

**CONROE CHURCH OF
CHRIST
SAFE CHILD/YOUTH
POLICY**

Conroe Church of Christ Safe Child / Youth Policy

INTRODUCTION

The Conroe Church of Christ is committed to providing a safe, secure, and caring environment for children and youth. The goal of the policy is to protect children and youth from abuse and workers from false allegations. It applies to all church child and youth activities on and off premises. Every child and youth activity worker must become familiar with and agree to follow this policy. An effective safety policy for children and youth also protects workers against false allegations and the congregation against disputes and lawsuits. However, no policy is foolproof. A critical aspect of any child/youth safety policy is the commitment of caring people who put Jesus first and place priority on the nurturing of children and youth. The Conroe Church of Christ is committed to providing people who are devoted to following the teachings of Jesus Christ and are committed to providing an environment that protects our children and youth from abuse and harm.

1. Safe Child/Youth Committee:

Steve Klovensky, Safe Child/Youth Coordinator

C.E. Reed, Elder

LuAnne Criswell

David Deschner

Tammy Loving

Starla Shinn

Becky Sinquefield

Don & Pam Spradlin

Sarah Grace Willy

2. Definitions:

2.1 **Abuse:** Generally any sexual contact with or exploitation between adult, caregiver and a child or adolescent even if the victim consents.

A. Types of Abuse:

1. Physical – includes bodily harm or injury caused by blows or harmful substances, as well as exposure to unreasonable risk of harm or injury.

2. Emotional and Psychological – attacks a child's self-image, often through labels and ridicule.

3. Sexual – can occur through showing and communicating as well as through touching. Not only forced activity, but also permission and persuasion, can be abusive.

2.2 **Adult:** Any person 18 years of age unless they are still in the youth group.

2.3 **Background/criminal check:** Each individual involved with children or youth in any capacity during church planned events on and off campus will under go a criminal history check through an agency or a web site service authorized to do so by Texas law. This formal criminal history check is for the purpose of identifying worker applicants with a criminal history background.

- 2.4 **Child:** Any person from birth - 6th grade.
- 2.5 **Deacon:** A publicly identified leader of the Conroe Church of Christ. There will be a deacon assigned to the Safe/Child Youth Committee.
- 2.6 **Elder:** A publicly identified overseer of the Conroe Church of Christ. There will be an Elder assigned to the Safe/Child Youth Committee.
- 2.7 **Hall Monitor:** Workers who will be available by “walkie-talkies” each Sunday and Wednesday to help monitor hall activities and restrooms.
- 2.8 **Member:** A person who officially places membership at the Conroe Church of Christ.
- 2.9 **Negligence:** is the failure to report abuse and to provide for a child’s physical, medical, emotional, and safety needs.
- 2.10 **Open Door Policy:** Doors to classrooms or facilities where children or youth are present with an adult(s) will be left open in times where the two adult rule is not possible.
- 2.11 **Parent:** The legal parent and/or guardian of a child or youth.
- 2.12 **Safe Child/Youth Committee:** The standing committee appointed by the Safe Child/Youth Coordinator to propose, implement and monitor the Conroe Church of Christ Safe Child/Youth Policy.
- 2.13 **Safe Child/Youth Coordinator:** A person designated to have the supervisory responsibility for carrying out this policy and to maintain the integrity of the application and authorization process.
- 2.14 **Staff:** A paid employee of the Conroe Church of Christ.
- 2.15 **Teen Teacher Training Program:** A program for our youth allowing them to be mentored by a Bible class teacher for our 4 year old – 6th grade Bible classes and BridgeKids (excluding the Pod Area), equipping them to be teachers of the future.
- 2.16 **Teen Teacher Trainee:** A youth who has been interviewed and accepted into the Teen Teacher Training Program and has attended the Safe Child/Youth Training.
- 2.17 **Three Month Rule:** The requirement that an applicant be a member of the Conroe church of Christ for at least three months before qualifying to serve as a worker in the child/youth ministry activities.
- 2.18 **Two Adult Rule:** Two adults will be required to be in each child/youth classroom, at all child/youth campus events and at all child/youth off- campus church events.
- 2.19 **Vehicle:** Any van, bus, or personal automobile used in the transporting of children or youth.

2.20 **Worker:** A paid or volunteer individual who serves in a position that has them in contact with children or youth during a church planned event on or off campus.

2.21 **Worker Training:** All workers will be required to complete a Safe Child/Youth training seminar and to sign a statement that they will abide by the Conroe Church of Christ Safe Child/Youth Policy

2.22 **Youth:** Any person from 7th - 12th grade under the age of 18.

2.23 **Youth Worker:** A member of the student ministry (7th - 12th grade) who has attended the Safe Child/Youth training and has ten hours of service hours and has a reference from the Senior Student/Spiritual Development Minister and approval from Safe Child/Youth Coordinator or Safe Child/Youth Elder.

3. Worker Selection/Screening.

3.1 Conroe Church of Christ will conduct a screening process for all individuals involved with children and youth during planned events, on or off church premises. The purpose of this screening process is to establish an equitable and safe care giving environment. This process includes attending a mandatory training course provided by the Conroe Church of Christ, completing and submitting an application form and a full screening process. Each applicant will be required to sign a compliance form verifying they understand the Conroe Church of Christ Safe Child/Youth Policy and have received a copy of the policy. A person who desires to work within children's or youth ministry must be a faithful member of the Conroe Church of Christ for at least three months.

3.2 **Selection/Qualifications of Workers**

3.2.1 *Submission of Worker Application.* Each full-time or part-time employee and/or worker will be required to complete a worker application. This application will be completed according to the directions and will be submitted to the Safe Child/Youth Coordinator.

3.2.2 *Screening Process of an Applicant.* Each person submitting an application for child/youth work shall be subject to all or part of the following screening mechanisms:

- A. Reference check.
- B. Motor Vehicle record check.
- C. Personal Interview.
- D. Criminal History check.

3.2.3 No person who has been convicted of, placed on regular or deferred adjudication probation, received pre-trial diversion, plead guilty, or nolo contendere to any offense involving sexual contact or physical abuse with a child/youth may work with any child/youth.

3.2.4 Refusal to consent to criminal history check will disqualify applicant from being used as a volunteer worker or paid positions that involve contact with children or youth.

3.2.5 A person's experience with abuse and their recovery process may be pertinent to their suitability as a worker with children/youth. Any applicant who is a survivor of sexual or physical abuse is asked to share this information with the Safe Child/Youth Coordinator or Elder. This information will be held in the strictest confidence.

3.2.6 *Qualifications of Applicants.* All volunteer workers shall be members of the Conroe Church of Christ for a minimum of three months prior to working with children/youth and be in the 7th grade or above.

3. *Identification Badge.* Once an applicant has finished the above procedures and is approved to work with children or youth, he or she will be required to wear an identification badge during all church planned events on church grounds that involve children, ages birth - 12th grade.

4. Guidelines for overnight events/host families.

4.1 Periodically, ministry activities require overnight stays for children and youth. They fall into three broad categories: stays in rented hotel/motel rooms, lock-ins, and stays in personal dwelling.

4.2 *Required Approvals.* A signed Parent/Guardian Permission Form will be required of each child/youth prior to the activity. These will be collected and approved by the group leader prior to the commencement of the activity. Following the activity, the forms will be provided to the Safe Child/Youth Coordinator.

4.3 *Rules for Overnight Stays.*

- A. All persons are to abide by the Conroe Church of Christ Safe Child/Youth Policy at all times including the two adult rule
- B. None of the children/youth will be allowed away from the designated overnight area without prior permission of the group leader and the parents' signed permission.
- C. No child/youth is to be left alone in a room except the restroom.
- D. No two children/youth of the opposite sex are to be left unsupervised.
- E. No child/youth of the opposite sex will be allowed to sleep in the same room.
- F. No husband and wife will be allowed to share a room with a nonrelated child or youth.

5. Rules/Guidelines for Supervision of Children/Youth.

5.1 *Two adult rule.* Every attempt will be made to have two workers with children or youth at all times during church activities, on or off campus.

- A. The two adult rule prohibits one worker from being in an isolated setting with a child or group of children without another worker present.
- B. In the case of child/youth activities and classes, two adult workers must be present. If not, the door must remain open.
- C. Observation of this rule serves not only to protect the child/youth, but also to protect the worker against the possibility of false accusation.
- D. There are exceptions to the two adult rule:
 - i. Child or youth supervised by own parent or guardian.
 - ii. Elder/Staff/Worker counseling a child.

5.1.1 To ensure a safe environment for our infants and toddlers, youth will not be able to serve on the nursery rotation or allowed in the Pod area.

5.1.2 A youth worker involved with the Teen Teacher training Program is not to be left alone with children.

5.2 *Counseling Children/Youth.*

Counseling may be conducted by a single worker counseling alone in a room with a child/youth. The counseling must be done in plain view of an open door or of a window in a closed door.

5.3 *Restroom/Changing Procedures.*

Activities such as diapering and bath rooming of infants and young children which are sometimes performed in a restricted space must be performed in full view and hearing of another adult worker. Parents and guardians are urged to take small children to the bathroom before class or activities.

5.4 *Arrival/Dismissal Procedures.*

5.4.1 0 - 3 year olds Parents or guardians will take their children to the desk in the Nursery pod. The child will be signed in, given a name badge and taken to their classroom by a nursery worker. The parent or guardian will be given a claim ticket which must be returned to the nursery workers at sign-out. All children left in the nursery must have a care card on file completed by the parent or guardian. Parents and guardians are not allowed to come into the classrooms and are asked not to return to check on their child until they are ready to leave the building. Also, they may be picked up by a youth (7th - 12th grade) if indicated.

5.4.2 4 year olds - Kindergarten: Parents or guardians must indicate at sign in who will be picking up their child/children. A claim ticket will be filled out by the parent/guardian and the sticker number written on sign-in sheet. The sticker is then placed on the child. The claim ticket portion is to be kept by the parent/guardian and is compared to the # on the roster at check-out. The child may also be picked up by a youth (7th - 12th grade) if indicated.

5.4.3 1st - 4th grade: Parents or guardians must indicate at sign in who will be picking up their child/children. Pick-up person will be asked to show I.D. *if* they are not known by workers. Also, they may be picked up by a youth (7th - 12th grade) if indicated.

5.4.4 5th - 6th grade: May be dismissed from class without a parent if the parent has notified the teacher at sign-in and indicated on the sign-in sheet that the child may leave.

5.4.5 Bible class doors must be locked at the end of Bible class by the teacher, helper, or Hall Monitor.

5.4.6 All class roll sheets will be picked up by the Coordinator of Children's Ministries and kept in a file cabinet in the Children's Ministry Office for a full year.

5.5 *Reporting procedures for suspicion of abuse.*

5.5.1 Any possible child abuse will be taken seriously and receive immediate attention, including reporting to state authorities in accordance with state law (see referral help at the end of the Conroe Church of Christ Safe Child/Youth Policy). This includes child abuse both outside and within the programs of the Conroe Church of Christ. If a worker suspects or observes child abuse or neglect, he/she must report it immediately to the Safe Child/Youth Coordinator and take the steps to report it to Child Protective Services.

5.5.2 The accused person will be removed from his/her position by the Safe Child/Youth Coordinator until the allegations are fully investigated and resolved. In the case of paid employees, he/she will be placed on involuntary paid leave until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

6. Transportation Procedures.

6.1 The following procedures are for providing safe transportation for children and youth traveling for activities with the Conroe Church of Christ.

6.2 *Vehicle Requirements:*

- A. All vehicles should have a current license plate, inspection sticker, and passenger restraints.
- B. All vehicles will have current insurance coverage as required by Texas law.
- C. No vehicle will be allowed to carry more than the passenger capacity as specified by the vehicle manufacturer.

6.3 *Qualifications of Drivers:*

- A. All drivers are considered workers as defined in the Conroe Church of Christ Safe Child/Youth Policy.
- B. All drivers must undergo the application process including the background check that all children and youth workers must go through except charter bus drivers.
- C. All drivers must have current drivers license with no restrictions with classification required for the vehicle being driven.
- D. All drivers for church sponsored events must be at least 21 years of age if driving a rented vehicle.

6.4 *General Rules.*

- A. All drivers must obey all traffic laws. Failure to do so may disqualify them from driving for activities for the Conroe Church of Christ.
- B. Signed parent permission forms will be obtained from each child/ youth prior to being allowed in the vehicle.

7. Worker Training.

7.1 A training session will be conducted prior to the implementation of this policy for current child/youth workers and new volunteers. Subsequent training sessions will be conducted **periodically** to orient new workers prior to involvement with children or youth.

8. Miscellaneous.

8.1 Any deviation from this policy will require the approval of both the Safe Child/Youth Coordinator or the Elder in charge of Safe Child/Youth.

Policy revised 8/14/ 2011 – High-lited area note changes!

Information helpful when making a referral to
The Child Abuse Hotline

All Referrals must go through the statewide hotline number

Name of alleged victim

Date of birth or age if DOB not available

Social Security number of child if available

When and where can the child be seen (days and place)

Physical address, not P.O. Box

Phone Number

Name of parents or the person with whom the child resides

Work numbers of parents/guardians

Names of siblings, their ages and where they go to school

Information regarding suspected abuse or neglect

Who is/are the alleged victim(s)*

When did the alleged abuse or neglect take place?*

Where did the alleged abuse or neglect take place?*

Who is the alleged perpetrator (abuser)?

Are the primary caretakers aware of the alleged abuse or neglect if they are not the alleged perpetrators?

*This information is required in order to begin an investigation.

Have as much of this information with you when you make the call to the Child Abuse Hotline. This will make a referral more substantive and should not require a call back to you to give more information.

Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-252-5400
24 hours a day / 365 days a year

For situations that do **not** require a response within 24 hours you may report through our secure web site: <https://www.txabusehotline.org>

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