

# **Child and Youth Protection Policy**

## **Introduction**

A central tenet of our business ethics is the inherent value and worth of all children, youth, and adults. Children and youth are least able to protect themselves in our society and are particularly vulnerable to abuse and neglect. The Company is desirous of doing what it can to protect the youth and children who participate in the activities of this organization.

We believe implementing a policy and adopting procedures to protect our children recognizes that:

Tragically, many organizations in our country have not always been safe places for children and youth. Child sexual abuse and exploitation occurs in organizations, both, large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines. Our Board of Directors calls our organization to make our facilities safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from abuse.

### **I. Definitions**

#### **A. “Child” and “Youth” and “Adult”**

Following the public school system, a “child” is anyone under the age of 11. A “youth” is anyone not a “child” and under the age of 18. An adult is anyone 18 years of age or older.

#### **B. “Paid Staff Person,” “Adult Volunteer,” and “Screened Adult”**

A Paid Staff Person is someone paid by the organization, overseen by a manager or supervisor and screened. An Adult Volunteer is someone who has not been screened. They can work in a room with a Screened Adult or paid staff person. A Screened Adult is a volunteer who has gone through the screening process. These volunteers must be regular participants in our organization for at least six months.

#### **C. “Child/Youth Abuse”**

For purposes of this Policy, child/youth abuse is defined as any of the following:

##### **1. Physical Abuse:**

Violent non-accidental contacts that result in injury. This includes, but is not limited to, striking, biting, or shaking. Injuries include bruises, fractures, cuts, and burns.

##### **2. Sexual Abuse:**

Any form of sexual activity with a child/youth, whether at one of our facilities, at home, or in any other setting. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another minor.

3. Emotional Abuse:

A pattern of intentional conduct which crushes a child's/youth's spirit or attacks his/her self-worth through rejection, threats, terrorizing, isolating, or belittling.

II. Screening and Selection of Staff and Adult Volunteers

- A. Adult volunteers who regularly work with the organization's children and youth and each paid staff person will be screened. Those who are exposed to or work regularly with children/youth will be trained on child protection issues prior to beginning their regular involvement with children and youth. The procedures for screening are as follows: Each person being considered to work regularly with children and/or youth, whether as a volunteer or paid staff person, shall fill out an application form that is available in the office of each facility.
- B. Before placing the applicant in a position of responsibility with children or youth, a designated paid staff member or other person charged with specific responsibility will interview the applicant reviewing with them the written application. (Suggested questions and additional details on the Youth Protection Policy are available in the facility office and should be read and consulted by all supervisors.)
- C. The person conducting this interview will contact the references provided on the application form and any additional persons as the circumstances dictate. A written record of such contacts will be retained with the application form.
- D. Each person applying to work with children and/or youth shall "authorize" our organization to conduct a criminal background check. At a minimum, the background check should include the one offered by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. (This may be done online at [www.FDLE.com](http://www.FDLE.com))

For persons who have not lived in Florida for the past five years, a background check will be conducted in all states that the applicant has lived since the age of 10.

- E. Before beginning work with either children or youth, each paid staff member and volunteer will sign a statement that they have read, understood, and agree to abide by this Child and Youth Protection Policy. This statement is described as the Participation Covenant.
- F. After the interview and background check have been accomplished, the decision will be made to accept or reject the applicant as a paid staff member or adult volunteer who will work with youth and/or children.
- G. Where it has been determined that an applicant should not work with children or youth, those persons involved with the decision should handle it in a sensitive manner. The appointed facility managers should inform the applicant in person. The specific reasons for the decision should be given, whenever possible.

- H. It is important that all records be kept in a locked cabinet in the facility manager's office. There should be a system in place that gives those who need these records easy access and a safe place to be stored when they are not needed.
- I. Although not required to personally accomplish the above tasks, the area Vice President over the facility shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with sub-paragraphs (A) through (H) above.

### III. Ongoing Education of Persons Who Work With Children and Youth

The organization shall ensure that regularly scheduled (i.e., at least annually) training focused on current issues of child protection is available to and received by those working with children and youth. Attendance at this training shall be required of all paid staff members, screened and non-screened adult volunteers who work consistently with children and/or youth.

The training should include:

- A. The definition and recognition of child abuse.
- B. The organization's policy and procedures on child abuse and the reasons for having them.
- C. The need to maintain a positive classroom environment, including appropriate discipline and age-level characteristics.
- D. The appropriate behavior for teachers and leaders of child/youth events.
- E. Abuse reporting responsibilities and procedures.
- F. Definition of appropriate interpersonal boundaries.

### IV. Supervision of Children and Youth

#### A. General Rules

1. All activities involving children and youth will be supervised by at least one screened adult.
2. When reasonably feasible, each room set aside for children/youth should have a door with a window. (Windows in doors tend to remove the opportunities for secrecy and isolation, conditions every child abuser seeks). Half doors should be considered for Toddler to Second Grade children to keep them from wandering outside the classroom.
3. The "Two Person Rule" is defined as having at least two people in any classroom or setting, one of which must be a screened adult volunteer or staff person.

## B. Supervision of Classroom Activities

### 1. Crib/Toddler to Second Grade

At least one screened adult should be present for all classroom activities involving infants, toddlers, and children in grades K-2. When feasible, there should be two screened adults present, and where the two adults are family members, it is preferable that a third adult be present. In addition, a designated person should periodically check each classroom. Two persons in the classroom is the expectation, at least one of them must be a screened adult.

### 2. Grades 3-5

At least one screened adult should be present for all classroom activities. Two screened adults are preferred. In addition, a designated person should periodically check each classroom. Children should be escorted to and from bathroom facilities or when otherwise leaving the room by either one of the supervising adults or by a designated floating person who checks on all classrooms. Where two adults are not available to supervise, the classroom doors are to remain open.

### 3. Grades 6-12

At least one screened adult should be present for all classroom activities. A designated person should periodically check all classrooms.

## C. Open Door Policy

Parents, volunteers or staff should be permitted, as reasonableness dictates, to visit and observe all programs and classrooms at any time.

## D. Sign-in/Sign-out Procedure

Adults responsible for children who are infants through toddler should sign-in their child and indicate the names of the authorized person(s) to whom the child may be signed-out. Adults responsible for children age 2 through second grade should sign their child in and out of children's activities. Picking-up children by non-authorized adults is forbidden.

## E. Supervision of Non-Classroom Activities

With the exception of the circumstances identified under the "Special Rules for Supervision of Specific Activities and Transportation", at least two screened adults should be present for all non-classroom activities involving children and/or youth. Any meetings held in an individual's home should be supervised by at least two adults who are not members of the same family. Meetings held in an individual's home

must be pre-approved by the child's/youth's parent or guardian.

#### F. Counseling of Youth and Children

In instances of youth or child counseling where circumstances dictate that counseling would be most effective on a one-on-one basis, an appropriate organization paid staff person may meet individually with a youth with the knowledge of at least one other paid staff member. At any counseling session with children or youth, the door of the room used should remain open for the entire session, unless there is glass in the door or wall that gives a clear view into the room. If another adult is not in the building when the counseling occurs, the session should be moved to in a public place, such as a restaurant or outside where other people are present.

#### G. Time Following Group Events

Following child/youth group events, it is inevitable that occasionally a child's/youth's transportation arrives after all other participants have departed. In those circumstances, a child/youth may unavoidably be supervised by one screened adult. Under these circumstances, the general rule requiring the presence of two screened adults is suspended and the screened adult is responsible for exercising his/her best judgment for the participant's well-being.

### V. Transportation

#### A. General Rules

Transporting youth and children is an important concern. Their safety can be at risk in a variety of ways. Therefore, certain discretion must be used depending upon the event attended, the locale of the event, and the age group participating. This Policy includes both Requirements and Guidelines. When feasible, there should be adherence to the recommendations in the Guidelines. It is expected that the Requirements will always be followed.

#### B. Requirements

1. Drivers must be known to the staff member or designated adult leader of the event.
2. When a child/youth is transported in any vehicle, the driver must be either the child's/youth's parent/guardian, or a screened adult or a paid staff person who is at least 18 years old.
3. When a child/youth is transported in a company-owned vehicle, the driver must be at least 21 years of age; provided, however, exception is made when the driver is a paid staff member who is at least 18 years of age and for whom a motor vehicle

record search has been made and the record has been found by the facility manager to be satisfactory.

4. Drivers must have a valid driver's license for the vehicle being operated. For example, if driving a bus, a commercial license is required. A copy of the driver's license should be on file at the facility.
5. Drivers must require that seat belts be used at all times and the number of passengers must not exceed the number of seat belts.
6. Drivers should be advised of a designated route and should not deviate from it except in cases of emergency or road detours.
7. When there is reason to believe it would not be safe for a youth to ride in a vehicle driven by another youth, the adults responsible should intervene and take reasonable steps to make alternative arrangements for all concerned.
8. When a trip is planned and the destination is expected to be 100 miles or more from the point of departure, drivers are to be listed on an "approved driver list" maintained in the facility office.
9. Persons who regularly drive company owned vehicles are to be listed on an "approved driver list" maintained in the facility office.
10. In order to be listed on the "approved driver list" of drivers, a Motor Vehicle Record search must be conducted and the facility manager must determine if the record is satisfactory.

#### C. Guidelines

1. Drivers should be accompanied by at least one other adult.
2. Drivers should read and sign an acknowledgement form indicating that the Child Protection Policy has been read and will be followed.
3. Drivers should receive training for the company owned vehicle being operated.
4. Youth who drive their own vehicles should be reminded regularly of the importance of vehicle safety.

#### VI. Trip and Retreat Supervision

Travel settings can call for different child/youth protection requirements depending on the circumstances. What follows are Requirements and Guidelines of this Policy. The Requirements should always be implemented. Depending on the circumstances of the setting, who is in attendance, etc., some or all of the Guidelines should be implemented.

Those in charge of the trip should be mindful of both Requirements and Guidelines, in addition to applying their own wisdom to the needs of a given occasion.

#### A. Requirements

1. There should be at least two screened adults present for all trips, retreats and other events where the children and/or youth gather overnight at, or away from, the facility.
2. There should be at least one screened adult for each gender present at co-ed overnight events. At single gender overnight events, at least one of the two screened adults present shall be of the same gender as the child/youth.
3. The person in charge of youth/children for each overnight trip shall carry parental permission slips including permission for emergency medical care.

#### B. Guidelines

In a hotel type setting, rooms should be assigned as follows:

1. Separate rooms for adults and child/youth should be assigned with at least two children/youth per room.
2. Assignments should be made so that an adult room is between two children/ youth rooms.
3. Adults should make random monitoring hall trips and room checks at night by two adults of the same gender as those being checked.
4. A hotel should be selected where the rooms open to the interior of the building (i.e., do not open to the outside).

### VII. Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

- A. Everyone in the organization has a moral responsibility and a legal duty to report suspected abuse whenever it comes to their attention, regardless of where that abuse takes place. Reporting abuse is a form of assistance to those crying out for help. Therefore, immediately notify the proper authorities (i.e., the local law enforcement agency in the jurisdiction in which the child/youth resides or in which the suspected abuse occurred and/or the appropriate department of children's services). This is a requirement of the Florida "MANDATED REPORTER" law.
- B. Immediately, yet with dignity and respect for the accused, remove the accused from further involvement with children and/or youth. Once the proper authorities have been contacted and the safety of the child or youth is secured, the facilities manager should inform the accused that abuse has been reported.
- C. If abuse is observed by, disclosed to, or suspected by a volunteer and/or paid staff

member of the organization, the observer shall report the incident immediately to the facility manager. If the facility manager is not available, the matter should be reported to the area Vice President.

If the accused is the facility manager or a member of her/his family, the allegations shall be immediately reported to the area Vice President over the facility and immediately reported to the proper authorities as required by state or local law. The area Vice President will take responsibility and act according to established policy with respect to claims against a manager or supervisor. If the area Vice President is not available, the incident should be reported to the Department of Human Resources at the home office.

- D. Notify the parents of the victim and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety and well being of the child or youth until the parent(s) arrive. (NOTE: If one or both of the parents is the alleged abuser, follow the advice of the authorities concerning notification of others.)
- E. Take all allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Show care and support to help prevent further hurt. Extend whatever resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority. Respond in a positive and supportive manner to the victim and the victim's family.
- F. The organization should provide a supportive atmosphere to all those who are affected, offering both objectivity and empathy as it seeks to create a climate in which healing can take place.
- G. After having reported the suspected abuse to the proper authorities, the facility manager is to report the incident immediately to the area Vice President. If the Vice President over the facility is unavailable, the incident should be reported to Human Resources at the home office.
- H. Keep a written report of the steps taken by the Organization in response to the reported abuse. The report should be brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation. It should be kept in a secure place. It should be written in ink or typed to prevent it from being changed.
- I. Any contact with the media should be handled by a pre-determined spokesperson selected by the area Vice President with the knowledge of the facility manager. The organization spokesperson should generally convey a spirit of concern for the physical and emotional well-being of all who are affected, and that the matter is being diligently and appropriately handled.

## VIII. Implementation

Unless otherwise specifically stated, it shall be the responsibility of the area Vice President to implement this Policy, to design and conduct future training, and to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of this Policy. Several additional guides and forms are available for use in implementing this policy. All supervisory employees of the organization and any adults that work with children/youth are required to read the complete policy and guidelines. A copy is available in the organization office.

## IX. Application

All of those who participate in the activities of this organization and use its facilities – individuals, organizations, and groups within and outside this organization - are expected to respect, implement, and adhere to these provisions as a minimum.