the Department of Children and Family Services or other comparable agency of the civil authorities. This will call for investigation of the controlling legal authority and the laws of the particular state or nation.

NOTE: Some states have passed legislation that has been signed into law REQUIRING the reporting to proper authorities. In most cases, there are specific guidelines for the prosecution of those who fail to report, which will often mandate fines and incarceration. In addition, there exists a substantial risk of exposure to civil litigation.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The application process, screening and required background checks are in effect as of June 2, 2025.

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

NOTE: Any volunteer, licensed minister, pastor, teacher already working in ministry in The Church of God do not need to complete this process. They do not need to complete an application or have a background check run. This part of the Child Protection Policy applies to volunteers who have not already been vetted by the local church.

A. Recommended Six Month Church Attendance

It is recommended that persons be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with minors until she/he has been a member, regular attender, or known by established member of The Church of God for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

NOTE: This RECOMMENDATION is based on 1 Timothy 5:9a which says, "Lay hands on no man suddenly." There is wisdom in taking time to observe a person's character, consistency, and commitment before entrusting them with spiritual influence or responsibility. Prayerfully consider the applicant and depend on the Holy Spirit for discernment.

B. Written Application

Anyone seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by the church. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliations, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions.

The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at the church office until the Background Check has been completed, at which time the application will be shredded so that confidential information (such as social security number, driver's license number, etc) isn't accessible.

C. Personal Interview

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face (or phone) interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

NOTE: We have included a section with suggested questions for the personal interview. Use your own judgment and discretion. This can be accomplished with a simple conversation or may already be known through counseling. Understanding an applicant's history regarding possible abuse allegations or through their own confession is a critical part of the evaluation.

D. Reference Checks

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicants' references should be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file in the church office.

NOTE: Documentation of the reference checks means the date and time of the contact, not personal or confidential details of the conversation.

E. Criminal Background Check

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and volunteers as defined above. All volunteer and compensated workers shall be screened by a background check for the purpose of obtaining information regarding criminal history or abuse findings. This check must include the state sex offender's registry.

*NOTE: As stated earlier, background checks are **NOT REQUIRED** for employees or volunteers already vetted and working PRIOR to June 2, 2025. We are not recommending that we begin retroactively running background checks on current ministry.*

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to complete online authorization form allowing The Church of God to run the check. (This is a legal requirement under

the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA)). The FCRA dictates that you must disclose your intent to conduct a background check and obtain the individual's signed consent before proceeding.) If an individual declines to complete the authorization form, she/he will be unable to work with children.

This application and the results of any screening shall be kept confidential by authorized Church staff unless it is required to be released for legal reasons.

A disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the State Presbytery on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. However, any adult member of the congregation, volunteer, or compensated worker who has been convicted of a crime against a child or a violent crime against another adult shall not provide service in any Church-sponsored activity or program for children or special needs persons.

Those who have been convicted of either sexual or physical abuse can be forgiven for and cleansed of their sin. However, sin does have consequences, and while such persons may serve in certain other areas of ministry, they will be prohibited from serving in the children's and special-needs ministries

Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form, or any failure to disclose accusations of, participation in, or convictions of any sexual misconduct will be disqualifying for participation in child ministry programs.

NOTE: The process of the written application, reference checks, background check, and providing a copy of the Child Protection Policy has a multi-faceted purpose.

1. This level of screening is a deterrent for anyone who may have ill-intentions to volunteer to help with children. The wolf in sheep's clothing will understand immediately that the under-shepherd has taken the time to erect a well-built fence and maintains a vigilant awareness of everything that is happening in the flock. The wolf will know that there will be no opportunity for destruction there.

2. The policy provides clarity and transparency regarding what is an acceptable environment for which children can safely learn and grow in Christ. By providing a copy of the policy to potential volunteers up front, there is no room for misunderstanding or miscommunication. It is clearly spelled out what is expected.

3. Parents will have peace of mind knowing that their children are safe in the hands of someone who is known and trusted by their church leadership.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Commonly Asked Questions

Is a criminal background check really necessary?

Sadly, the culture in which we live dictates that we must take drastic preventive measures to protect the children and youth whose care we've been entrusted with. Furthermore, there are litigation issues: A Church that hasn't performed background checks faces the risk of catastrophic financial penalties in the event that an allegation of abuse within the Church leads to a conviction or out-of-court settlement.

Who needs to submit a Children's and Youth Workers Application and a Permission to Obtain a Background Check form?

Any Church employee or volunteer who will have direct contact with any child or youth (less than 18 years of age), either on or off the Church sites, during any Church-related ministries must complete both of these forms.

Once I complete and sign these forms, to whom do I give them?

Give your completed forms to the director of Children's Ministries/director of Youth Ministries or pastor.

I'm concerned about confidentiality and privacy issues. Who will see my application, and, more importantly, who will see the results of my background check?

Only those individuals listed above, along with our Church's administrative support staff, will see your application and the results of your criminal background check. It will be noted that a background check was performed, and the application and further documents pertaining to the check will be destroyed once reviewed.

I am not presently involved in any Church volunteer work that involves young people. Should I submit an application and give permission for a background check?

Because the addition of programs to minister to these young people is ongoing, the demand for volunteers is always on the increase. Even though you may not be currently involved in such a ministry, it's a good idea to go ahead and submit your forms now. In the event that you do volunteer work at some point in the future, we'll already have your forms on file and can do the background check right before the volunteer work begins.

What is a "U.S. Criminal Record Indicator" database search?

The U.S. Criminal Record Indicator is the most comprehensive and current search available in the United States. The U.S. Criminal Record Indicator database search examines the Department of Public Safety, Department of Corrections, Administrative Office of the Courts, Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, and/or the Department of Criminal Justice files and records, and other applicable government agencies where available. Currently, this search includes information from 39 states plus multiple online county records.

BACKGROUND CHECKS (Cont.)

Why do I have to list my Social Security Number (SSN)?

There are a couple of reasons. The first is that your SSN is the primary key for all databases affiliated with a background check. The second reason is that your SSN is used to verify the following crucial information:

- Whether the SSN is validly issued
- To whom the SSN belongs
- In which year and state the SSN was issued
- The current and other known or previous addresses to that SSN

The SSN verification process can reveal that the number belongs to another individual, has more than one name associated with it (i.e., produces other aliases) including maiden and divorced names, is associated with fraud, is not a validly issued SSN, belongs to a deceased person, produces additional addresses not stated by the application/request form, or if that individual has other SSNs.

Anyone can give a false identification by using another person's Social Security number. This search ensures that the individual is who he or she says. The Social Security search is provided in the Basic Search along with the National Criminal Indicator search.

What criteria from the background check will determine whether or not someone is approved for volunteer or paid staff work? Who makes that decision?

The background check will cite felony and misdemeanor convictions listed in the National Criminal Database Search. The most obvious reason that someone is denied the opportunity to do volunteer work in our Church is any prior conviction pertaining to an offense against a child. It's quite unlikely, though, that a person with such a conviction would even submit an application.

Misdemeanor convictions, and even some felony convictions, would have little or no negative impact in determining a person's worthiness as a Church volunteer. To put it another way, the only determining factor in evaluating someone's criminal record is the likelihood of him or her posing a threat to our young people.

In the event a felony conviction turns up on the report, the pastor, with the appropriate state/national overseer, will decide whether the person is allowed to work as a volunteer or paid staff.

Final Thoughts

Please know that the intent of the background check is to protect the children in our Church. Its purpose is not to cause personal embarrassment by dredging up past mistakes or wrong choices. Regrettably, it's impossible to implement a viable screening plan without a bit of scrutiny into some personal background information. Throughout the entire process of developing the Child, Youth, and Worker Protection Policy for our Church, a tremendous amount of concern and sensitivity has been shown in regard to matters of confidentiality. Much effort has been put into implementing screening procedures that limit the number of people who have visible access to private information. Please know that as the screening process evolves during the next several years, the leadership of The Church of God will remain committed to the task of administering screening procedures with utmost regard to your privacy.

POLICY AND CARE GUIDELINES*

*GUIDELINES AND COMMON-SENSE SUGGESTIONS

NOTE: This section includes some best-practices when it comes to providing safe care for children. Many of the examples listed here are most likely things that may be common-sense or something that is already understood. The purpose of offering these guidelines within this policy is to provide clarity and transparency regarding the standard of care that is expected when ministering to children. Some of the examples may not apply to your particular layout or classroom. In instances like these, use wise judgment and discretion.

It is no one's intention to oversee or "police" any detail of these guidelines in a local church setting. If there were ever an instance of abuse that would occur, if the following guidelines would have helped to prevent that abuse and they were disregarded, the immediate overseer (Local Pastor/Youth Director) assumes liability.

Two Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult workers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open. It is a best practice that there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation (not opposite sex).

NOTE: It is understood that sometimes in small classes you may only have two students. Use wisdom and discretion in these situations. If you can conduct this class in a more open area or with the door open, that would be best. At no time should a class or other activity be conducted with one adult and one minor of the opposite sex.

If you, as a church leader, receive negative feedback from volunteers regarding these guidelines, remind them that this is for the protection of students AND staff. There can be no misunderstandings or false accusations if there are witnesses present.

Special Situations

Field Trips off Campus: Adult chaperones are needed when children leave the property for a church activity. Two adults are required and at least one male and one female are preferred. Parent signed permission forms delegating authority to act on behalf of the parents in the case of a child emergency are required for each trip. Drivers must have a valid drivers' license and vehicle insurance, and it is strongly suggested that drivers with previous Drive While Impaired (DWI) convictions should not be authorized to transport children.

Field Trips-Overnight and Mission Trips: In addition to following standard field trip procedures other requirements apply to overnight stays. Bunk rooms in large retreat facilities are ideal and allow for males and females to be housed separately. Further, often adults are segregated within the bunk house facilities. Occasionally, hotel rooms are the only available option and adults will maintain separate accommodations from children whenever possible.

NOTE: Obviously, if you have younger aged children and have to stay in a hotel (this would not be a common occurrence), children wouldn't be in a room separate from the adult chaperones. However, an adult not related to the child would not share a bed with a minor, whether they are the same sex or opposite sex. Two chaperones should be present with minors at all times.

Open Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities. The following guidelines apply to teenage workers:

- Should be at least age 14.
- Over 16 years old must be screened* as specified above. **Background checks won't apply.*
- Must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

Discipline Policy

It is the policy of The Church of God, South Carolina not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Workers should consult with program director, youth pastor, or lead pastor if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

Restroom Guidelines

Children **five years of age and younger** should use a classroom bathroom if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort children to the hallway bathroom and stay outside of the bathroom. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, and then allow the child inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the child back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the worker should ask for help from another chaperone to witness, prop open the bathroom door, and leave the stall door open as they assist the child. If at all possible, ask the child's parent to come to assist instead.

For children **over the age of five**, at least one adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female should take girls. The worker should check the bathroom first to make sure

that the bathroom is empty, and then allow the children inside. The worker should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom.

For the protection of all, workers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

NOTE: In addition, if you have a nursery and have to change diapers, you should have another volunteer present with you. This and other restroom guidelines may seem excessive or overboard to some, especially considering that many of our volunteers have known these children for a long time and we consider one another family. For the purpose of this WRITTEN POLICY, consider that you will have new volunteers that will also be following these guidelines. Many cases of child sexual abuse in church/school settings occur in the restroom. While some seasoned volunteers may find this unnecessary and perhaps overly-cautious, by adhering to the policy, this will prevent future cases of abuse and protect volunteers from allegations.

Technology Guidelines

To protect both youth and adults, all communication between church staff/volunteers and minors must be transparent, appropriate, and accountable.

- Direct Communication: Staff and volunteers should not text, private message, email, or communicate one-on-one via social media with minors. All communications should be through approved, group-based platforms with parental oversight. This protects youth from inappropriate contact and protects adults from misunderstandings or accusations.
- Photos/Videos: Taking photos or videos of minors should be done with extreme caution. They should never be shared online without express permission from a parent or guardian. This helps protect the privacy and dignity of the child and reduces the risk of images being misused.
- Use of Personal Devices: Allowing youth to use a staff member's or volunteer's personal phone, tablet, or other device should be rare and always supervised. Caution is needed to prevent accidental exposure to inappropriate content, access to private files or messages, or creating an impression of favoritism or secrecy.

All interactions – digital or otherwise – should reflect the same standards of respect, safety, and accountability we uphold in person.

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian

will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.

3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

NOTE: Creating an incident report keeps a written record of what occurred. If a child is injured in our care, the church is liable for financial losses due to their medical treatment. If your local church has general liability insurance to cover injuries on the property (which you should), a written record with witness statements will be important to the insurance company and may be helpful in litigation. A dated, written document that we have retained on file will be much more reliable and credible than someone's memory of an event.

Training

The Church of God, South Carolina will provide training on this child protection policy and strategies for detecting abuse to all new childcare workers, volunteers and coaches. The church requires that all workers complete training prior to working with children and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

CHILD ABUSE

Recognizing Child Abuse

Child abuse is defined as physical, sexual or psychological mistreatment, or neglect of a child or children, and is usually due to actions or failure to act as a parent or caregiver. While child abuse may be a rare occurrence at The Church of God, SC all staff and volunteers need to be alert to the possible signs.

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- **Physical abuse** - any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- **Emotional abuse** - emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- **Sexual abuse**- any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- **Neglect** - depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

For the purposes of these procedures, any reference to a child or youth means a person less than 18 year of age.

Symptoms of Child Abuse

Symptoms of abuse vary widely and are dependent on the age and environment of the child. The list that follows are red flags that, when observed, cannot be ignored. The child...

- Withdraws from friends or usual activities.
- Has changes in behavior such as aggression, anger, hostility or hyperactivity.
- Exhibits depression, anxiety, unusual fears, or sudden loss of self-confidence.
- Has an apparent lack of supervision.
- Is reluctant to leave church or does not want to go home.
- Attempts to run away.
- Exhibits rebellious or defiant behavior.
- Attempts suicide.
- Shows evidence of unusual bruises or is in obvious pain when moving or being hugged.
- Demonstrates sexual behavior or knowledge that is inappropriate for his or her age.
- Says things that suggest he or she has been sexually abused or touched inappropriately.
- Has trouble walking or sitting.
- Abuses other children sexually.
- Desperately seeks affection.
- Shows poor hygiene.
- Lacks appropriate clothing or excessively worn clothing.
- Demonstrates emotional swings that are inappropriate or out of context to the situation.
- Shows indifference.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at this church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to the program director, youth pastor, or lead pastor for further action, including reporting to authorities as mandated by state law.

*NOTE: Reporting abuse may be an uncomfortable topic for some volunteers. What may be considered "abuse" to some, may be "discipline" to another. For the purposes of this WRITTEN POLICY, we are asking leaders and volunteers to use **common sense**. For example, ask yourself: if I encountered this exact scenario or situation outside of this setting, what actions would I take? If you would consider what you are seeing abuse or the child in your care shows signs of abuse, as a care giver, you are obligated under the law (not just this policy) to report it to the proper authorities. In many states, EVERYONE is now considered a mandated reporter, not just teachers, clergy, caregivers, etc. If you, as a REASONABLE PERSON, would consider ABUSE, report it.*

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse: What is probable cause?

Probable cause means that the available facts, when viewed in the light of the surrounding circumstances, would cause a reasonable person to believe a child was abused or neglected. A report based on probable cause *does not require proof* that abuse or neglect has actually occurred; rather, it is a request for an assessment of the condition of a child.

Because we believe children are our most important concern, The Church of God, SC has adopted the following guidelines for reporting suspected abuse:

1. Upon observing or suspecting abuse, the caregiver shall immediately do the following:
 - a. Make sure the child's safety and comfort are secured.
 - b. Make sure the suspected abuser is safely away from the children.
2. Report the abuse or neglect promptly to the pastor or director of Children's Ministries and/or the director of Youth Ministries. To preserve confidentiality, it is important to discuss the incident initially only with any of these four individuals.

Reporting Allegations of Child Abuse

The Church of God has determined that it is the responsibility of the pastoral staff to report all cases of suspected child abuse or neglect to the proper legal authorities with 24 hours of it being discovered. When it becomes necessary to report suspected child abuse or neglect, the protection of children must be the most important concern. The state/national overseer must be notified immediately.

As a caregiver, you are a mandated reporter of child abuse or neglect. It is the legal responsibility of a mandated reporter to report all cases of child abuse or neglect he or she observes, and further, to report visible signs of alleged abuse or neglect. Failure to report could lead to liability on the part of the Church, the observer, or both.

The confidentiality of the pastor/attende relationship is very important. Reporting probable cause of child abuse or neglect has the potential for helping individuals receive help for a previous problem and may prevent further harm to self and others.

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at this church or during one of our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
2. If a worker or church member is alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct, they will immediately be placed on leave pending an investigation and instructed to remain away from the premises during the investigation. He or she should be instructed to have no contact with the victim or with witnesses.
3. **All allegations of abuse should be reported* to the appropriate law enforcement authorities.** The church will comply with the state's requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse in accordance with existing law. The church will fully cooperate with the investigation of the incident by law enforcement authorities. **It is not the responsibility of the church to investigate the allegation or claim. It is simply our duty to report it. To*

"investigate" or try to "get to the bottom of it" immediately creates a liability. Doing so is Step #1 in creating a Cover-Up. You remain an unbiased and neutral party while the proper authorities do their job. Remember that we are not only responding to an accusation spiritual trespass, but also a potential crime.

4. Contact your State Bishop, who will notify General Headquarters of the incident.
5. The insurance company **will be** notified, and the church will complete an incident report. Any documents received relating to the incident and/or allegations will immediately be forwarded to the insurance company.
6. The church will designate a spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect. The advice of legal counsel will be sought before responding to media inquiries or releasing information about the situation to the congregation. All other representatives of the organization should refrain from speaking to the media.
7. A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it. This should be for the purpose of providing pastoral support during the time of crisis and not for the purpose of investigating the incident or influencing the investigation.
8. Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position working with children or youth.

Response of The Church of God

The primary function of The Church of God in responding to allegations of sexual abuse or neglect is:

- to attempt to provide pastoral care to all who are affected
- attempt to ensure the safety and protection of persons who have been or may be harmed
- seek healing by providing pastoral care and other needed assistance to all who are affected
- to the extent possible, respect the privacy and rights of the parties involved and the confidentiality of communications.

If the Church of God receives an allegation of child abuse or neglect, the pastors will respond with the utmost concern to the victim, parent, or other party making such an allegation.

The accused will be treated with dignity and support. Without clear and convincing evidence to the contrary, The Church of God will assume that such complaints are made in good faith.

Persons making such complaints should have no doubt that The Church of God takes them seriously and will take appropriate action.

If an alleged abuser contacts the Church officials about a complaint, The Church of God personnel may confirm that they have received such a complaint only if they are certain the alleged abuser already knows this. They should avoid discussing the allegations or making any further comments until the proper authorities have an opportunity to conduct their investigation.

They should not identify the alleged victim or complainant during an investigation.

If the media or other parties contact a Church official about a pending allegation of child abuse, they should be referred to the pastor. Only the pastor or his designee shall make comments about the allegation.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Responsibilities of The Church of God Pastoral Staff

In accordance with the Church's position that child abuse and neglect shall not be tolerated, the pastoral staff shall do the following:

1. Take all allegations of child abuse and/or neglect seriously.
2. Document all efforts at handling the incident.
3. Contact the Department of Children and Family Services or its equivalent agency within 24 hours. In many cases, the governing law enforcement agencies may have investigators specifically designated to investigate such claims. Do not attempt an in-depth investigation. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases. *Every state in the U.S. has mandated reporting laws for child abuse, meaning there isn't a state that doesn't require certain individuals to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect, and many states require "any person" to report suspected abuse.*
4. If the incident involves church staff/volunteers, occurred on church property, or at a church-sponsored event, report the incident immediately to the church insurance company and attorney.
5. Do not try to handle this without professional outside assistance.
6. Notify the parents or guardians (unless the suspected abuse happened at home).
7. Do not confront the accused until the safety of the child or special-needs person is secured.
8. Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously, and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Showing care and support will help to prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority.
9. Treat the accused with dignity and support. If the accused is a caregiver, that person should be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished.
10. Use the text of a prepared public statement to answer the press and to convey news to the congregation. Be careful to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.

APPENDIX A

The following forms are added here for your convenience. These are examples for you to follow. You are not required to use these particular forms or this format.

1A – Incident Report

1B – Witness Report

2A – Suspected Child Abuse Report Form

2B – Suspected Child Abuse Follow-Up Form

3A – Waiver & Medical Release Form

3B – Waiver – Overnight Events

INCIDENT REPORT

Instructions

Complete this report under any of the following situations:

- A. A child becomes ill or receives an injury that requires First Aid or medical treatment while in your care;
- B. A child receives a bump or blow to the head or other visible injury regardless of treatment;
- C. A child is transported by ambulance from your facility;
- D. An unusual or unexpected incident occurs that jeopardizes the safety of a child, such as a child left unattended, there is a vehicle accident (with or without injuries), or a child is exposed to a threatening person or situation;
- E. There is an allegation or reasonable suspicion of abuse of a child.
Important: Consult your state's mandatory reporting requirements for further information on abuse reporting; OR
- F. As otherwise required by any state licensing or other authority, such as childcare or daycare licensing.

Date of Incident:	Time of Incident:
Name and Approximate Age of Child Involved (One Report per Child):	
Contact Information for Child Involved: Parent/Guardian: _____ Address: _____ Telephone: _____ Email: _____	
Nature of Injury/Incident:	
Location of Incident:	

Description of Incident:

Was the above information:

Reported to you by someone else? If so, who: _____

OR

Directly observed/witnessed by you?

Action(s) Taken: (Check all that apply.)

Provided First Aid What/When _____

Call placed to 911 By Whom _____

Taken to hospital By Whom _____

Notified Parent/Guardian Who/When: _____

Notified Church Official Who/When: _____

Notified Authorities Who/When: _____

Other _____

Witnesses to Incident:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Printed Name of Person Completing This Report: _____

Position at the Organization: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Church Official: _____

Date: _____

WITNESS REPORT

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Numbers:

Home: _____

Work: _____

Cell: _____

Email: _____

Date/Time of Incident:

Fully Describe What You Observed:

Anyone else you know who may have witnessed the incident?

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Printed Name of Witness: _____

Signature: _____

Date Signed: _____

REPORT FORM
Suspected Child Abuse

DATE _____

Name of Child _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Name of Person Filing Report _____

Name of Person Receiving Report _____

Nature of Suspected Abuse: (Physical, Sexual, Emotional, Neglect) _____

Indications of Suspected Abuse: (Including Facts, Physical Signs and Course of Events Where

Necessary) _____

Action Taken: (Including Date and Time) _____

The above information will serve as a guide and will be necessary if a formal report is filed with the police or appropriate government agency. All information received is to be kept **STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**.

Signed _____ Signed _____
(Person Reporting) (Pastor)

**FOLLOW-UP REPORT
Suspected Child Abuse**

Name of Child _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Name of Person Who Filed Initial Report _____

Name of Person Receiving Report _____

Conclusions

Action Taken: (Including Date and Time) _____

The above information will serve as a guide and will be necessary if a formal report is filed with the police or appropriate government agency. All information received is to be kept **STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**.

Signed _____ Date _____
(Pastor)

WAIVER & MEDICAL RELEASE FORM
Field Trips and Special Events

Activity _____ Date _____

Chaperones _____

Name of Child _____ Age _____

Address _____

Phone _____ School _____

Does your child have any severe allergies (bee stings, food, penicillin, other drugs)? YES ___ NO ___

If yes, please explain: _____

Does your child have any life-threatening allergies? YES ___ NO ___

If yes, please explain: _____

Is your child bringing any medication with him or her (antibiotics, ventilator, Ritalin)? YES ___ NO ___

If yes, please explain: _____

Does your child have any physical, emotional, mental, or behavioral concerns or limitations that our staff should be aware of? YES ___ NO ___

If yes, please explain: _____

Precautions are taken for the safety and health of your child, but in the event of accident or sickness, the Church of God, (local church name) _____,

its staff, and its volunteers are hereby released from any liability. In the event that your child requires special medication, X-rays, or treatment, the parents/guardians will be notified immediately.

Your child must be covered by medical or health insurance.

Name of Health Insurance Provider _____

Insurance ID Number _____

Name of Family Physician _____ Physician's Phone Number _____

Parent's/Guardian's Signature

Date

WAIVER & MEDICAL RELEASE FORM
Overnight Events

Activity _____ Date _____

Chaperones _____

Name of Child _____ Age _____

Address _____

Phone _____ School _____

Does your child have any severe allergies (bee stings, food, penicillin, other drugs)? YES ___ NO ___

If yes, please explain: _____

Does your child have any life-threatening allergies? YES ___ NO ___

If yes, please explain: _____

Is your child bringing any medication with him or her (antibiotics, ventilator, Ritalin)? YES ___ NO ___

If yes, please explain: _____

Does your child have any physical, emotional, mental or behavioral concerns or limitations that our staff should be aware of? YES ___ NO ___

If yes, please explain: _____

Circle if your child currently, or within the last three months, has had any of the following:

- Appendicitis Diabetes Hay Fever Mumps
- Asthma Ear Infection Hepatitis Severe Stomach Ache
- Epilepsy Measles (Red) Sinusitis Bedwetting
- Chicken Pox Fainting Measles (Red) Tonsillitis
- Other: _____

Date of Last Tetanus Shot: _____

Precautions are taken for the safety and health of your child, but in the event of accident or sickness, the Church of God, its staff, and its volunteers are hereby released from any liability.

In the event that your child requires special medication, X-rays, or treatment, the parents/guardians will be notified immediately.

In case of surgical emergency, I hereby give permission to the physician selected by the church to hospitalize, secure proper treatment for, and to order injection, anesthesia, or surgery for my child as named above.

Your child must be covered by health or medical insurance.

Name of Health Insurance Provider: _____

Insurance ID Number: _____

Name of Family Physician _____ Physician's Phone Number _____

Parent's/Guardian's Signature

Date

REGISTRATION/CONTACT CARD

Name of Child _____ Age _____

Address _____

Phone _____ School _____

Emergency Contact _____ Relation _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Does your child have any severe allergies (bee stings, food, penicillin, other drugs)? YES ____ NO ____

If yes, please explain: _____

Does your child have any life-threatening allergies? YES ____ NO ____

If yes, please explain: _____

Does your child have any physical, emotional, mental, or behavioral concerns or limitations that our staff should be aware of? YES ____ NO ____

If yes, please explain: _____

Photo/Video Release:

I give permission for The Church of God to photograph and/or video my child during church-related activities. I understand these images may be used for church-related publications, presentations, and online platforms such as the church website and social media. (Note: Your child's safety and privacy are extremely important to us. Images will never be used in a way that is inappropriate, misleading, or exploitative. We will not include children's names with photos shared publicly.

I do not give permission for The Church of God to photograph and/or video my child for any purpose.

Parent's/Guardian's Signature

Date

APPENDIX B

The following forms are copies of forms included in the separate file "Volunteer Packet." Additionally, potential volunteers also receive a copy of the Child Protection Policy (Volunteer Edition). This is the same information in this Overview without Notes to Leadership.

- **4A – Volunteer Packet Cover Letter**
- **4B - Confidential Volunteer Application**
- **4C – Authorization & Release of Liability**
- **4D – Background Check Authorization**

These forms are listed here for your convenience. You are not required to use these exact forms or format.

- **5A – Reference Check Table**
- **5B – Suggested Interview Questions**
- **5C – Initial Clearance Checklist**

The Church of God

Volunteer Application Packet

Thank you for your willingness to minister to the youth/children of The Church of God, South Carolina. This packet contains our Child Protection Statement, and an application to work or volunteer with minors. This application is to be completed by all workers who give supervision, have custody of minors, (A minor is an individual under the age of 18 years) or who have opportunity to have contact with minors in church facilities or church sponsored activities and by all church employees. It will help our church family provide a safe and secure environment for all boys and girls who participate in our ministries and use our facilities.

1. **Child Protection Statement**– Please read this so you will be acquainted with the purpose and goals of our Child Protection Policy.

The Church of God South Carolina's Child Protection Statement

We at The Church of God, South Carolina value children. It is our mission to lead them into a growing relationship with Christ and help them develop a strong bond with those who minister to them. Abuse, specifically, physical and sexual abuse, endanger that mission. We are committed to following wise policies to safeguard the delicate lives God has entrusted us with. We ask your cooperation in making this a safe place to learn, grow and play.

2. **Confidential Volunteer Application**– Please fill this form out completely, sign, date and return it to the local church pastor. Please be sure to complete the “References” section as thoroughly as possible.

3. **Authorization and Release of Liability** - Signed

4. **Background Check Application**– Every person involved in any capacity with or even around children at The Church of God, South Carolina is required to fill out and submit this application in order to be involved with youth or children on The Church of God's property.

The Church of God

Confidential Volunteer Application

Today's Date _____

Personal Information

Full Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Present Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Work _____ Cell _____

Email Address _____

If you have lived at your current address less than seven years, provide information on all addresses during that time period.

Previous Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

1. How long have you attended The Church of God? Years _____ Months _____

2. Have you ever been convicted of, pled guilty to, or pled no contest to a crime other than a minor traffic violation? No _____ Yes _____

If yes, please explain:

3. Are you now under charges for criminal offense? A criminal conviction will not necessarily disqualify you from conviction. No _____ Yes _____

If yes, please explain:

References

List at least two references from places of employment or prior volunteer service, especially regarding previous work with other youth-serving organizations (not from this local church).

Additional references may be provided on a separate sheet of paper. References must meet the following criteria: must be over age 18; must not be a relative; must have seen you work with minors and be able to speak to your ability to serve young people; and must have known you for at least one year.

1st Reference

Name _____ Length of time known _____

How do you know this person? _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Home Phone _____ Work _____

Cell: _____ Job Description _____

THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY CHURCH STAFF:

How long have you known the applicant? Under which circumstances?

What is your knowledge of this person's work with children/youth?

How would you describe this person's manner of interacting with children/youth?

Based on your observation, is this person reliable and dependable?

Would you feel comfortable with this person being alone with a small group of children/youth for a period of time? Why or why not?

Do you have any concerns we should know about regarding this person's ability to work with children/youth?

Were you ever made aware of circumstances in which this person's care of children/youth was called into question or criticized? If yes, please describe the circumstances.

Were you ever made aware of any criminal or civil investigations or actions taken against this person? If yes, please describe the circumstances.

Do you recommend this person to work with children/youth? Why or why not?

2nd Reference

Name _____ Length of time known _____

How do you know this person? _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Home Phone _____ Work _____

Cell: _____ Job Description _____

THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY CHURCH STAFF:

How long have you known the applicant? Under which circumstances?

What is your knowledge of this person's work with children/youth?

How would you describe this person's manner of interacting with children/youth?

Based on your observation, is this person reliable and dependable?

Would you feel comfortable with this person being alone with a small group of children/youth for a period of time? Why or why not?

Do you have any concerns we should know about regarding this person's ability to work with children/youth?

Were you ever made aware of circumstances in which this person's care of children/youth was called into question or criticized? If yes, please describe the circumstances.

Were you ever made aware of any criminal or civil investigations or actions taken against this person? If yes, please describe the circumstances.

Do you recommend this person to work with children/youth? Why or why not?

I acknowledge receipt of the Child Protection Policy.

Signature _____ Date _____

Training on Policy Completed Date _____

Authorization and Release of Liability

I hereby represent and warrant that the information contained in this application is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I authorize references, or any other person or organization, whether or not identified in this application, to give you any information (including opinions) regarding my character and fitness for volunteer service. In consideration of the receipt and evaluation for this application by the church, I hereby release the organization with which I am applying to volunteer and all of its directors, officers, employees, agents, volunteers, and any individual, church, denominational agency or official, reference, or any other person or organization, including record custodians, both collectively and individually, and whether or not identified in this application, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family, relating to the obtaining, communication and use of information about me or relating to this authorization on account of compliance or any attempts to comply with this authorization, excepting only the communication of knowingly false information. I further state that I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE FOREGOING RELEASE AND NOW THE CONTENTS THEREOF AND I SIGN THIS RELEASE AS MY OWN FREE ACT. This is a legally binding release which I have read and understand. I understand that I may consult with an attorney before signing this document. A facsimile or photocopy of this authorization shall be as valid as the original. I further understand that a criminal records check will be conducted on me, and I consent to any such check.

I (check one of the following two options): waive _____ do not waive _____

any right that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization described above. I have read and understand the Dispute Resolution and Release of Liability provisions and agree to them.

Applicant Signature _____ Today's Date _____

The Church of God Volunteer Background Check Authorization

Name: _____
(First) (Middle) (Last)

Former Name(s) and Dates Used: _____

Current Address Since: _____
(Mo/Yr) (Street) (City) (Zip/State)

Previous Address From: _____
(Mo/Yr) (Street) (City) (Zip/State)

Previous Address From: _____
(Mo/Yr) (Street) (City) (Zip/State)

Social Security Number: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Driver's License Number/State: _____

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I hereby authorize The Church of God and its designated agents and representatives to conduct a comprehensive review of my background causing a consumer report and/or an investigative consumer report to be generated for employment and/or volunteer purposes. I understand that the scope of the consumer report/ investigative consumer report may include, but is not limited to the following areas: verification of social security number; current and previous residences; employment history, education background, character references; drug testing, civil and criminal history records from any criminal justice agency in any or all federal, state, county jurisdictions; driving records, birth records, and any other public records.

I further authorize any individual, company, firm, corporation, or public agency (including the Social Security Administration and law enforcement agencies) to divulge any and all information, verbal or written, pertaining to me, to The Church of God or its agents. I further authorize the complete release of any records or data pertaining to me which the individual, company, firm, corporation, or public agency may have, to include information or data received from other sources.

I hereby release The Church of God, the Social Security Administration, and its agents, officials, representative, or assigned agencies, including officers, employees, or related personnel both individually and collectively, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind, which may, at any time, result to me, my heirs, family, or associates because of compliance with this authorization and request to release.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

CONFIDENTIAL RECORD OF CHURCH CONTACT
With A Reference or Church Identified by an Applicant for Children's Work

Name of Applicant _____

Reference or Church Contacted	Date of Contact	Person Contacting the Reference or Church	Method of Contact (telephone, letter, personal conversation)	Summary of Contact
-------------------------------	-----------------	---	--	--------------------

Suggested Interview Guide/Questions

Spiritual questions

- Tell us about your relationship with Jesus Christ, your devotional life, and what Bible passages are meaningful to you.
- What is your doctrinal stance on Scripture?

Vision

- What is your vision for youth ministry?
- Do you sense God's call to long-term youth ministry?
- What evidence in your life affirms this calling?

Strengths

- What do you see as your strengths for ministry/spiritual gifts?

Weaknesses

- In what areas of ministry will you struggle? How will you compensate for these struggles?

Experience

- What is your experience with retreats, sports, and service projects?
- Conflict resolution: What is your preferred style of handling conflicts?
- Crisis management: What is your operating procedure when dealing with a youth crisis?
- Behavioral questions: Tell me about a time in which you handled a challenging situation.
- Approach to abuse: What is your approach to helping youths recover from abuse?

Accountability

- How important is accountability in youth ministry?
- How would you seek to build accountability into your life and ministry?
- In a ministry profession with a high burnout rate, how do you see yourself staying spiritually fueled for ministry?
- What boundaries would you establish around your relationships with youth group members of the opposite sex?

Family And Personal Relationships

- Tell us about your family
- How would one of your best friends describe you?

**Employee/Volunteer
Initial Clearance Checklist**

- Confidential Volunteer Application
- Application/instructions for Criminal Record Check given to applicant
- Reference Contact Form completed and signed; file copy for all contacts
- Background Check completed and received from authorities
- Interview completed
- Driver's Record Check (if required) received
- All of the above in order, reviewed, and cleared for applicant to serve in the Children's and Youth Ministries at The Church of God in South Carolina.

Signature of Pastor or Department Head _____ Date _____

If this cannot be signed at this time because of an unsatisfactory response in any of the above categories, it must be referred to the pastor of that department before any further discussion with the applicant.

- I acknowledge receipt of the Child Protection Policy

Signature _____ Date _____

Training on Policy Completed Date _____