
Safe Sanctuary Policy

To prevent abuse to
Children and Youth

A Ministry of the Board of Trustees





Safe Sanctuary Policy

Effective January 1, 2008

Statement of Purpose:

Members of the Victory Temple Christian Life Center come from a variety of experiences and backgrounds. Victory is committed to providing an environment that is as safe as possible for everyone and most especially for our children and youth. We are also committed to taking the necessary precautions to protect any person working or assisting in a Victory Ministry from false accusations or suspicions.

It is not the intent of the membership of Victory Temple to be judgmental in any way, for we are all accountable to God. We will rely on God's wisdom in developing, implementing and carrying out God's will through this policy. Compassion and truth will be the guiding forces for any investigation, reporting or follow-up action that results from the procedures as outlined in this policy.

OUR CALLING AND OUR MANDATE IS TO ENSURE SAFE SANCTUARY FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

Introduction

Throughout the gospels, Jesus provides teachings on providing a peaceable kingdom for all of God's people, including our most precious gifts, our children and youth (Matthew 5:9, Luke 18:15-17). The peaceable kingdom begins with sanctuary.

Scriptures provide examples of how sanctuary is to be a community of protective nurture and harmony (Psalms 20:1-2, 27:4-5). As Christians, we are called to create a safe sanctuary in our churches. They must be holy, safe, and protective communities for all of God's children, regardless of age or ability. The purpose of this policy is to address the safety of our children and youth at events sponsored by this church. This church recognizes the need to have a formal, written policy with procedures in place (1) to help prevent the opportunity for the occurrence and/or the appearance of abuse of children and youth and (2) to help protect workers from false accusations and/or suspicions.

The following policy and procedures are not based on a lack of trust in workers, but are intended to protect our children, youth, workers, employees, volunteers and the entire church body. Careful and confidential documentation is essential to show compliance with policies, to verify information as needed, and to have an accurate record in the case of an incident.

Scope of Policy

This policy and its provisions shall apply to all persons, including all paid and unpaid adults, whether lay or clergy, who have any direct or indirect contact with children and youth who participate in any activities or events sponsored by this church.

Supervision

An adult is anyone 18 years of age or older.

A youth assistant is anyone under the age of 18 who may work with children and youth, only when supervised by at least two adults over the age of 18 years. Youth assistants cannot be in charge of or left alone with children and youth. Background checks on youth under the age of 18 are inaccessible, so choose youth with great care.

To achieve compliance with the Safe Sanctuary policy it may be necessary to combine groups, recruit, train, and reference additional volunteers or cancel an event. Recognizing that there is safety in numbers, children and youth will be instructed to use the “buddy system.” It is also strongly encouraged that there be present at least one adult who is trained and certified in First Aid and CPR.

Observation of activities in rooms is essential, whether it is done by windows, open doors, glass doors, electronic technology, etc.

For all persons seeking to work with children and/or youth, membership in this church shall be at least six (6) months (or written recommendation from the senior pastor at the church most previously attended or written recommendation from two current members of this church who have been members for at least one year.)

Supervision for Nursery/childcare

- There shall be a minimum of two (2) adults per room or within line of sight.
- Whenever possible State Childcare Minimum Standards shall be followed, particularly in relation to the number of adults to child ratio.

Supervision of children and youth

- The “2 Adult Rule” shall be observed (2 adults per classroom, 2 adults within line of sight.)
- Any one-to-one mentoring or consulting shall be conducted in sight of another adult.
- Understanding that there is safety in numbers, one adult can be in contact with multiple youth (6th-12th grade) so long as they are in line of sight of other adults.

Overnight Accommodations

At events that require overnight accommodations:

- We strongly recommend that at least (2) adults be present in every room.
- When staying in a hotel, adults shall sleep in separate rooms from children/youth; or if necessary for children/youth to share a room with an adult, adults shall sleep in separate beds from children/youth so long as any one adult shall not be alone with any one child/youth.
- Recognizing accommodations may be restrictive in some cases one adult is adequate, so long as any one adult shall NOT be alone with any one-child/youth.

Definitions of Abuse

1. Verbal Abuse – Any verbal act that humiliates degrades or threatens any child or youth.
2. Physical Abuse – Any act of omission or an act that endangers a person’s physical or mental health. In the case of child or youth physical abuse, this definition includes any intentional physical injury caused by the individual’s caretaker. Physical abuse may result from punishment that is overly punitive or inappropriate to the individual’s age or condition. In addition, physical abuse may result from purposeful acts that pose serious danger to the physical health of a child or youth.
3. Sexual Abuse – Child or youth sexual abuse is the sexual exploitation or use of same for satisfaction of sexual drives. This includes but is not limited to: 1) incest, 2) rape, 3) prostitution, 4) romantic

involvement with any participant, 5) any sexual intercourse or sexual conduct with, or fondling of an individual enrolled as a child or youth in sponsored activities of this church, 6) sexualized behavior that communicates sexual interest and/or content. Examples are not limited to displaying sexually suggestive visual materials, making sexual comments or innuendo about one's own or another person's body, touching another person's body, hair or clothing, touching or rubbing oneself in the presence of another person, kissing, and sexual intercourse.

Screening for Adults

Careful screening is one way to prevent the abuse of children and youth. References will be called for a careful gathering and review of information in search of those who can provide safe and caring supervision in a safe environment.

1. Prior to employment or acceptance as a paid or unpaid adult worker/volunteer, the event leader in charge of an event or program shall direct each prospective applicant to complete the application/consent form. By signing the form, the applicant gives permission to this church to contact references and perform the necessary investigation to complete the review of the application.
2. This church is responsible for conducting at least two references and screening. This screening shall be done through the company with which the conference has contracted. All persons shall be screened annually.
3. If any of the reports raise questions about fitness of the applicant, this church will disapprove the application. This church reserves the right to turn away any persons for service.
4. If the applicant (paid or unpaid) is found to have been involved in any activity in which the applicant abused or exploited children or youth, the applicant will not be approved. Any conviction of a crime against children or youth shall disqualify any applicant.
5. Results of screens shall be kept confidential. The determination of whether a particular crime is serious enough to result in this church giving a negative recommendation shall be made by this church in its sole discretion. Without in any way limiting those crimes which this church may determine to be serious, these are the guidelines:

Persons having a criminal history of any of the following types of offenses shall not be allowed to serve in any ministry with children and youth:

- Child abuse, whether physical, emotional, sexual, or neglectful
- Violent offenses, including murder, rape, assault, domestic violence, etc
- Persons having a Criminal History of DUI or DWI conviction within the five (5) years immediately prior to application shall not be allowed to act as a driver.
- Persons having a Criminal History of a drug related conviction within the five (5) years immediately prior to application shall not be allowed to participate in the event.

Training

This church shall develop and implement training and orientation procedures for all persons (including youth assistants) who work with children and youth. Training shall include this policy, and appropriate discipline, appropriate physical and emotional boundaries, and leader misconduct as described in this policy. No person shall, after this policy becomes effective, have any direct or indirect contact with children and/or youth until they have completed this training program. We recommend that at the beginning of each event a review of this policy be conducted.

The guidelines of these policies and procedures create a status of Safe Sanctuary Certification with this church. Adults thus certified are entrusted with the title "Certified Local Church Safe Sanctuary Worker with Children and Youth".

Reporting of Incidents

1. When an adult leader of an event or activity suspects that abuse or any suspected violation of the Texas Penal Code is taking or has taken place, he or she shall call 911 when needed and report the abuse to the appropriate local law enforcement agency and/or the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (800-252-5400). The adult leader shall contact the administrator or event leader immediately, and cooperate fully with the investigation conducted by law enforcement officials or child protective services.
2. Address any needs the child or youth may have, medical or otherwise. Report to the parent(s) and/or legal guardians(s).
3. The person suspected of abuse (respondent) shall, for the safety and well-being of the children or youth, be removed with dignity from further contact with the children and youth until an appropriate investigation has taken place. The matter shall remain confidential. If the adult event leader is the respondent, then the report should be made to that person's supervisor.
4. Following the report of an incident, the adult event leader or supervisor in charge shall document the report and then speak with the alleged victim, being careful to use open-ended questions.
5. All such conversations shall be documented. Careful and confidential documentation is essential. The documentation should include the following:
 - a. The name of the adult leader observing or receiving the disclosure of abuse, including the date, time and place and any action taken by this person.
 - b. The alleged victim's name, age, and date of birth.
 - c. Any statement made by the alleged victim.
 - d. Name of the respondent, the date, time and place of any conversation or any statement made by the respondent.
 - e. Any action taken, i.e. suspension of the respondent.
 - f. Date and time of call to the appropriate agency, name of worker spoken to, content of that conversation and case number assigned.
 - g. Date and time of call to law enforcement agency, name of officer spoken to and content of that conversation.
 - h. Date and time of any other contacts made regarding this incident.
6. Notify the Senior Pastor.
7. It shall be the goal to provide supportive care to both the victim and the respondent and to restore such persons to wholeness. Supportive care can include the procedures of the criminal justice system, appropriate counseling referrals and continued pastoral visitation.
8. Confirmed reports of proven incidents of abuse shall be retained in a confidential file for future screening purposes.

Media Response

The Senior Pastor and Vice President of the Board of Trustees shall be informed of all investigations or allegations of abuse. If investigations or allegations of abuse should come to the attention of the media, a response shall come from a designated church spokesperson. Refer all inquiries to the spokesperson. **Do not give out any information, simply state that all inquiries will be answered by our spokesperson.**

Appropriate Discipline

Children and youth should be made aware that appropriate behavior is expected at all events. Gentle reminders are always necessary when dealing with children and youth. When these reminders don't work, then discipline needs to move to the next step. In cases where behavior has to be addressed, designated event adults should handle it. In no case is physical discipline an appropriate measure to deal with problems. A reasonable response might include a period of "time out" for the child or youth. This should be done with necessary supervision keeping safe sanctuary guidelines in mind.

Keeping parents involved is important. They need to be kept up to date on their child's behavior. For serious offenses, the appropriate response will be to send the child or youth home immediately. Parents and the leaders will help make proper arrangements.

Appropriate Physical and Emotional Boundaries

Physical boundaries are most important in dealing with children and youth. Persons working with children and youth have to understand and respect those boundaries. Obviously these boundaries change as children grow older. A young child sitting in the lap of a caregiver is most appropriate, whereas an older child or youth sitting in an adult's lap would not be acceptable. Hugs and kisses from a toddler to an adult are entirely different than the same from a youth.

Emotional boundaries are also important. As a child grows older it is important for the adult to maintain appropriate boundaries in relationships. It is important for those working with children and youth to not step outside of those lines and allow the younger person to become too attached to them. It is important for the older person to be careful where conversations might lead and to steer clear of inappropriate talk. When an adult recognizes that there might be an issue with these boundaries, great space should be allowed to come between them and the child or youth in question. If that does not solve the problem, then the event leadership should address the issue.

Leader Misconduct

It is a privilege to work with youth. Great responsibility is required. Those who violate this policy shall immediately be removed from contact with children and youth and appropriate authorities shall be notified immediately.

Behavioral Summary

The examples below are not "all-inclusive". Any behavior that contravenes the Statement of Purpose shall be considered prohibited behavior.

- ✓ The following behaviors are prohibited:
 - Threatening to inflict or intentionally inflicting emotional or physical injury
 - Committing any sexual offense or engaging in any sexual contact
 - Making any kind of sexual advance or making a request for sexual favors
 - Engaging in verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature, including but not limited to back rubs, massages, kissing or similar contact.
 - Physical discipline, such as spanking

- ✓ Touching to comfort or affirm a Protected Person in an age-appropriate manner is permitted. Side-by-side hugs are suggested between persons of the opposite sex instead of full body contact. Appropriate touching need not be completely avoided, but is acceptable only in public. We must be sensitive to how it looks and how the person being contacted may interpret the contact.

- ✓ The following are unacceptable and will **not** be tolerated by any ministry:
 - Tobacco
 - Alcohol
 - Illegal drugs
 - Name calling
 - Firearms or other weapons
 - Foul or offensive language
 - Pornographic material

SUMMARY

APPLICATION PROCESS

1. All adults shall complete an application/consent form. By signing the form, the applicant gives permission to have references checked and background screening completed by the appropriate authority.
2. The application will be processed with all references checked and background screening completed by the company with which the Victory Temple CLC has a contract.
3. All applicants must be review the Safe Sanctuary Policy and should attend a Safe Sanctuary training.

REPORTING OF INCIDENTS

1. If an adult worker/volunteer observes or suspects a violation of the Safe Sanctuary policy, these steps must be taken immediately:
 - A. Address any immediate needs the child or youth may have.
 - B. Report concerns to event coordinator.
 - C. Cooperate with leadership and authorities throughout the crisis.
2. If an adult suspects that abuse or any suspected violation of the Texas Penal Code is taking or has taken place, he or she shall call 911 when needed and report the abuse to the appropriate local law enforcement agency and/or The Department of Protective and Regulatory Services. (800.252.5400)

Recommended Resource: *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church* by Joy Thornburg Melton (Discipleship Resources, ISBN 0881772208)

Background checks through ***FC Background*** (214) 404-4479, Keith Hinton | Vice President
Direct 214.306.8180 | Main 972.404.4479 | 800.388.8827
Keith.hinton@fcbackground.com | www.fcbackground.com



VICTORY VOLUNTEER MINISTRY CHECKLIST

COMPLETE THE VICTORY VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

All adults shall complete an application/consent form. By signing the application/consent form, the applicant gives permission to have references checked and background screening completed by the appropriate authority. This information shall be safeguarded as private and confidential.

READ THE SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY AND INITIAL BELOW

_____ Initial Here

Understanding and adherence to this policy and its provisions is critical for all persons, including all volunteers and workers, paid and unpaid adults, whether lay or clergy, who have any direct or indirect contact with children and youth who participate in any activities or events sponsored by this church.

SIGN ALL FORMS

By signing the application and forms the applicant indicates their acceptance of and agreement with our policies and procedures.

SUBMIT ALL FORMS

- THE VOLUNTEER APPLICATION
- SCREENING CONSENT FORM
- INITIAL ABOVE TO INDICATE YOUR AGREEMENT WITH THE SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

Once completed the application and consent forms should be place in an envelope and sealed for privacy. The Envelope can then either be hand delivered to the Steward on Duty or to the Ministry Director of the area in which you would like to volunteer or mailed to the address below:

**Victory Temple Christian Life Center
Attn: Volunteer Ministry Screening
P O Box 380337
Duncanville, Texas 75138**

Children's Ministry Covenant of Conduct



Matthew 19:14

But Jesus said, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children."

Our goal is to ensure that every child who participates in a Ministry is offered a safe environment where God is the center of all that we do and say.

To participate in activities of the Children Ministry or other church sponsored activities we need the children to follow these basic rules:

1. Treat everyone with kindness and respect.
2. Follow directions given by the teacher or leader of a ministry.
3. Stay in the classroom at all times unless escorted by a teacher or leader.
4. Remember, there is no fighting, name calling or rude behavior.
5. Use all equipment properly. Treat property with respect and clean-up after yourself (remember this is God's House)

We also need parents to be supportive and encouraging. As parents and teachers we realize that children are filled with energy. However, should a child's behavior become disruptive to the class or any ministry, the following actions shall be taken.

Age-Appropriate Discipline Methods - Children

1. The teacher/leader shall redirect the child's focus to an activity.
2. A verbal warning and separation from the source of disruption Ex: separate children, put toy away, etc.
3. Time-out in the classroom. Use this time to explain to the child why it is important to exercise proper behavior.
4. As a last resort, the parent/guardian shall be located and asked to sit with the child or remove him/her from the activity for that day.

I have read the "Covenant of Conduct" and fully agree with the conditions. I understand that my child may be excused from participating in other youth sponsored activities for violation of this covenant.

Signature of Participant Signature of Parent

Printed Name of Participant



Galatians 5:22-23

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with passion and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.

To participate in activities of the Youth Ministry, JAM and/or other youth sponsored activities I agree to:

- treat all persons, regardless of race, religion, and culture, with respect and consideration
- respect the facility we are using
- portray a positive role model for others by maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, integrity, courtesy, tact and maturity

During these events I agree to not:

- use profanity
- purchase or participate in the use of drugs or alcohol
- participate in inappropriate displays of affection or sexual activity
- conduct myself recklessly such that I cause injury to myself or others
- make terroristic threat that would indicate intent to do bodily harm to self or others
- participate in criminal mischief, damage or destruction of property, structures, equipment, vehicles or theft
- bring or use any weapon(s), fireworks, pets, pornographic materials or any other inappropriate items
- abuse others; physically (e.g. strike, spank, shake, slap), verbally (e.g. humiliate, degrade, threaten), sexually (e.g. inappropriate touching, exposure or comments), or mentally (e.g. inconsistent standards, communicating one behavior and rewarding the opposite)
- play with any electronic games, equipment, CD players, IPOD's or other items that may distract attention from my participation unless authorized to do so.

Above all, I agree to have fun at all youth sponsored activities.

I understand that:

- I am financially responsible for any damage that should occur because of my negligence.
- all penalties are left up to the discretion of the Director of Youth Ministries, or his/her representative, with consultation of other Youth Workers.
- The Victory Temple Youth Covenant of Conduct does not cover all situations. In the event that something arises that is not mentioned, the Director of Youth Ministries, or his/her representative, reserves the right to make all necessary decisions.

I have read the "Covenant of Conduct" and fully agree with the conditions. I understand that I may be excused from participating in other youth sponsored activities if I violate any conditions of this covenant.

Signature of Participant Signature of Parent, if Participant is under 18

Printed Name of Participant