

Church of Christ in Champions

Safety Guidelines

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I. Purpose

The Church of Christ in Champions has developed the following guidelines for all church planned events on and off campus. Please understand that the sole purpose of these guidelines is to promote the well-being of the families at the Church of Christ in Champions. These guidelines reflect our commitment to provide a positive environment for all.

The three areas that these guidelines address are:

1. Worker Selection
2. Worker Supervision
3. Reporting and Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

II. Definitions

A. Campus – refers to the physical grounds of the Church of Christ in Champions at 13902 Cutten Road in Houston Texas.

B. Child – refers to all persons from birth through the fifth grade.

C. Church Planned Activities – any activity that meets with the authorization of the elders, ministry staff, deacons, or designated ministry leaders. All church planned activities should be announced in advance. Any function or activity which takes place without previous planning and announcement may not be considered a church planned activity.

D. Hall Monitor – refers to those people assigned to oversee the conduct on the campus during any church planned activity.

E. Released – refers to the time when a parent or authorized person takes charge, either physically or verbally, of any child or teen.

F. Safety Panel – refers to the elders and the group of people assigned by the elders to function in this capacity. A current list of the members of the Safety Panel may be kept on file in the church office and may be examined by any member of the Church of Christ in Champions or any visitor with children attending classes or youth functions at the Church of Christ in Champions.

G. Screening – refers to the process whereby a person submits an application, submits to a criminal history check, is interviewed and approved to work with youth/children at the Church of Christ in Champions.

H. Worker – refers to any adult who has been assigned to a particular area of work. These persons may also be referred to as “*authorized adults*.”

I. Youth – refers to those persons between sixth grade and eighteen years of age. These may also be referred to by the designation “*teen*”.

III. Worker Selection and Screening Process

To establish an equitable care-giving environment, Champions endeavors to conduct a screening process for all individuals who wish to be involved with children and youth during church planned events on and off campus. This process may involve going to a training class, filling out an application form, furnishing references, giving permission for a background check and signing a document indicating they have received and understood the guidelines as may be determined by the Safety Panel. After possible screening has been completed and the applicant has been a member at Champions following a reasonable waiting period (possible six (6) month), the applicant may then be allowed to become a worker.

A. Training Class

The screening process may begin with the prospective worker going to a training class. The session may involve the following: watching a video on child abuse and protection; receiving a copy of the guidelines; reading the guidelines thoroughly; and then completing an application, criminal history check form and guidelines agreement form.

B. Application

Individuals seeking to work with children and youth in any capacity during church planned activities on and off campus are encouraged to complete an application containing basic information. Only those items considered vital to child safety standards at Champions may be included. The information in the application will be treated as ***strictly confidential*** and access may be restricted to the Safety Panel and elders only.

C. Criminal History Check

People involved with children or youth in any capacity during church planned events on and off campus may be asked to undergo a criminal history check. Any criminal history check may be performed through an agency or a web-site service authorized to do so by Texas law. The history check will be at the expense of the church and will also be treated as ***strictly confidential***. Information returned on the criminal history check may be made available to the elders only. The elders may address any problems resulting from the criminal history check. Any applicant with a known conviction for either child abuse or physical abuse may not be engaged in any capacity that would bring them into contact with children or youth. Any adult survivor of child abuse or physical abuse may be interviewed by the elders before working with children or youth. The Safety Panel, in keeping with the best interest of our children, may decide if any person is approved to work with children. Any person who may not be allowed to work with children will be notified and advised of the reasons that they cannot work with children.

D. Waiting Period

New members to Champions congregation may be subject to a six month waiting period before being utilized in any volunteer positions involving contact with children or youth. The waiting period may be waived on a case by case basis with the approval of the Safety Panel and the elders.

IV. Worker Supervision

To achieve the goal of maximizing the well being of everyone at Champions, the supervision guidelines attempt to define the responsibility for workers and parents working together as a team.

A. General Guidelines for Workers

1. Hygiene

Good hygiene should be practiced by all workers. Washing hands after changing babies, cleaning toys after play, and proper disposal of diapers and used tissue are all examples of good hygiene which should be encouraged.

2. Two-Worker Guideline

We endeavor to have two workers with children or youth at all times during church events on and off campus. Any person under the age of eighteen should not be left alone during any activities or classes. During services a Hall Monitor may be considered a second adult. Observation of this guideline serves to protect against the possibility of false accusations or misunderstandings.

3. Classroom Doors

The top portion of half-doors should be left open. Full doors should be left open if there is not a half-door or window in the door or wall.

4. Visitation

No one should visit in seclusion with a child or youth in a one-on-one basis. Where there is a legitimate reason for being alone with a child or teen (for example counseling or discipline), the visitation should be conducted in a place where there are other people nearby to observe the activity. If privacy is necessary, a room that observes the classroom door guidelines must be used. Ministers, elders, deacons, directors and coordinators may make unannounced visits into classrooms or other program sites at any time.

5. Releasing

We attempt to provide supervision consistent with the two-worker guideline until all children/youth have been appropriately released.

B. General Health and Safety Guidelines

Parents are asked to observe the following health guidelines:

- a) No child who has a fever, diarrhea or vomiting within twenty-four hours should be in contact with a group of other children.
- b) No child with excessive coughing, sneezing or runny nose should be in contact with a group of other children.
- c) No child with any contagious virus or infection should be in contact with a group of other children.
- d) If a child needs medication while they are in the care of a worker of the Church of Christ in Champions, the parent is required to come and administer the medication.

C. General Guidelines for Parents of Preschool Children (0-5 years)

As a reminder, parents are asked to label ALL of their child's belongings- i.e. bottles, blankets, pacifiers, cups, etc.

D. General Guidelines for Non-service Nursery Use

During times when there are no scheduled activities, parents are responsible for monitoring their children.

E. General Guidelines for Parents of Children up to 60 months (Training Room)

Parents are responsible for monitoring their children while in the training room.

F. General Guidelines for Parents of Youth Group Children; 6th- 12th Grade

Parents are asked to observe the following health guidelines to help insure the wellbeing of the other students in the youth group.

- 1. No youth who has a fever, diarrhea or vomiting within twenty-four hours should be brought to any youth group function.
- 2. No youth with excessive coughing, sneezing or runny nose should be brought to any youth group function.
- 3. No youth with any contagious virus or infection should be brought to any youth group function.
- 4. If a youth needs medication while they are in any youth group function, an authorized adult is required to safeguard and administer the medication.

G. General Requirements

1. The youth minister is authorized to make all decisions concerning student drivers after consulting with the student's parents. In order to abide by this guideline, the youth minister should keep written records of the parents' wishes.
2. All youth group members are required to have a current "Medical Release & Permission Form" on file with the Youth Minister.
3. The youth minister should attempt to provide at least one male and one female chaperone for all youth functions with mixed groups.

H. Overnight Trips/Activities

Each youth group member/child who participates in any overnight activity/trip must have a "Medical Release and Permission Form" on file with the appropriate minister. All guidelines should be followed off campus as well as on campus.

I. General Guidelines for Little Champs Preschool/Mother's Day Out

All workers should meet the general guidelines for workers as set forth in these guidelines. All guidelines specific to Little Champs are covered in the "Little Champs Policies and Procedures" booklet. This booklet is available from the Mothers Day Out director.

V. Reporting and Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

If an allegation of child abuse occurs, the allegation will be taken seriously and handled forthrightly with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality. Allegations of child abuse may be reported by a church worker, a parent, a guardian, a child, or any concerned person in the congregation. In each case, we may respond within a reasonable time frame to these allegations.

A. Suspected or Observed Child Abuse

If a worker suspects or observes child abuse, or otherwise perceives that a child is behaving abnormally, the worker should report it to an elder or minister who may refer the allegation to the Safety Panel for appropriate action.

B. Allegations of Child Abuse

1. If a child, parent, or worker makes allegations of inappropriate conduct on the part of a volunteer worker or a paid church employee the following steps should be taken:
2. If the allegation is made against anyone other than paid church staff, then a minister or elder should be notified. If the allegation is made against paid church staff, an elder should be notified.
3. The minister and/or elder should notify the Safety Panel. Together they should determine the plan of action for investigation on the part of the church. If a child made the allegation, the Safety Panel should then inform the parent of the allegation and the steps that may be taken to investigate. The Safety Panel should designate the elder who may coordinate the reporting of the incident and the follow-up action taken. State law requires that reporting must be completed within 72 hours.
4. The investigation should include an interview with the parents (and the child if appropriate) to get a simple statement of what happened.
5. If abuse is suspected the elders should then contact the accused; tell him or her of the allegation, and get a statement concerning the allegation. He or she should be informed of the Church of Christ in Champion's obligation to report the situation to Child Protective Services and should be asked to suspend work with children and youth until an investigation has been completed. All statements recorded in written form should be kept on file, using the "Incident Statement Form." A report should be given to the elders

and follow up action should be determined. The follow-up action plan should be recorded and filed with any other statements pertaining to the specific incident.

6. If the allegation appears to be one involving inappropriate conduct (but is not considered child abuse as prescribed by Texas law), the elders should meet and agree on a course of action. This action can range from talking to the accused and reinforcing the proper conduct for a first offense to removal from working with children and youth for repeated offenses. The parents should be informed of the action before it is carried out. If the decision is made not to remove the accused, the situation should be monitored by a member of the eldership.

7. If the allegation appears to be child abuse as prescribed by Texas law, the Safety Panel may report the information to authorities under the child abuse reporting statute. See next section for follow-up action procedures.

8. If a child, parent, or worker makes allegations of inappropriate conduct on the part of any adult who is not a volunteer worker or a paid church employee (a church member or visitor for example) the following steps should be taken:

a) Any church minister or elder should be notified.

b) The minister and/or elder should immediately notify the Safety Panel. Together they should determine the plan of action for investigation on the part of the church. (If a child made the allegation, the Safety Panel should then inform the parent of the allegation and the steps that may be taken to investigate.)

c) The investigation should include an interview with the parents (and the child if appropriate) to get a simple statement of what happened

d) If abuse is suspected the Safety Panel should then contact the accused, tell him or her of the allegation, and get a statement concerning the allegation. He or she should be informed of the Church of Christ in Champion's obligation to report the situation to Child Protective Services when abuse is believed to have occurred. Both statements should be recorded in written form and kept on file.

e) If the allegation appears to be one involving inappropriate conduct (but is not considered child abuse as prescribed by Texas law), the Safety Panel should inform the parents that the allegation does not appear to be child abuse. The Safety Panel should then inform the person being accused of the allegation and tell them of the unacceptable nature of their behavior. The Safety Panel should monitor the situation as well as inform the parents that they always have the right to make a report to Child Protective Services themselves.

f) If the allegation appears to be child abuse as prescribed by Texas law, the Safety Panel may report the information to authorities under the child abuse reporting statute.

9. If a child makes allegations of abuse by someone, such as a neighbor, parent, relative, or school employee, to a volunteer worker, the worker should seek the counsel of a minister and/or an elder on how to proceed and make a report to Child Protective Services.

10. If a child makes allegations of abuse by someone such as a neighbor, parent, relative, or school employee, to a paid church employee, or if the employee observes or suspects abuse, the employee should notify an elder, minister, or the Safety Panel, and Child Protective Services.

11. Once the allegation has been resolved, a final report should be prepared and kept on file.

C. Follow-up to Allegations, Accusation or Suspected Child Abuse

1. These guidelines emphasize prevention in order to safeguard everyone. However, in the unlikely event that an allegation, accusation, or suspected abuse does occur, the church is committed to a proactive stance in ministering to the victim and the victim's family, the accused, and the family of the accused as well as the congregation, as appropriate.
2. Typically, follow-up may involve elders and ministers in the development of a course of action, which provides an avenue of communication to the various individuals involved. The general approach should contain the following elements:
3. The elders should provide pastoral counsel and ministry to the emotional and spiritual needs of the victim and their family. This may include arrangements for professional therapy as required.
4. The elders should provide pastoral counsel and ministry to the spiritual needs of the accused and their family. This may include arrangements for professional treatment and therapy as required.
5. The elders may communicate with the congregation, as appropriate, respecting the privacy of the individuals involved.
6. Should investigation by authorities be required, the elders should cooperate fully with any investigation and legal actions that may result.
7. The elders may act to impose spiritual discipline on individuals as a result of their investigations and the conclusions reached.

VI. Compliance and Goals

Every minister, director, coordinator, elder, deacon, paid church employee, and volunteer worker is responsible for carrying out the provisions set forth in these guidelines for all church planned events on and off campus. These guidelines also apply to all paid church personnel

The goal of these guidelines is the safety and prevention of abuse, molestation and exploitation of anyone.

VII. Definitions of Child Abuse and Sexual Abuse

A. Defined – Texas Family Code Section 261.001

1. Child abuse is defined to include acts or omissions which cause or permit: (i) mental or emotional injury to a child, (ii) physical injury or a threat of physical injury to a child, (iii) failure to make efforts to prevent action by another person that results in physical injury to a child, or (iv) sexual contact or the failure to make reasonable efforts to prevent sexual contact with or in the presence of a child.
2. Neglect includes: (i) leaving a child in a situation where the child would be exposed to a substantial risk or harm, (ii) requiring a child to use judgment or take actions beyond the child's level of maturity, physical condition or mental abilities, (iii) the failure to obtain medical care for a child, or (iv) the failure to provide a child with food, clothing or shelter necessary to sustain the life or health of a child.

B. Duty to Report – Texas Family Code Section 261.101

Any person who learns of or has cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person shall report that belief to a local or state law enforcement agency or the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (state hotline 1-800-585-5400). The duty to report includes any time a person has knowledge or reasonable cause to believe that abuse or neglect has been committed or will be committed in the future. An oral report must be made immediately upon learning of the abuse or neglect or the likelihood

of abuse or neglect, and a written report shall be made within five days to the same agency or department on the form available at that agency for making such a report. The duty to report is very broad and will be non-accusatory.

C. Reporting at the Church of Christ in Champions

Members of the Church of Christ in Champions are asked to report any case of neglect or suspicion of neglect to an elder or minister, who in turn may inform the Safety Panel. The Safety Panel may investigate the alleged incident and take appropriate action.

D. Immunity – Texas Family Code Section 261-106

Any person reporting child abuse or neglect or the suspicion thereof, is granted immunity by state law and is not liable for damages related to the reporting. This does not mean the reporter cannot be sued, but that the defense would be based on the immunity statute of law.

E. Immunity at the Church of Christ in Champions

Those who report any incidents to an elder or minister at the Church of Christ in Champions, may be granted immunity with regard to public disclosure, but may be subject to decisions made by the overseers of the church in charge with those matters.

F. Clergy Privilege – Rule 505, Texas Rules of Evidences

The Texas Rules of Evidences provide that communications between clergy and any individual consulting with him or her for the purpose of seeking spiritual advice in the clergy's professional capacity is considered privileged. There is an exception, which provides that the privilege disappears in the event the clergy member learns of child abuse or neglect, and the clergy is required to report the information to authorities under the child abuse reporting statute. Therefore, any information divulged to a clergy member during a counseling session that reveals a potential or actual child abuse or neglect situation, should result in that individual being advised that the situation will be investigated and if necessary, reported to the proper authorities.

G. Criminal Liability for Failure to Report

A person failing to report child abuse or neglect commits a Class B Misdemeanor. A civil claim may be imminent in a failure to report incident; therefore all incidents will be investigated and reported to the proper authorities.

H. Sexual Misconduct Defined

Sexual misconduct defined under the Texas Penal Code includes indecent exposure, indecency with a child, and sexual assault, including rape, or conduct that may be sexually oriented.

I. Sexual Misconduct at the Church of Christ in Champions

Sexual misconduct at the Church of Christ in Champions may be investigated and reported to the proper authorities.

J. Sexual Harassment Defined

Sexual harassment is defined by EEOC as any "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when submission to the conduct enters into employment decisions and/or the conduct unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment." Sexual harassment is an illegal offense under civil law, Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IV. The court defines two types of sexual harassment: (i) Quid pro quo which means something for something, demanding sexual favors in exchange for favors or benefits and (ii) a hostile environment where unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature substantially interferes with someone's mental or physical health or interferes with job performance.

K. Sexual Harassment at the Church of Christ in Champions

Although workers are not necessarily employees of the Church of Christ in Champions, sexual harassment of children, between children, or by adults will not be tolerated at any Church of Christ in Champions function.

Forms

Church of Christ in Champions Safety Guidelines Agreement Form

The undersigned acknowledges that they have received and read the *Church of Christ in Champions Safety Guidelines* and agrees to be bound by the terms found therein.

The undersigned confirms that they have undergone training about this policy and that they have had an opportunity to ask questions about any portion of the policy that they did not initially understand.

The undersigned acknowledges that the enforcement of this policy may periodically involve new criminal background evaluations, and gives permission to the Church of Christ in champions to pursue any information relevant to said check.

The undersigned further acknowledges that the information provided pursuant to this policy is true and correct to the best of their knowledge, and agrees to notify the church Safety Panel should any material change to this information occur, or if they should have any reason to believe that they have become unfit in any way to care for children or youth.

Please Print Full Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Church of Christ in Champions Child/Youth Worker Application

These applications for service are strictly confidential. Persons applying who refuse to answer questions will be interviewed regarding the refusal. Thank you for your cooperation in this process. Our goal is to promote safety for children and youth. This is not an application for employment.

Name _____ Birth date _____
Last Maiden First Middle

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Home Phone _____ Business Phone _____ Email _____

Are you a member at the Church of Christ in Champions? _____ How Long? _____

Please list your church history for the past three years. Include the name of the church attended, the address of that congregation, the phone number, and how long you attended.

<u>Church Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Phone #</u>	<u>Time in Attendance</u>
--------------------	----------------	----------------	---------------------------

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Please list all child related work experience for the past three years (paid or volunteer). Include organization name and address, phone number, dates worked, and type of work (attach a separate sheet if necessary)

<u>Organization Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Phone #</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Work Description</u>
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_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

SEE OTHER SIDE

Please provide the names and phone numbers of three personal references.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The following questions are designed to help us protect the children and youth of our congregation. We understand that the following questions are personal and we will protect your privacy.

1. Is there any reason, including those that are physical or mental health related, that might keep you from effectively working with children/youth or that might cause a child/youth potential harm? _____
2. Have you ever been convicted of a felony, misdemeanor or deferred adjudication that involved a child or youth? _____
3. Are you an adult survivor of child abuse? _____

If you answered yes to any of these questions, please explain (attach a separate sheet if necessary):

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY BEFORE SIGNING BELOW

I have not been convicted of nor admitted committing, nor am I under indictment for any felony, misdemeanor, or deferred adjudication offense involving drugs, child abuse, sexual offenses or moral indecency.

I understand that I will be asked to consent to a criminal history check.

Signature

Date

Church of Christ in Champions Criminal History Check

The following information is part of the screening process at the Church of Christ in Champions.
All information is confidential to the Safety Panel.

Name of Applicant

First	Middle	Last

Please list all other names by which you are known or have been known:

Gender (Circle one): Male Female Date of Birth: _____

Social Security Number: _____

Current Drivers License State and Number: _____

Please list all states and towns that you have lived in for the last three years:

I certify that the information on this form is true and accurate. I understand that falsifying criminal history information is unlawful. I give my permission for the local police department or state agency or other agency authorized to obtain criminal history information, to release these facts to the elders of the Church of Christ in Champions.

Failure or refusal to submit this information is good cause to reconsider your application for working with the children or youth at the Church of Christ in Champions.

Applicant Signature	Date

**Church of Christ in Champions
Accident Report Form**

Name of Child/Youth: _____

Date of Accident: _____ Time of Accident: _____

How and when were the parents/guardians notified?

Who was supervising at the time of the accident? _____

What was the location of the accident? _____

Describe the accident or type of injury plus any emergency care that was administered:

If the child was taken to the hospital or an ambulance was called what instructions were received?

Each person who signs below is affirming that they have received a copy of this report and that the report is a satisfactory description of the events.

Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Child Supervisor: _____ Date: _____

Safety Panel Member: _____ Date: _____

**Church of Christ in Champions
Incident Report Form**

Name of Child/Youth: _____

Date of Incident: _____ Time of Incident: _____

How and when were the parents/guardians notified?

Who was supervising at the time of the incident? _____

What was the location of the incident? _____

Describe the incident in your own words:

Signature: _____ Date: _____