

Child/Youth Safety Policy



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To know Christ and to share His love ...

SECTION 1 -- PURPOSE:

This policy provides written affirmation of the paramount importance of all individuals at St. Andrew's. We are committed to providing an environment that is safe and Christ-centered for all persons. This policy provides written guidelines regarding required screening and training for all people who work in programs for children and youth. The policy also provides guidelines regarding appropriate programs for children and youth that may be sponsored by this church. This policy will be modified in the future as needed by the Church Council.

SECTION 2 -- DEFINITIONS:

- A. **Children:** All persons from birth until the completion of the sixth grade.
- B. **Youth:** Students from the ending moment of the sixth grade until the final moment of the twelfth grade. A student becomes an adult for purposes of this policy when he/she attains age eighteen regardless of the grade level at the time.
- C. **Adult:** Individuals that are age eighteen and older.
- D. **Staff:** Individuals that are compensated by St. Andrew's to perform specific services that are approved and controlled by the Staff Parish Relations (SPR) Committee.
- E. **Servant::** Individuals who participate as leaders in activities relating to established programs at St. Andrew's without compensation and without the control of the SPR Committee.
- F. **Application:** A written request including specific information for very specific purposes.
- G. **Background Investigation:** An established risk assessment to evaluate criminal history and background history/references of volunteers and staff members.
- H. **St. Andrew's:** St. Andrew's United Methodist Church, 2045 S.E. Green Oaks Blvd., Arlington, TX 76018
- I. **SPR:** Staff Parish Relations Committee
- J. **Suspected Misconduct:** Behaviors exhibited by children that lead parents, volunteers and/or staff to suspect the child has suffered physical or mental abuse. Misconduct includes physical or mental abuse inflicted by staff or servants

SECTION 3 -- INVOLVEMENT OF SERVANTS IN CHILD/YOUTH PROGRAMS:

Scope

1. *All staff members (including ordained clergy) are required to comply with the requirements of this policy until January 2014 as directed by the Staff Parish Relations (SPR) Committee. Paid staff members are exempt from the one year attendance requirement to become certified. All staff under age 18 are required to attend youth training and child/youth protection training and they must achieve a certified servant status.*
2. *All servants participating in any capacity in a children's or youth program at St. Andrew's are required to comply with the requirements of this policy until January 2009 as directed by the SPR Committee. Servants may not participate in programs involving children or youth until necessary screening action has been taken and the individual has been approved by designated staff for participation.*

Levels of Participation

1. Approved Servant

- a) All Adult servants participating in children's and youth programs are required to comply with these requirements.
- b) Approved servant status requires the following actions
 1. Completion and submission of a signed application to the Ministries Coordinator.
 2. Successful completion of a background investigation using criteria established in Section 6.
 3. Application Processing, Criminal Background, and Name Tag Fee of \$10.00. Scholarships are available.
 4. Must have attended St. Andrew's regularly for the previous 3 months.
 5. Issuance of a letter of approval to the servant by the Ministries Coordinator or his/her designee.
- c) Approved servants will have an approved until 2014 sticker on their nametag which must be worn when serving with children or youth programs.

2. Certified Servants

- a) All Adult servants participating in a leadership position in children's and youth programs (as defined by the staff person responsible for the program) are required to comply with these requirements.
- b) Certified servant status requires the following actions:
 1. Completion and submission of a signed application to the Ministries Coordinator.
 2. Completion of an approved training class on child/youth protection at least once every two years.
 3. Successful completion of a background investigation using criteria established in Section 6.
 4. Application Processing, Criminal Background, and Nametag Fee of \$10.00. Scholarships are available.
 5. Must have attended St. Andrew's regularly for 1 year.
 6. Issuance of a letter of approval to the servant by the Ministries Coordinator or his/her designee.
- c) Certified servants will have a certified until the date their training expires sticker on their nametag which must be worn when serving with children or youth programs.

3. Youth Servants

(From the completion of the 6th grade until the completion of 12th grade or he/she attains age 18 regardless of grade level)

- a) All youth servants participating in children's programs are required to comply with these requirements. (including 3 yr. age gap see Section 4F)
- b) Youth servant status requires the following actions:
 1. Completion and submission of a signed application to the Ministries Coordinator.
 2. Successful completion of a background investigation using criteria established in Section 6.
 3. Must have attended St. Andrew's regularly for the previous month.

4. Completion of an approved youth training class specifically geared toward specific youth issues at least every 2 years. Parents or guardians of the youth are encouraged to attend.
 5. Youth Servants are never to be left alone with a group of children or a single child.
 6. Issuance of a letter of approval to the servant by the Ministries Coordinator or his/her designee.
- c) Youth servants will have a fish symbol on their nametag which must be worn when serving with children's programs.
- d) Exception to three year age gap rule (4F), A Youth Servant may assist an approved or certified adult leader only if he/she has no direct contact or supervisory role with participants. (eg. musical accompanist)

4. *Child Servants*

(until completion of the 6th grade)

- a) Children may assist in any program in which their certified servant parent is a leader/servant. (including 3 yr. age gap see Section 4F)
- b) The child must remain under parents direct supervision (within eye sight) at all times and the parent(s) will be held responsible for the actions of their child(ren).
- c) A child(ren) may be present in a room as a bystander or participate where their approved or certified parent is a leader/servant regardless of the age gap. They may not serve in any kind of leadership or supervisory role.

SECTION 4 -- REQUIREMENTS REGARDING SERVANT PARTICIPATION IN CHILD/YOUTH ACTIVITIES

- A. All program activities must meet the general requirements for program approval defined by the appropriate Children's or Youth Council and be sponsored by the church. The appropriate Chairpersons of the Children's Council or Youth Council and the concurrence of the staff person assigned to that area of responsibility must approve any exceptions to these requirements in advance.
- B. All individuals participating in children's or youth program activities must be recorded as either an Approved, Certified or Youth servant in advance of participation. Individuals may not participate in these programs until they have received notification of their approval to participate.
- C. All activities involving programs of children or youth require the physical presence of at least two individuals at all times during the activity. Youth servants are never to be left alone with a group of children or a single child. In those situations where a single adult servant is responsible for a group of children or youth, this requirement may be met by having a roving adult who moves from room-to-room on a regular but un-scheduled basis.
- D. At least two individuals must remain at the site following completion of the activity until all non-related children or youth leave the facilities with their caregiver.
- E. There must be at least a 3-year age gap between the servant and the age of the children or youth of the group for which they are serving.

SECTION 5 -- CHILD/YOUTH PROTECTION TRAINING

- A. The Director of Youth Ministries and another appointed staff member will be jointly responsible for the initial development of an approved training course and subsequent revision of the course in future years. Upon approval of the Children's Council and Youth Council, the Church Council will certify the training plan annually.
- B. All certified individuals are required to successfully complete the designated training at least every two years. Records will be maintained by the Ministries Coordinator to assure that this requirement is met.
- C. Servants attending child/youth safety training in other non-profit organizations may receive credit for that training in lieu of St. Andrew's training with the written concurrence of the Director of Operations or Ministries Coordinator.
- D. Servants will not be permitted to serve in leadership positions in children's or youth programs until the designated training has been completed.

SECTION 6 -- BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION CRITERIA

- A. As provided in sections of this policy providing for Approved, Certified and Youth servants, a background investigation is required.
- B. A standard criminal background check (including driving record) will be included on all servant applications. The check will be sufficient to access records for the preceding ten-year period.
- C. Any convictions (misdemeanor or felony) during the preceding ten-year period may result in disqualification of the applicant.
- D. The Ministries Coordinator or his/her designee will conduct background investigations. Church staff will conduct all investigations. All staff members and servants participating in any way in implementing this policy are expected to exercise complete confidentiality at all times of all records involved as part of the performance of their job duties. Records involved in implementation in this policy will be secured. Failure of the individual to respect confidentiality regarding this information may result in appropriate sanctions.
- E. If approved, the Ministries Coordinator will send written notice of approval to the servant. At this time all youth servants will have their social security numbers blacked out on their application. In the event that the application cannot be approved, a written notice will be sent to the servant by the Ministries Coordinator informing the individual of that fact and advising him/her of the right to appeal the determination to the Staff Parish Relations (SPR) Committee or its designated subgroup.
- F. Appeals should be directed to the Chairperson of the investigations. Staff Parish Relations (SPR) Committee. The decision of the SPR committee will be final.
- G. All background records are private and will be safeguarded. Access to the records will be limited to only those members of the staff, SPR Committee, or designated SPR subgroup that are responsible for performing these investigations.

SECTION 7 -- REPORTING OF SUSPECTED MISCONDUCT

- A. It is the responsibility of all persons (children, youth, and adults) to be constantly aware of activities and relationships around them. Our goal is to create an environment in which no individual ever feels uncomfortable or threatened.
- B. It is of paramount importance that suspected misconduct of all types be immediately

- reported for investigation and resolution. It is always appropriate for all persons to report concerns even if specific information might not be available. Unless an emergency situation exists that threatens the life or well being of other individuals, the person involved in the alleged misconduct will be notified of the allegation and provided a reasonable period of time (but not more than five days) to respond to the allegation.
- C. Reports of suspected misconduct should be immediately referred either verbally or in writing to the Ministries Coordinator. This staff person has received special training to assess these concerns and initiate appropriate action. In the absence of the Ministries Coordinator, the report should be made to the Senior Pastor. A written record of the allegation (preferably signed by the reporting party) will be placed in the confidential file. The person involved in the alleged misconduct will also be informed of the allegation at that time and invited to provide a written response for the confidential record.
 - D. The Ministries Coordinator will prepare a brief confidential summary of the allegation and report it to the Senior Pastor within twenty-four hours. Release of this information will be limited to these staff members until a preliminary inquiry can be completed.
 - E. The Ministries Coordinator will conduct a preliminary inquiry regarding the allegations and prepare a summary report with recommendations for the Senior Pastor and the Chairperson of the SPR committee as quickly as possible after completing needed background investigation. In the event of an imminent emergency, the Ministries Coordinator is empowered to work through the Senior Pastor to provide immediate temporary relief for the situation.
 - F. Upon recommendation for action by the Ministries Coordinator, the SPR committee or a subgroup designated by the SPR Committee will be the primary agent for further investigation and/or corrective action. All actions will be confidential. Written records will be maintained and will be safeguarded.
 - G. It is the policy of St. Andrew's that allegations involving specific individuals will be immediately reported to the appropriate authorities for investigation by the statutory authority. In those instances where the allegation involves a St. Andrew's program rather than a specific individual or if specific information regarding a specific individual is not known, concurrence of the Senior Pastor or the Chairperson of the SPR Committee will be required before filing a report, unless an emergency exists.

SECTION 8 -- PROVISIONS FOR ENFORCEMENT

- A. This policy reflects a Christ-centered philosophy of caring for individuals. All members of St. Andrew's are expected to comply with the spirit as well as the letter of this policy.
- B. In those rare instances where a violation of these policies occurs, the violation will be referred to the Ministries Coordinator or Director of Operations for review and appropriate action. Any person in the church may submit reports of violations. The report should be submitted in writing to the Ministries Coordinator or Director of Operations for action.
- C. The decision of the SPR Committee will be final.

SECTION 9 -- IMPLEMENTATION AND REVISION

- A. The implementation date of this policy will be ninety (90) days following the approval of the policy by the Church Council.
- B. Approval for all non-church organizations involving child or youth programs will be subject to annual submission and verification of those requirements with the building use application.
- C. The Church Council will review this policy on October 2013 and make necessary revisions. All proposed changes to the policy must be submitted to the Ministries Coordinator by September 2013 for approval by the council and implementation.
- D. Policy revisions will not be effective for at least 90 days following enactment, unless the Church Council declares it to be an emergency revision.

SECTION 10 -- CHILD RELEASE POLICY

Children are a gift from God and a sacred responsibility. St. Andrew's UMC Church Council takes this responsibility seriously and seeks to protect all children who come to learn more about God. Therefore, the Council asks parents, guardians, servants, care givers and staff to follow these guidelines when releasing children:

- A. A child may only be released to a parent or guardian unless otherwise provided for in writing.
- B. A child may be released to other adults with written consent.
- C. A child may not be released to siblings under 12 years old.
- D. A child may be released to siblings 12 years or older with written permission of the parent or guardian.
- E. Children 3rd through 6th grades may be released on her/his own if a parent or guardian has given written permission.

A consent/release form will provided to each family to fill out and have on file for each child.

SECTION 11 -- TRANSPORTATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- A. Only approved and/or certified adult servants between the ages of 25-65 can drive for church events. There must be two adults in every vehicle one of whom must be certified. Adults should never travel alone with a single unrelated child/youth.
- B. Adults providing transportation for programs will be required to submit evidence of insurance. Driving records will be evaluated before approval. An approved adult driver must report any changes in their driving record immediately to the Ministries Coordinator.
- C. Drivers must follow the driving directions laid forth by the person in charge of the activity for which they are driving. They must stay together during transit and at all other times during the trip. Any deviance must be approved by the person in charge of the event. The person in charge always reserves the right to make transportation changes of drivers and vehicles.
- D. All vehicles used for transporting must be in safe operating condition as stated by the Texas Department of Transportation. All persons must be in their own individual seatbelt while the vehicle is in motion.

Approved by Church Council: July 15, 2001

Subsequent Revisions by Church Council:

- Effective date of policy changed to November 1, 2001 on October 14, 2001.
- Policy changes for 3 yr. age gap, no youth to transport youth and all applications expire January 2005 on September 5, 2002 will become effective on January 1, 2003.
- Effective date for the addition of Section 10: Child Release Policy on July 13, 2003.
- Policy changes for Youth and Child Volunteers and addition of suspected misconduct definition on March 11, 2004 will become effective on June 11, 2004.
- Change of stickers and expiration date of 2009 for approved and certified servants. Renewal application approved.
- Effective date for the addition of Section 11 Transportation of Children and Youth and deletion of E. in Section 4 concerning transportation on September 7, 2006.

Church Staff

Dr. Clifton Howard, Pastor

Guy Sellers, Director of Operations

DeDe Jones, Director of Worship Arts

Todd Allen, Director of Student Ministries

Kim Dailey, Ministries Coordinator

Becky Doss, MDO Director & Child Care Coordinator

Jessica Green, Building Associate

Kate Titsworth, Administrative Assistant, & Keyboard

Michael Earhart, Band Leader



St. Andrew's Mission Statement

St. Andrew's is a Christ-centered fellowship, which offers God's transforming love to the world through worship, discipleship, friendship and mission to develop mature disciples of Christ.