



Policies and Procedures for Keeping Children Safe TEMPLATE

*Prepared by Cathee Johnson Phillips, Executive Director, Foothills Child Advocacy Center;
contact Foothills for the Word version to edit this template easily for your organization.*

Introduction

About this Template

This template is designed for youth-serving organizations to use and customize in developing policies and procedures that create a safe environment for children under the age of 18 and help to prevent the abuse of children while in the care of these organizations. Such policies and procedures can also help to protect employees and volunteers and protect organizations from lawsuits.

This template provides general guidelines; each organization should carefully consider which guidelines apply and whether there are other issues related to child safety in the organization that should be addressed. A youth-serving organization should customize this template with the advice of legal counsel, and the policies and procedures should be reviewed and approved by the organization's Board of Directors.

This template is primarily based on and uses language from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Center for Disease Control and Prevention's 2007 publication, "Preventing Child Sexual Abuse within Youth-Serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures."

Disclaimer

Foothills Child Advocacy Center provides this template so that it may be used as a starting place in developing policies for the prevention of child abuse in youth-serving organizations. This template is intended as a guide, not a manual. It does not cover every issue that an organization may want to consider in the development of such policies, nor does it necessarily reflect Virginia's or any state's law. Foothills Child Advocacy Center is not engaged in giving legal advice or services in providing this template. Organizations should consult with their own legal counsel and other professional advisors before adopting any policies for the prevention of child abuse.

Definitions

Definitions should be customized for each organization and be included in the child protection policy, either in an introduction or appendix. This template uses an appendix. Here are the definitions used for this template:

- **Children, child, youth, minors** – Anyone between the ages of zero and 18 years.
- **Employees, staff, volunteers** – Any individual who regularly or occasionally has contact with children, including but not limited to those who supervise children, teach children, assist in the care of the children, transport children, or whom live on the organization's premises.
- **Child abuse, legal definition** – Under the Virginia law, an abused or neglected child is any child under 18 whose parent or any other person responsible for the care of the child:
 - causes, or threatens to cause, a physical or mental injury except for an accident.
 - fails to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or caring support.

- abandons the child.
- fails to provide the kind of supervision necessary for a child's age or level of development.
- commits, or allows to be committed, any illegal sexual act involving the child — including incest, rape, fondling, indecent exposure, prostitution — or allows the child to be used in any sexually explicit visual material.

The following definitions are also used and come from the 2004 Church Pension Group publication "Model Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse":

- **Economic exploitation** is the deliberate misplacement, exploitation, or wrongful temporary or permanent use of a child or youth's belongings or money.
- **Emotional abuse** is mental or emotional injury to a child or youth that results in an observable and material impairment in the child or youth's growth, development or psychological functioning.
- **Neglect** is the failure to provide for a child or youth's basic needs or the failure to protect a child or youth from harm.
- **Physical abuse** is non-accidental injury, which is intentionally inflicted upon a child or youth.
- **Sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult** is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and an adult. This includes any activity, which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult, child, or youth.
- **Sexual abuse perpetrated by another child or youth** is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and another child or youth when there is no consent, when consent is not possible, or when one child or youth has power over the other child or youth. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children or youth.

Mayo Clinic provides the following definition:

- **Medical abuse** – When someone purposely makes a child sick, requiring medical attention, it puts the child in serious danger of injury and unnecessary medical care. This may be due to a mental disorder called factitious disorder imposed on another, such as a parent harming a child.

Resources and Samples

Resources

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Center for Disease Control and Prevention's 2007 publication, "Preventing Child Sexual Abuse within Youth-Serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures"; download at <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/preventingchildsexualabuse-a.pdf>
- Mayo Clinic, Child Abuse Definitions; view at <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/child-abuse/basics/definition/con-20033789>
- Virginia's "Guide for Mandated Reporters in Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect"; download at https://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/dfs/cps/intro_page/publications/general/B032-02-0280-00-eng.pdf
- Foothills Child Advocacy Center training, www.foothillscac.org/training

Samples

- Church Pension Group 2004 publication "Model Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse"; download at <http://docplayer.net/25851643-Model-policies-for-the-protection-of-children-and-youth-from-abuse.html>
- "Safe-Wise Sample Youth Protection Policy"; download at <http://safe-wise.com/phl/downloads/Youth-Protection-Policy.pdf>

[INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION]

Policies and Procedures for Keeping Children Safe

Adopted and Approved by the Board of Directors on [INSERT DATE]

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Introduction

The [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] is committed to protecting children and keeping them safe. The [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] will not tolerate the sexual, physical, or emotional abuse of children. The purpose of these policies and procedures is to ensure that employees and volunteers understand and implement best practices for creating safe environments for children (0-17 years of age).

[INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] expects its employees and volunteers to agree:

- To do their best to prevent abuse and neglect among children involved in [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] activities.
- Not to physically, sexually, or emotionally abuse or neglect children.
- To comply both in action and attitude with the policies for interactions with children and caregivers as defined in these *Policies and Procedures for Keeping Kids Safe*.

The appendix has a list of definitions for terms used in this document.

Acknowledgements

This document is based on the “Policies and Procedures for Keeping Children Safe” template developed by Foothills Child Advocacy Center, Charlottesville, Virginia. In turn, the template is based on and uses language from the following documents:

- Church Pension Group 2004 publication “Model Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth from Abuse”; download at <http://docplayer.net/25851643-Model-policies-for-the-protection-of-children-and-youth-from-abuse.html>;
- Mayo Clinic, Child Abuse Definitions; view at <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/child-abuse/basics/definition/con-20033789>;
- “Safe-Wise Sample Youth Protection Policy”; download at <http://safe-wise.com/phl/downloads/Youth-Protection-Policy.pdf>;
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s 2007 publication, “Preventing Child Sexual Abuse within Youth-Serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures”; download at <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/preventingchildsexualabuse-a.pdf>;
- Virginia’s “Guide for Mandated Reporters in Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect”; download at https://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/dfs/cps/intro_page/publications/general/B032-02-0280-00-eng.pdf.

I. Screening and Selection of Employees and Volunteers

Goal of the Screening and Selection Process

The goal of [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] is to select the best possible full-time and part-time staff and volunteers to work with children. "Staff and volunteers" includes but is not limited to any individual who regularly or occasionally comes into contact with children.

Selection Process

The selection process includes:

- (a) An application process that includes an authorization for the release of information to conduct background checks and the Code of Conduct.
- (b) Criminal records check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years, and other states, if any, as determined by [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION].
- (c) Sexual offender registry check in any state where the applicant has resided during the past seven (7) years.
- (d) Individual interview with the applicant.
- (e) At least two reference checks of persons who know the applicant, preferably who know how the applicant works with children.
- (f) Driving or Motor Vehicle records check if the person may be transporting children or youth.

Background Screening/Checks

Safety

Safety of the children that we serve, our staff, and our supporters is a primary concern of [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION]. A critical component of safety is background screening for employees, contract workers, interns, Board members, and volunteers who work within our organization.

Requirement

Individuals who serve or work for [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] as an employee, on-site contract worker, intern, Board member, or on-site volunteer are required to sign one or more forms authorizing [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] to do background screening. Background screening will be repeated every 3 years for all employees, on-site contract workers, interns, Board members, and on-site volunteers.

Identifying Information that may be required includes but is not limited to:

- Full name
- Date of birth
- Social Security number
- DMV License number
- Names of any children
- Names of spouses and ex-spouses.

Types of records that may be checked include but are not limited to:

1. VCIN: Virginia Crime Information Network - Form SP-167
2. NCIC National Criminal Information Center - Form SP-24 that must include a fingerprint card.

VCIN and NCIC are administered by the Virginia State Police and the FBI, respectively. Arrests are recorded in cases in which processing (i.e. fingerprinting and photographing) is conducted by the arresting agency. The outcome of each case is frequently but not always reflected on the VCIN/NCIC record. A VCIN or NCIC record may be obtained by a lawful VCIN operator and may be disclosed to the designated [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] personnel with the permission of the subject of the record.

3. Virginia Sex Offender and Crimes Against Minors Registry:

This registry is administered by the Virginia State Police and publicly accessible through the internet.

4. Virginia DSS/CPS Central Registry Check – Form 032-02-0151-12-eng

5. Department of Motor Vehicles:

DMV record may include traffic-related offenses such as DUI, hit and run, or other serious motor vehicle offenses that may not be reflected on a VCIN/NCIC record.

[INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] follows the rules of the Virginia Barrier Crime Laws (Barrier Crimes by the Code of Virginia § 63.2-1719) in determining whether an individual can serve or work for the center. Barrier crime laws prohibit persons convicted of certain statutorily-defined crimes from obtaining employment with certain employers, mostly those employers specializing in the care of vulnerable populations, such as children, the elderly, and those with mental disabilities.

Privacy

If there is no information contained in the report(s) that would prevent an individual from working within the center, then [INSERT DESIGNATED POSITION OR OFFICE] at [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] completes and signs a Notification Form which is placed in the individual's file. The actual background reports are destroyed after being scanned and stored on the password protected computer of [INSERT DESIGNATED POSITION OR OFFICE].

Negative Report(s)

[INSERT DESIGNATED POSITION OR OFFICE] at [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] informs the potential employee, contract worker, intern, board member, or volunteer in writing of any information in the report(s) that might prohibit them from serving in the capacity for which she or he has applied and provides them with a copy of the report.

If the individual believes that 1) the information reported is inaccurate or 2) they want to know what information in the report(s) falls outside our agencies' guidelines, the individual should contact the [INSERT DESIGNATED POSITION OR OFFICE] directly. If the candidate does not respond within five business days, [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] shall assume that they no longer wish to pursue a relationship with the organization.

If the candidate is unable to resolve the issue with the [INSERT DESIGNATED POSITION OR OFFICE], they may then contact the [INSERT LEADERSHIP POSITION AT THE ORGANIZATION]. The Chair shall review the potential candidate's complete criminal history and allow the individual to provide an explanation of the offense. [INSERT LEADERSHIP POSITION AT THE ORGANIZATION] shall then make a determination on whether the individual could serve or work for [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION].

This policy of reporting does not automatically preclude the individual from working for or serving [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION], but provides the [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] with sufficient information to make an informed decision regarding the candidate. In addition, it will protect the privacy of the individual.

II. Guidelines on Interactions Between Individuals

Goal of the Guidelines on Interactions Between Individuals

The goal of these guidelines are to ensure the safety of children in their interactions with the staff and volunteers of [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] and with each other.

The [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] [INSERT APPROPRIATE POLICY, e.g., Code of Ethics, Employee Handbook, Volunteer Policy] governs general behavior of employees and volunteers. These guidelines on interactions between individuals identify specific appropriate/inappropriate/harmful behaviors and practices that will help to ensure the safety of staff, volunteers, and children.

Behaviors

The list of behaviors that follow are not inclusive. Employees and volunteers shall be thoughtful in their behavior with children and take into account child development and cultural diversity when interacting with children.

Appropriate

The following behaviors are usually appropriate:

- Pats on the shoulder or back;
- Handshakes;
- “High-fives” and hand slapping;
- Verbal praise;
- Holding hands while walking with small children;
- Sitting or kneeling down beside small children;
- Pats on the head when culturally appropriate;
- Brief hugs; and
- Arms around shoulders.

Inappropriate/Harmful

The following behaviors are inappropriate/harmful:

- Sexually provocative or degrading comments;
- Sharing risqué jokes;
- Kissing;
- Pats on the buttocks of children;
- Tickling or wrestling;
- Holding children over three years old on the lap;
- Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers when a parent/caregiver is not available;
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff-only areas or other private rooms;
- Occupying a bed with a child;
- Touching knees or legs of children;
- Giving a piggy-back ride to a child;
- Any type of massage given by a child to an adult;
- Any type of massage given by an adult to a child;
- Any form of unwanted affection;
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development (e.g., “You sure are developing” or “You look really hot in those jeans”).
- Snapping bras or giving wedgies or similar touch of underwear, whether or not it is covered by other clothing;
- Bullying or hazing;

- Giving gifts or money to individual children; and
- Private meals with individual children.

Other Considerations

Employees and volunteers of [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] shall not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, financial circumstances, or any other basis prohibited by law. Such conduct may result in disciplinary action up to and including discharge.

Employees and volunteers of [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] are prohibited from:

- The use, possession, distribution, or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs while participating in or assisting with programs or activities specifically for children.
- Intimate/romantic/sexual contact with children.
- Showing pornography or involving youth in pornographic activities.

Practices

Employees and volunteers of [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] shall adhere to the following practices.

Supervision

1. Employee or volunteer/child ratios shall be established based on the age and developmental level of the child, the risk of the program/activity, and the location of the program/activity.
2. If employees or volunteers are under the age of 21, they shall be supervised by employees 21 years of age or older at all times.
3. Employees or volunteers shall actively interact with the children to maintain adequate supervision and monitoring.
4. Employees and volunteers shall be responsible for children 15 minutes before a program or activity begins and 15 minutes after the program or activity ends. [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] shall communicate this policy clearly to caregivers.
5. All employees and volunteers shall be responsible for monitoring behavior and interactions within the organization.

One-On-One Interaction

6. **Limit one-on-one interactions whenever possible by having at least two unrelated adults present at all times with children.**
7. Employees or volunteers shall never be alone with a child where they are not easily observable/interruptible by others.
 - a. For example, if an employee needs to have a private conversation with the child, that shall be done in a room with a glass door with other employees present who can easily see through the door.

Communication

8. Employees and volunteers shall not initiate contact with or accept supervisory responsibility for children outside of [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] programs and activities, including babysitting or private instructions.
9. Employees and volunteers shall not communicate via written, electronic, or other means outside of [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] programs on non-program related matters.

Interactions between Children

10. Children shall be monitored for inappropriate interactions with each other, including but not limited to the list of inappropriate behaviors on page 5 of this document.

Interactions between Children and People Outside of the Organization

11. Interactions between children and people outside of the organization shall be limited and monitored by employees and volunteers.

12. People outside of the organization who want to enter the program or activity shall sign in and out at the reception desk and be escorted by an employee or volunteer while in the building.

Interactions with Caregivers

13. Employees or volunteers shall collect each caregiver's name, address, e-mail, and phone number, as well as an emergency contact and phone number.
14. Employees or volunteers shall require signed permission slips from the caregivers for field trips, late-night activities, and other activities that require travel or take place out of normal business hours.
15. [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] shall provide regular opportunities for caregivers to give input and feedback on programs and activities, e.g., an online survey or evaluation form.

III. Reporting Inappropriate or Harmful Behavior, Breaches in Policy, and Allegations and Suspicions of Child Abuse

Inappropriate or Harmful Behavior and Breaches in Policy

[INSERT ANY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES IN PLACE AT YOUR ORGANIZATION, OR USE THE FOLLOWING LANGUAGE.]

All employees and volunteer shall be required to report behaviors and practices that may be inappropriate or harmful and breaches in policy, as follows:

1. The employee or volunteer shall report an inappropriate behavior or practice as soon as possible to his or her supervisor, unless the report involves the supervisor; in that case the report shall be made to the person who oversees the supervisor.
2. The employee or volunteer shall make a written report to supplement the oral report.
3. In investigating the report and deciding on disciplinary action, the supervisor shall follow the policies and procedures outlined in the **[INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION]** employee handbook.

Allegations and Suspicions of Child Abuse

In Virginia, employees and volunteers who work with children are mandated reporters. This means that they are required by law to report suspicion of abuse or neglect. The leadership of **[INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION]** is professionally and legally accountable for ensuring that all cases of abuse are reported to the proper authorities.

Making a Report

When child abuse or neglect is suspected, a formal report to Child Protective Services or Law Enforcement shall be made with 24 hours, as follows:

1. The employee or volunteer shall report the allegation or suspicion to his/her supervisor.
2. If the alleged offender is a family member, the employee or volunteer and supervisor shall make a report to Child Protective Services.
3. If the alleged offender is not a family member, the employee or volunteer and supervisor shall make a report to Law Enforcement.
4. If there is doubt concerning whether a report should be made, the supervisor shall contact Foothills Child Advocacy Center (434-971-7233) to discuss the situation.
5. The supervisor, employee, or volunteer shall not conduct their own investigation but only ask a few clarifying questions as needed.
6. By law, an employee or volunteer bears ultimate responsibility for reporting the allegation or suspicion to the authorities, regardless of whether that person's supervisor reports the allegation or suspicion.

Confidentiality

1. The supervisor, employee, or volunteer shall not discuss the allegation or suspicion with other employees or volunteers.
2. The supervisor, employee, or volunteer shall not discuss the allegation or suspicion with the alleged offender.
3. The name of the alleged victim(s), the alleged offenders, and the persons who made the report shall be kept confidential.
4. The leadership of the **[INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION]** shall decide when and whether to inform the community that an allegation has been made and designate a spokesperson for questions and inquiries as needed.

When the Alleged Offender is an Employee or Volunteer

An allegation of abuse does not mean that the alleged offender is guilty. However, in addition to reporting the suspicion or allegation, the following steps shall be taken:

1. [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] shall take steps to protect the children in its care, and leadership shall need to make a decision on whether to suspend employment or the volunteer's duties during the investigation.
2. If the employee or volunteer is not suspended, informed supervision is required, which means that at least one staff member shall be informed of the allegation and supervise the alleged offender at all times.
3. Leadership shall consider whether to provide counseling and support for other employees and staff.
4. Leadership shall consider whether to provide access to counseling for the alleged victims and their families.

Records

[INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] shall keep permanent records of allegations and suspicions of child abuse through an established process. [INSERT YOUR PROCESS HERE.]

IV. Required Training on Child Abuse and Safety for Staff and Employees

Goal of the Required Training

The goal of this training is to give employees and staff the information and skills they need to keep kids safe and to help them prevent and respond appropriately to child abuse.

[INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] requires that all employees complete mandated reporter and child sexual abuse prevention training [INSERT WHEN, e.g, during orientation or within 30 days of the first day of employment] and thereafter at least once every three years.

[INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] requires that all volunteers complete mandated reporter and child sexual abuse prevention training before they begin their volunteer duties and thereafter at least once every three years.

[INSERT DESIGNATED PERSON OR OFFICE] at [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION] tracks and records employee and volunteer completion of these trainings.

[INSERT SPECIFIC TRAINING DETAILS HERE IF APPROPRIATE.]

Foothills Child Advocacy Center offers a training program free of charge that could be incorporated here; please visit www.foothillscac.org/safekids.html.

Appendix: Definitions

People

- **Caregivers** – Parent or legal guardian
- **Children, child, youth, minors** – Anyone between the ages of zero and 18 years.
- **Employees, staff, volunteers** – Any individual who regularly or occasionally has contact with children, including but not limited to those who supervise children, teach children, assist in the care of the children, transport children, or whom live on the organization's premises.

Abuse

- **Child abuse, legal definition** – Under the Virginia law, an abused or neglected child is any child under 18 whose parent or any other person responsible for the care of the child:
 - causes, or threatens to cause, a physical or mental injury except for an accident.
 - fails to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or caring support.
 - abandons the child.
 - fails to provide the kind of supervision necessary for a child's age or level of development.
 - commits, or allows to be committed, any illegal sexual act involving the child — including incest, rape, fondling, indecent exposure, prostitution — or allows the child to be used in any sexually explicit visual material.
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- **Emotional abuse** is mental or emotional injury to a child or youth that results in an observable and material impairment in the child or youth's growth, development or psychological functioning.
- **Medical abuse** – When someone purposely makes a child sick, requiring medical attention, it puts the child in serious danger of injury and unnecessary medical care. This may be due to a mental disorder called factitious disorder imposed on another, such as a parent harming a child.
- **Neglect** is the failure to provide for a child or youth's basic needs or the failure to protect a child or youth from harm.
- **Physical abuse** is non-accidental injury, which is intentionally inflicted upon a child or youth.
- **Sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult** is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and an adult. This includes any activity, which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult, child, or youth.
- **Sexual abuse perpetrated by another child or youth** is any contact or activity of a sexual nature that occurs between a child or youth and another child or youth when there is no consent, when consent is not possible, or when one child or youth has power over the other child or youth. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of any of the children or youth.