

GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS & CAREGIVERS

Because our society is filled with pain, problems, and litigation caused by improper conduct of adults working with children and youth, it is imperative that those working with children at church have meaningful guidelines for conduct – to protect both themselves and those under their care. As a ministry volunteer, you want parents and others to feel comfortable and confident with you. Here are some practical guidelines:

1. **Never leave alone a child – or group of children – for whom you are responsible.** Provide adequate supervision at all times, no matter what.
2. **NEVER be the only adult** serving as a caregiver – ALWAYS have at least one other person 18 or older with you.
3. **Always ask a person's permission before touching** him/her anywhere, even when responding to an injury or problem. This is especially true for any area that would normally be covered by a T-shirt and shorts. If an injury is within this area, make sure another adult works with you as you provide care.
4. **Physical and verbal attack are inappropriate** and should not ever be used as discipline. "Time out" or "sit-in-that-chair" may be helpful methods with children.
5. **Kids need to be touched appropriately.** However, keep hugs brief and "shoulder-to-shoulder" or side-to-side." Always keep your hands at (not below) the shoulder level. A caregiver kiss is to the forehead or cheek only – not elsewhere. For small children who like to sit on laps, encourage them to sit next to you.
6. **When taking small children to the bathroom** – take another adult along, or leave the door open.

Be aware of the signs and symptoms of abuse; be aware of the legal requirements in your locality for reporting child abuse. In nearly all places, a caregiver can be held legally responsible for failing to report suspected or actual child abuse.

Be loving, kind, firm, and always thoroughly professional as a caregiver. Working with children and youth at church is not only a privilege; it is also a deep responsibility that must be approached with utmost care.

Adventist Risk Management and the North American Division Secretariat mandate the following rules for leaders. These serve as a protection to you and your ministry against charges of abuse:

- **The volunteer screening rule.** All volunteers must complete the screening process described on the Volunteer Ministry Information Form.
- **The six-month rule.** Do not recruit a volunteer who has been a church member for less than six months.
- **The two-person rule.** Have at least two adults present at all times.
- **The glass window rule.** If the door to a classroom does not have glass in or around it, the door should be left open, so that the teacher is in full view.

I, the undersigned caregiver, have read the guidelines listed above and agree to abide by them. I will obtain a copy of this signed form and keep it for reference.

Signed _____ Date _____