

Avondale Presbyterian Child, Youth, Staff and Volunteer Protection Policy Overview

This policy is intended to: protect children and youth from inappropriate treatment while participating in Church activities. It also protects volunteers and staff from false allegations of inappropriate treatment.

Screening employees and volunteers:

1. Prospective staff members and volunteers will complete a confidential screening form.
2. Background checks are conducted on all prospective staff members.
3. Volunteers and staff are subject to random background checks, conducted annually.
4. A person with a conviction or ongoing investigation of inappropriate treatment involving a minor will be disqualified from employment or volunteering for child/youth ministries.
5. There is a six month attendance requirement before volunteering with child/youth ministries (with stipulations for early clearance for volunteering in the company of other adults).

Training:

1. Staff and volunteers must participate in a training program once every 3 years, which includes receipt of policy and signing certifications.
2. Staff and volunteers must read and sign a certification annually of their continued understanding of and compliance with the policy.

General Policy: *In the presence of or relative to children/youth, staff and volunteers may not:*

1. Subject them to inappropriate treatment, use physical punishment as discipline, or use physical restraint unless to protect the child or others.
2. Leave them unsupervised, and must be aware of their manner of departing, and with whom (with release only to parent, guardian, or designated adult).
3. Use, possess or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, or be impaired by prescription drugs.
4. Smoke or use tobacco.
5. Use profanity, tell inappropriate jokes or intimate personal details, or possess pornography.
6. Possess firearms of any kind.

Guidelines:

1. **Open Spaces:** Doors to rooms in which children/youth are present will remain open. Each staff member and volunteer should avoid being alone in a closed area out of sight of others with a single child/youth.
2. **Two Adults:** Two adults will be present with children/youth at all times (exceptions may be made for Sunday School, ministerial counseling, etc, as long as there is periodic observation by a roamer and/or compliance with Open Spaces).
3. **Restrooms:** Check before entering, send children in pairs, stand in doorway to monitor, and leave door open when assisting younger children.

4. **Gifts:** May not be given without approval.

Social Media Guidelines:

1. No inappropriate use of smart phones or other electronic or digital devices. Respect privacy. No taking photos of those who object. Do not take photos around shower houses, restrooms, other such places where privacy is expected, etc.
2. Staff and volunteers should be mindful of content on electronic devices or social networking pages or other social media that may be accessible to children and youth.
3. Open Spaces applies – no private channels or communication allowed – only public social media sites or channels.
4. Two -Adult guideline applies – no private messages or one-on-one contact through social media. Use public forums or include another adult. Written permission from parent required for exception if youth seeks advice via social media. Exception available for communicating logistics such as date, time, supplies for events.
5. Do not speak for Avondale on social media unless authorized to do so.
6. Social media sites and content live forever. Transition rights and duties to social media sites when volunteers end involvement.

Supervision:

1. Ministry team or group/individual responsible for planning child/youth event must establish oversight in compliance with this policy.
2. Parents are encouraged to participate in activities with children/youth, and be alert to their child's emotional and physical state.
3. Staff and parents may visit any Church program at any time without prearrangement.

Reporting and Responding to Incident/Allegation:

1. All reports are taken seriously.
2. Care, respect, and discretion (with no guarantee of complete confidentiality) will be given to alleged victims and perpetrators during investigation.
3. Anonymous reports may be made, and Social Services must be contacted.
4. The Church will designate a spokesperson, and the investigation will be conducted by civil authorities.
5. Staff and volunteers must cooperate fully with an investigation.

Disclaimer: This Overview does not replace the full policy, and the full policy must be consulted regarding discrepancies or questions. Staff and Volunteers must comply with the full policy. Any staff or volunteer will receive a copy of the full policy during training, and at any other time upon request.