

Safe Kids Policy

Children & Youth Ministry

Richland Adventist Church

Statement of Purpose

As a church, we believe that the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of children is vital. This policy is intended to ensure that church activities involving children are consistent with the teachings and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. The C&Y Ministry Team exists to lead each young person to a relationship with Jesus, to educate and mentor them to become a lifelong disciple of Christ, and to use their spiritual gifts to minister in the church and to the world.

The primary purpose of this policy is to promote the safety and well-being of children by providing clear instructions about the operation of the Children and Youth Ministry at **RICHLAND ADVENTIST CHURCH**. The leaders of **RICHLAND ADVENTIST CHURCH** sincerely request the cooperation of the adults in our church who must abide by the stringent guidelines of this policy.

Child Safety Takes Priority

The greatest priority of **RICHLAND ADVENTIST CHURCH** children's programs is to be a safe place where children can grow spiritually, emotionally, and physically. It is obvious that any sexual exploitation, abuse, or endangerment directly contradicts this priority and the values of **RICHLAND ADVENTIST CHURCH**.

Ministry Directors and Pastoral Staff who oversee children's volunteers must keep this priority in mind: adults do not have a right to serve as volunteers. Adults merely have an **opportunity** to serve when selected by the church. This means that volunteers should err on the side of caution as they make subjective decisions involving the well-being of children and youth.

The Safe Kids Policy will be administered by the Children and Youth Ministry Team. It will be the responsibility of the Children and Youth Ministry Director to assure that this policy is being followed and remains current with the practices of the Children and Youth Ministry Volunteers.

Higher Standard

As ambassadors of Jesus Christ, we must strive to be worthy of a very high standard of trust. For this reason, every volunteer at **RICHLAND ADVENTIST CHURCH** must avoid even the **appearance** of inappropriate behavior. All volunteers must diligently avoid any conduct that appears wrong to a reasonable observer, even if no actual misconduct takes place. This is needed in order to maintain parental confidence and avoid mistaken allegations.

Reporting

Workers report suspected or observed child abuse to the Children & Youth Ministry Director or a pastor immediately. Violations of these guidelines or suspect behavior by other workers must be reported in the same manner.

Policy Standards and General Christian Moral Standards

Volunteers in children's ministry are expected to observe these policies and guidelines as well as Biblical standards of moral behavior.

Volunteer Selection and Supervision

The following criteria will be used as **RICHLAND ADVENTIST CHURCH** reviews candidates for positions within the Children and Youth Ministry:

Minimum Age

All primary and secondary volunteers must be 18 years of age or older. Younger persons may and are encouraged to assist primary volunteers, but they may not take the place of primary volunteers. Children that have completed the Jr. Childcare Program may be considered a Primary volunteer under the following circumstances.

- They have completed the 1 day Safe Kids/Babysitting Training.
- The expected number of children for care is less than 10.
- They are a minimum of 12 years of age.
- Must work under the supervision of a Primary Volunteer over 18.

Jr. volunteer's working with Cradle Roll or with Cradle Roll Age children must have completed the Jr. Childcare Program. Minimum age for pre-school children and older is 12. Only one younger person may assist per session, per room. Youth volunteers in a supervisory role need to be at least 8 years older than the children being supervised. Exceptions to this action will be reviewed by the C&Y Ministry Team. Individuals under the age of 18 are strongly encouraged to complete a Babysitting Training Course.

Six-Month Rule

Primary volunteers must have been a member or regular attendee of **RICHLAND ADVENTIST CHURCH** for at least six months. This time of interaction between ministry Directors and the candidate allows leaders to better evaluate the suitability of a candidate. In some situations this rule is not feasible and may be waived (such as church employees or interns who are not church members). If the six-month rule is waived, program leaders may take additional steps to screen the candidate at their own discretion.

Background Screening

Background Screening will be **required** for all Primary Volunteers. This is done through Shield the Vulnerable. Volunteers will be given a link and instructions on how to complete this screening. In addition to screening they will be required to complete two training classes also found on Shield the Vulnerable. Once volunteers have clearance they will be considered a Primary Volunteer.

Application and Screening

Candidates will complete the on line training/screening. Church leaders will check **at least** two references for each worker. The references will be done by phone, mail, or in person. Whenever possible, the three references should include: one person who has known the applicant well for an extended period of time, a former pastor or supervisor, and a teacher you have had or worked with. After the initial screening, a renewal will need to be completed by each person still volunteering. The frequency of this renewal will be set by the Upper Columbia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Auto Safety

Persons who will drive vehicles for conducting church business or transporting children must complete a "Private Transportation Form." Drivers must be 21 years of age with 2 or less traffic citations and without any at fault accidents within the previous three years. Drivers will submit a copy of their driver's license and proof of insurance prior to transporting children. Drivers will be asked to provide proof of insurance and fill out a "Private Transportation Form" on an annual basis.

First Aid Training

Volunteers in the C&Y Ministry who supervise young people are encouraged to maintain current certification in basic first aid and basic CPR (or the equivalent if other is offered in the church's locality). Costs for this training will be the responsibility of each volunteer. Cradle Roll volunteers and others serving young children may also want training in infant and toddler CPR. Other volunteers are encouraged, but not required, to get training if they frequently accompany kids on adventure activities: water sports, camping, mission trips, etc.

Signatures on Guidelines

All volunteers must agree by signature that they understand the Safe Kids Policy and guidelines pertaining to working with children and that they agree to abide by them. This requirement will be met by having applicants sign the printed "Guidelines" forms.

Confidentiality of Information

The church will keep confidential all information received in the candidate selection process. Selection information will be marked as such and stored with limited access afforded only to church staff and others with a need to know.

Confidentiality

Leaders must report to the Children & Youth Ministry Director or pastor immediately if a minor discusses harming himself or others, committing a crime, or being abused. There are limits to confidentiality when working with youth. Questions about such cases or other issues of confidentiality must be discussed promptly with the Children & Youth Ministry Director (or pastor if the Children's Ministry Director is out of town). Any serious issues discussed in confidence should be reviewed with one of the pastors, who will also protect the confidential nature of the discussion. Conferring with a Director or pastor on sensitive issues is not considered breaking a confidence.

Delays in Receiving Information

While the church is waiting for background information and references, candidate may begin working in contact with children. During this time only closely supervised work with 2 primary volunteers present should be done by the candidate. Failure to receive satisfactory responses in a timely manner may result in dismissal or withdrawal of the offer to work with the C&Y Ministry program.

Classification of Workers According to Their Duties

In order to screen volunteers appropriately to their responsibilities, **RICHLAND ADVENTIST CHURCH** will categorize workers into two categories: primary and secondary. Please note that the terms primary and secondary do not refer to the ages of children served, but rather to relative levels of responsibility and risk.

Primary workers -- All volunteers in roles with greater responsibility or risk should be classified as primary workers and should meet the primary screening standards. Primary workers have greater interaction with and access to children, and more opportunity to harm children, so churches must take extra care in their screening.

Secondary workers -- Secondary workers are people who occasionally interact with minors and/or do so in less risky circumstances. For example, a volunteer who will be volunteering on an occasional basis, and sees children only in a group setting, on church premises, and with a primary volunteer present may be classified as a secondary worker. This category may include parents of participants who supervise activities.

Recommended Screening Requirements For Primary and Secondary Workers		
	<u>Primary</u>	<u>Secondary</u>
Six-Month Rule (may be waived for employees and interns)	Yes	No
Criminal/Court Records Background Check	Yes	No
Auto Safety Form (Optional)	Yes*	Yes*
Guidelines (signed) and Job Description	Yes	No

* If operating a vehicle for church business

Guidelines for Children and Youth Ministry Volunteers

Note: We live in an age where child abuse is a reality in our society. The church must deal with this issue as a "good shepherd" by taking steps to protect the children in our care. RICHLAND ADVENTIST CHURCH has implemented a policy that will safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. The guidelines below are to be strictly followed by anyone who has custody or supervision of children. We pray for God's blessing for our children, workers, and church.

Guidelines

- ❑ **Two-Person Rule** -- Two primary workers should be present for each activity whenever possible. Activities include but are not limited to Sabbath School and Club Activities. This rule accomplishes two important objectives. First, it reduces the risk of child abuse. Secondly, it reduces the risk of unfounded claims of abuse. Volunteers who suspect any unhealthy or abusive activities must discuss their suspicions immediately with the C&Y Ministry Director or a pastor.
- ❑ **Volunteer to Child Ratios**
RICHLAND ADVENTIST CHURCH has a goal of maintaining the following ratios of ministry volunteers to children whenever feasible. These ratios are goals. The church recognizes that in some circumstances achieving these ratios may not be feasible, such as an unexpected number of children showing up for an event.

Goals for Worker to Child Ratios (2 min.)		
Program	Volunteers	Children
Program or Childcare for Ages 0-2	1	3
Program or Childcare for Ages 3-5	1	6
Program or Childcare for Ages 6-17	1	7

- ❑ **Well Child Policy** – Parents are encouraged to keep their children home if they have the following symptoms.
 - Coughing/sneezing due to cold
 - Green drainage from the nose or eyes
 - Frequent runny nose (3 wipes rule)
 - Fever or flu symptoms within last 24 hours
 - Questionable rashes within last 24 hours
 - Diarrhea within last 24 hours
 - Head Lice
- ❑ **Restrooms** –
 - Children are not allowed to go to the restroom without the permission of a classroom volunteer.
 - A C&Y volunteer will retrieve a parent or guardian if a child needs assistance in the bathroom. Volunteers may help children with snaps, zippers, etc but should not be helping with self clean up.
 - Restrooms – The C&Y Volunteer at the Check In/Out Desk will monitor children going to and from the restroom during the hours of Sabbath School.
 - Diaper changing will be the responsibility of the parent or responsible adult.

- ❑ **Corporal Punishment** (hitting or spanking) and other forms of punishment involving physical contact are never appropriate in **RICHLAND ADVENTIST CHURCH** activities. This rule holds true even if parents have suggested, or given permission for, corporal punishment. This rule also holds true if you are the parent of the child. Children’s ministry volunteers must consult the Children & Youth Ministry Director or other Leader within the C&Y Ministry if they need help with discipline techniques.

- ❑ **Absences – When you know that you will be absent make every effort to find a qualified volunteer for your replacement.** If you are unable to find a replacement please contact the Children and Youth Ministry Director for Sabbath School or your club director for kids clubs.

- ❑ **Injuries** – Please put on clean disposable gloves if you are dealing with an injury where blood is present. Gloves and bandages are available in each room. A more complete first aid kit is available at the Children’s Information Desk. After you have tended to the problem, throw away the soiled gloves, bandages, and paper towels, in a plastic bag and wash your hands. All injuries must be reported to the responsible adult picking the child up. Injuries requiring more than a simple clean up and band-aid will have the parent/responsible adult contacted immediately. The parent or Guardian will be asked to fill out an “Adventist Risk Management Form.” This form will be kept on file in the church office. If additional medical treatment is needed this form will be copied and the original sent to the conference.

- ❑ **Transportation as a Part of Children and Youth Ministry Activities**-- The church may from time to time provide transportation as an official part of ministry activities. For example, the church may provide transportation to out-of-town events or field trips. When children are transported as a part of club activities, all guidelines will apply. Following the two adult rule and having all drivers complete a “Private Transportation Form” are especially important. Sometimes staffing does not allow for two adults when transporting children. In these cases a Primary Volunteer may transport children as long as they are transporting two or more children at all times. A medical release form is required for each member of the Eager Beaver, Adventurers and Pathfinder Clubs as well as for each child being transported on a church sponsored event.

- ❑ **Open Door Policy** -- All events should be open door. This means that pastors, parents, and church members have a right to observe any activity.

- ❑ **Supervision and Communication** -- Leaders should meet on a regular basis with their immediate team and the leaders should meet with the Children & Youth Ministry Director periodically to discuss any issues regarding these guidelines. Appropriate topics that may be discussed include problems, accountability, policy clarification, personal feelings, or other issues that may interfere with the Children and Youth Ministry efforts.

□ **Touching** - We live in an age where child abuse is a reality in our society. The church should deal with this issue as a "good shepherd" by taking steps to protect the children in our care. **RICHLAND ADVENTIST CHURCH** has established touching guidelines that will safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. The guidelines below are to be carefully followed by anyone working with children and youth.

- Hugging and other forms of appropriate physical touch between workers and children are important for a child's development and can be suitable in our church setting.
- Physical touch should be appropriate to the age of the child or youth.
- Touching should be initiated by the child. It should be a response to the child's need for comforting and encouragement, or affection. It should not be based upon the adult's emotional need.
- Touching and affection should only be given when in the presence of the child's parent or other adults. It is much less likely that touches will be inappropriate or misconstrued as such when two adult workers are present and the touching is open to observation. This rule is especially important when diapering a baby or helping a young child change clothes or use the restroom.
- Touching behavior should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. As ministry workers our behavior must foster trust at all times; it should be above reproach.
- A child's preference not to be touched should be respected. Do not force touching upon a reluctant child.
- Church workers are responsible to protect children under their supervision from inappropriate touching by others.
- Church workers must immediately discuss inappropriate touching or other questionable behavior with their Ministry Director or a pastor.

Workers who do not comply with these guidelines may be reassigned or relieved from children's ministry duty after review and consultation with the Ministry Team and Pastor.

I have read the guidelines above and agree to observe them faithfully.

Signature _____ Date _____
(Team Member)

I have gone over the guidelines with the above Children & Youth Volunteer.

Signature _____ Date _____
(Children's Ministry Director)

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