

Layer 1: Screening

Application Form: Before being considered for a position working with children and/or youth, a screening application form will be completed by the worker and reviewed by the appropriate staff.

Reference Check: References will be checked for each applicant by the appropriate staff and a written record of the contacts will be kept on file.

Criminal Background Check: A State Department of Justice and Federal Bureau of Investigation records check performed on each applicant prior to working with children and/or youth.

Participation Rule: Only persons who are regular attendees of the church for minimum time (e.g., 3 months) will be permitted to work with children or youth in on-campus programming.

Rationale

An **application** form for volunteer workers in children and youth ministries allows for good record-keeping by staff and indicates the kinds of expectations we have for volunteers in children/youth ministry, including accountability to appropriate staff.

References aid in discernment about teachers and helpers for all our spiritual formation programs. Applicants may be refused if fitness for ministry is discerned to not be present.

Criminal background checks (CBCs) - not because we are suspicious of one another, but because we wish to protect both past perpetrators and children from being in a high-risk environment. To create a reasonably safe congregation, we want to restrict adults with a history of criminal sexual or violent crimes against children from serving in our ministries focused on children and youth. We believe past offenders should not have supervisory responsibility for children and youth at our church. We also believe that a State Department of Justice (Federal) CBC is the best tool for identifying past offenders who might be seeking access to children through building relationships in the church. Like other tools and resources we use in church, a CBC is not perfect. However, we think that a good feature of our government is that these records are public and can be used restoratively by the church.

Most literature which indicated a "waiting period" for new persons becoming involved in children and youth ministry, use a longer interval than 3 months. In our urban and highly mobile setting, we felt that requiring a longer interval was not a reasonable option for our congregation. Still, regular attendance for **3 months** creates a standard for community participation prior to service.

Implications

Feelings: 1) Members who have long-volunteered may feel hurt that they now need to supply references.

2) Some members may feel as though the use of criminal background checks threatens their privacy as citizens.

Financial: CBCs are \$40 - \$100 per individual screened. We can phase in these costs in order to reach full compliance with this policy.

Confidentiality: See policy (Layer 1, point C).

Staff time: Staff time is required to maintain the paperwork for applications and references in this layer.

Layer 2: Supervision

Two-Adult Rule: A minimum of 2 adults will share the supervisory responsibility of children & youth including going to the restroom for children in Kindergarten and younger.

Five-Year Rule: When working with junior or senior-high youth, both workers must be at least 5 years older than then oldest participant.

Ratios: The ratio of children to adult workers is as follows:
5:1 for ages 4 and younger
10:1 for ages 5 and up

Rover: A designated rover, a screened adult, will be monitoring classroom activity throughout the sessions.

Pick-Up Policy: Children in Kindergarten and younger will remain in classrooms until picked up by parent. Sign in/out sheets will be used in the Toddler room and nursery.

Rationale

The **two-adult rule** is pervasive in the literature related to childcare and church programming. Adults who abuse children rely on secrecy, isolation, and the ability to manipulate victims. Additionally, false allegations are very unlikely to arise when two adults are present. Risk is reduced when the two adults are not related. MCC materials state that, "[a] very common practice is to allow junior- and senior-high aged volunteers in the church nursery. In effect, the church is using children to supervise children. While in some situations they may provide excellent help, people under the age of eighteen cannot be expected to have developed the maturity and judgment that is needed to be fully responsible for younger children."

MCC, as well as other sources, recommends the **5 year rule** for protection of both youth and adult worker. A 21 year-old college jr. should not be leading the youth class, which includes 17 year olds.

The state childcare licensing **ratio** is 4:1 (for children 2 and under); 12:1 (for children 2-6); and 15:1 (for children 6-14.) Given our current numbers of children and our suggested ratio, we simply need 2 adults in each classroom!

The **rover** position enables us to maintain the two-adult rule, even when there are trips to the bathroom, retrieving parents, etc.

Implications

Staff time Staff is required to review our maintenance of this layer.

Teachers, helpers, and rovers are needed for Spiritual Formation ministry and supervision. This task force estimated that in order to maintain a 2-adult rule, we would need X more adults than were active in spiritual formation programs.

Parents with small children need to sign children in and out. This may feel less personal than simply knowing everyone. However, guests and newcomers will likely appreciate this kind of care. This procedure helps caretakers and rovers (who serve on a rotating basis) to know parents' names in case their child needs them. This procedure also helps to hold parents and caregivers accountable in the pickup/drop-off procedures.

Layer 3: Physical Environment

Window and Doors: All classroom doors will include windows or be left ajar for observation.

Walkie-Talkie: All classrooms will be supplied with a walkie-talkie for communication with the rovers.

Posted Procedures: Basic Procedures specific to each classroom will be posted for easy reference by teachers, helpers, and parents.

Rationale

The **door ajar or windows in the doors** allows rovers and other adults to observe classroom activities. This reduces risk, by reducing opportunities for isolation and secrecy.

The **walkie-talkies** allow childcare providers and teachers to call the rovers when needed.

For quick reference with a "Frequently Asked Questions" format, basic **procedures** should be at hand for adults who are teaching or helping in classrooms.

Implications

Financial: We have received estimates for adding windows to classroom doors in the lower level. This cost would be the church's to bear. The mid-level rooms of our current facility already include windows.

Layer 4: Education

Worker Training: Current workers will attend an annual training session including information about the nature of physical, verbal, or sexual abuse of children, church policy for Preventing Child Abuse, instructions for reporting suspected child abuse.

First Aid and CPR Training: Provide opportunity for workers, parents, and interested adults to be instructed in first aid and CPR annually.

Parent and Family Education: Provide opportunity for families to develop an awareness of abuse and abuse prevention from a faith perspective, in age appropriate ways.

Rationale

An annual **training session** will keep our procedures fresh in the minds of all our church volunteers. Our policy is only as good as our practice.

While **First Aid/CPR** is not required of screened adults, providing such opportunity for our church-attending adults is a matter of adult education.

Implications

Staff Time is required for a adequate training of teachers and helpers. The annual teacher training Kristina has led in previous years, would need to include additional material.

A member of our church has volunteered to provide opportunities for First Aid/CPR training.

Layer 5: Restoration and Healing

Prayer: With the support of the our prayer team, we want to regularly pray for the safety of our children.

Offender Support: If offenders in our congregation are known through self-disclosure, a criminal background check, or another incident, pastor(s) will initiate a plan for support, offer counseling services, and maintain confidentiality.

Survivor Support: With sensitivity to adult survivors of abuse we invite them to share confidentially with pastors or small groups. Our application for church volunteers includes this invitation.

Children: We recognize that some of our children may have experienced abuse and we aim to be sensitive to the needs and concerns of each child. We use curriculum and recruit teachers who consistently point to the God of love and grace who cares for those who are broken and hurting.

Rationale

Prayer is a protective and empowering practice of the church. Our church self-identifies as a praying congregation and we want to honor this history and continue this practice.

Romans 14:13-23 and I Corinthians 8:9-13 are instructions for relationships within the church. To the Romans Paul instructed: **Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another.** We see this policy as a way to remove "stumbling blocks" and to care for the weaker member.

Our church has long been a place of Christian healing for those suffering from various kinds of wounds. We recognize that our congregational process related to child safety has affected some of us who are **adult survivors** of abuse.

Implications

Intercession: The Prayer Team would need to be engaged with this ministry.

Pastors and Members: Pastoral and congregational support for both offenders and survivors is relationally costly. Pastors and support groups are likely to share these burdens.

Financial: If counseling services are requested by survivors or offenders, the congregation may be involved in mutual aid which has financial implications.

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