



# THE FOURSQUARE CHURCH

## CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION MANUAL 2025 Edition

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## Purpose Statement

The Foursquare Church is committed to protecting minors and releasing them into the calling God has placed on their lives. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 is our guide: "... may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete..." (NASB). God has charged us with the responsibility of protecting each minor's spirit, soul, and body, and we will do everything possible to fulfill that charge.

We are committed to creating a safe and nurturing environment that fosters spiritual, emotional, and physical health for all minors who participate in our ministries. We are also committed to protecting staff members and volunteers from false accusations.

*"Keep me, Oh Lord, from the hands of the wicked; Preserve me from violent men, who have purposed to make my steps stumble."*

*Psalms 140:4 (NKJV)*

# ICFG Corporate Resolution Concerning Child and Youth Safety

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Providing children with a safe, secure, and happy environment takes diligent oversight and a heartfelt conviction that children deserve the best. A copy of a resolution regarding the safety of children adopted on April 3, 1992, during the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel Convention in Van Nuys, California, is included.

**WHEREAS** the Holy Scripture declares children are a heritage from the Lord and

**WHEREAS** the Creator has made mankind in His image and sanctified human life with eternal destiny and

**WHEREAS** our Lord Jesus Christ received little children and clearly taught us that “of such is the Kingdom of Heaven” and

**WHEREAS** both a severe warning against offending little ones and solemn commandments to protect, nurture and teach our children are evident throughout the Word of God,

## **THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**

**THAT** the safety of the child be defended, and the sacred value of each individual be taught in the writings, the witness and the work of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel;

**THAT** we subscribe to a gracious balance between the safety of each individual and the responsibility of parental, civil and Church authority;

**THAT** we boldly declare our belief that each child has the right to life, liberty, and fulfillment in the pursuit of happiness according to the precepts of the Bible; and

**THAT** together, we demonstrate a deep respect for human life, a firm commitment for future generations to have access to Christ’s calling and an entrance into his eternal Kingdom.

**THAT** the safety of minors under our care is foundational to the health of all ministry activities, and our commitment to child and youth protection is unwavering and applies to all expressions of ministry under the purview of The Foursquare Church.

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# **Section 1 – General Policies and Procedures for Working with Minors**

## **1.1 Definitions of Terms (for the purposes of this manual)**

**Adult:** An individual aged 18 or older.

**Minor:** An individual under the age of 18.

**Pastor (or ministerial staff member):** An individual with a current Foursquare credential, whether or not the individual receives compensation.

**Staff (or staff member):** Includes, but is not limited to, pastors (as defined above), employees, paid interns, and paid ministry leaders who work at a ministry (as defined below).

**Volunteer:** An individual who provides services to a ministry (as defined below) without compensation. Note: All volunteers who work in a ministry must complete the required screening and training outlined in this manual.

**Junior helper:** A minor aged 12–17 who volunteers in ministry programs. Junior helpers are recommended to be at least 3 years older than the minors they are helping. Note: Junior helpers must be under adult supervision, and do not count toward adult-to-minor ratios.

**Ministry (or ministry program):** Any program or activity organized by The Foursquare Church involving minors, including but not limited to children's ministry, youth ministry, camps, and off-site events operated by a local Foursquare church, a Foursquare district office, or the Foursquare national office. Note: Schools, preschools, and daycares are specifically excluded from this manual, as those ministries are regulated by state licensing agencies and are subject to those agencies' requirements.

**Ministry leader:** An individual who supervises a ministry (as defined above) (e.g., children's pastor/director, youth pastor/directors, etc.).

**Fully screened adult:** An individual aged 18 or older who has completed the screening process and been approved for service in a ministry per the screening procedures described in this manual.

## 1.2 Expectations of Conduct for Staff and Volunteers

The Foursquare Church is committed to protecting minors and releasing them into the calling God has placed on their lives. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 is our guide: "... may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete..." (NASB). God has charged us with the responsibility of protecting each minor's spirit, soul, and body, and we will do everything possible to fulfill that charge.

We are committed to creating a safe and nurturing environment that fosters spiritual, emotional, and physical health for all minors participating in our ministries. We are also committed to protecting staff members and volunteers from false accusations.

Abuse of any kind will not be tolerated, and confirmed abuse will result in immediate dismissal from employment and/or any role with minors. The Foursquare Church will follow the law in adhering to mandatory reporting obligations and cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made.

The following is an outline of specific expectations of conduct for all staff and volunteers as we strive to accomplish our mission together:

- Minors are always to be treated with respect and dignity.
- Staff and volunteers are to adhere to appropriate boundaries governing physical and verbal interactions as outlined in this manual.
- Staff and volunteers are to avoid physical interactions with minors that others cannot observe.
- Staff and volunteers are not to stare at or comment on minors' bodies.
- Staff and volunteers are not to flirt, date, or become romantically involved with minors.
- Staff and volunteers are not to use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of minors or provide minors with alcohol, cigarettes, vape, marijuana, or illicit drugs.
- Staff and volunteers are not to have sexualized material, including printed or online pornography or other explicit material, in the presence of minors or show minors any such materials.
- Staff and volunteers are not to keep secrets or confidentiality with minors. Unless parents/guardians are perpetrating or permitting abuse or neglect of the minor (in which case, follow the reporting protocol outlined in this manual), the parents/guardians have a right to know what staff and volunteers know about their minor.
- Gifts may only be given per organizational policies if the local ministry has such a policy. If no such policy exists, the giver must disclose all gifts to the parents and the giver's ministry leader.

- Staff and volunteers are to comply with The Foursquare Church's policies regarding interactions with minors outside of ministry programs.
- Staff and volunteers are to adhere to The Foursquare Church's policies regarding electronic communication and social media with minors.
- Staff and volunteers are to avoid having one-on-one meetings with minors in any setting where another staff member, volunteer, or pastor cannot observe the meeting.
- Staff and volunteers are not to abuse minors in any way, including (but not limited to): a. Physical abuse: hitting, shaking, slapping, or unnecessary restraints, b. Emotional abuse: degrading, threatening, cursing, shaming, humiliation, or cruelty, c. Sexual abuse: inappropriate touch, exposing oneself, sexually oriented conversations, or coercing a minor to expose themselves, d. Neglect: withholding food, water, shelter, or appropriate care or supervision.
- The Foursquare Church will not tolerate the abuse of one minor by another minor and will address it as outlined in Section 1.A of this manual.
- Staff and volunteers should report significant concerns or complaints about other staff and volunteers, adults, or minors to their immediate supervisor.
- When a child abuse situation arises, the staff/volunteers are to follow the reporting protocol outlined in this manual.
- Anyone who engages in, or has previously admitted to or been convicted of, child abuse, indecency with a minor, or causes non-accidental injury to a minor is permanently disqualified from serving in child or youth ministry in Foursquare contexts.

#### **A. Abuse of Minors is Prohibited**

The Foursquare Church has zero tolerance for abuse and will not tolerate the abuse of minors in its ministry programs. Any abuse by staff or volunteers will result in disciplinary action, that is, termination of employment or volunteer service. Child Abuse of minors is to be reported in compliance with applicable laws.

##### *1. Abuse of One Minor by Another Minor is Prohibited*

The Foursquare Church has zero tolerance for abuse or sexual activity among minors within our ministries. The Foursquare Church is committed to providing all minors with a safe environment and will not tolerate the abuse of one minor by another minor. Conduct by a minor that rises to the level of abuse or sexual activity will result in intervention or disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the program.



## B. Expectations of Adult Conduct with Minors

The following information, which includes required policies and suggested protocols that need contextualization in local contexts, is intended to assist staff and volunteers in making decisions about interactions with minors. Contact your supervisor for clarification of any guidelines or to inquire about behaviors not addressed here.

### 1. *Physical*

**Certain one-on-one meetings with minors are prohibited.** Private one-on-one meetings within the visibility of other staff, volunteers, or pastors are permitted. Interactions in isolation and outside the visibility of other staff, volunteers, or pastors are prohibited. For example, a one-on-one coffee meeting in a public place is prohibited. Volunteers and ministry leaders should never be in a place where they can be accused (accurately or falsely) of inappropriate behavior without witnesses who can observe and interrupt the interaction. Two adults should always be present with minors, even when providing private pastoral care. This policy aims to ensure that our organization clearly communicates expectations for staff and volunteers and gives examples of appropriate behavior.

The Foursquare Church's physical contact policy promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting minors, staff, and volunteers. Our organization encourages appropriate physical contact with minors and prohibits inappropriate displays of physical contact. Any inappropriate physical contact by staff or volunteers towards minors may result in disciplinary action, including termination (for staff) or dismissal (for volunteers).

**The Foursquare Church's policies for appropriate and inappropriate physical interactions include but are not limited to:**

Appropriate Physical Interactions	Inappropriate Physical Interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Side hugs</li><li>• Pats on the shoulder or back</li><li>• Handshakes</li><li>• High-fives and fist bumps</li><li>• Pats on the head when culturally appropriate</li><li>• Touching hands, shoulders, and arms</li><li>• Arms around shoulders</li><li>• Holding hands in appropriate escorting situations with young minors</li><li>• Asking for permission before touching or guiding in how to do an activity (such as fastening safety equipment)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Full-frontal hugs</li><li>• Kisses (other than on the cheek when culturally accepted)</li><li>• Showing affection in isolated areas or while one-on-one</li><li>• Wrestling (other than supervised sports)</li><li>• Piggyback rides</li><li>• Tickling</li><li>• Allowing a minor to cling to a staff's or volunteer's leg for extended periods of time</li><li>• Allowing minors, older than 3 years, to sit on a staff or volunteer's lap for an extended period of time</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any type of massage given by or to a minor (other than accepted and documented medical treatment)</li> <li>Any form of affection that is unwanted by the minor or the staff or volunteer</li> <li>Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas (other than authorized and documented personal care assistance; e.g., diaper changing)</li> <li>Physical discipline of any kind [Note: physical restraining of a minor should only be done in emergency situations to prevent physical harm to the minor themselves or others, and must be done with a reasonable and measured amount that is as little physical restraint that is reasonably needed to avoid harm]</li> </ul>
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## 2. Verbal

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from speaking to minors in a way that is or could be construed as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.

Staff and volunteers must not initiate sexually oriented conversations with minors outside of teaching a biblical doctrine on sexuality and purity in a group setting, in age-appropriate situations. Planned teaching on such topics should be disclosed to parents in advance whenever possible. Staff and volunteers are not permitted to discuss their sexual activities with minors.

**The Foursquare Church's policies for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions include, but are not limited to:**

Appropriate Verbal Interactions	Inappropriate Verbal Interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive reinforcement</li> <li>Appropriate jokes</li> <li>Encouragement</li> <li>Praise</li> <li>Strength-based conversations</li> <li>Scriptural encouragement and a sharing of testimonies through pastoral care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Name-calling</li> <li>Discussing sexual encounters or materials</li> <li>Involving minors in the personal problems or issues of staff and volunteers</li> <li>Flirting</li> <li>Secrets</li> <li>Cursing</li> <li>Off-color or sexual jokes</li> <li>Shaming, belittling</li> <li>Oversharing personal history</li> <li>Derogatory or discriminatory remarks</li> <li>Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate minors</li> <li>Derogatory remarks about the minor or their family</li> <li>Compliments relating to physique or body development</li> </ul>

### **C. Electronic Communication and Social Media Policy**

The terms “electronic communications,” “social media,” or “social network” refer to activities that integrate technology, telecommunications, and social interaction using words, images, video, or audio tools. Examples include but are not limited to: social websites, blogs, message boards, podcasts, image- and video-sharing sites, text and voice chat platforms for gaming, live webcasting, and real-time web communities. Additionally, sending messages of any kind between two or more mobile phones or fixed or portable devices over a phone or wireless network is included within these definitions.

Electronic and digital communications, including various social media and other digital platforms, permeate our society. The Foursquare Church recognizes the opportunities, creativity, and benefits of the digital world; however, like anything created for good, it can be used for harm and even unintentionally or unknowingly lead us down a path that is not Christ-honoring.

The Foursquare Church strongly encourages staff and volunteers to refrain from using electronic communication and/or social media with minors individually. We:

- Prohibit comments that are or could be construed by any observer to be harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, discriminatory, demeaning, or humiliating.
- Prohibit sexually oriented conversations or discussions about sexual activities.
- Prohibit posting inappropriate pictures or inappropriate comments on pictures or posts.

When electronic communication and/or social media use is a part of programming (or otherwise unavoidable because the minor initiates), The Foursquare Church offers the following guidelines:

- Strongly discourage any private messages between staff/volunteers and minors, and redirect any private communications initiated by minors.
- Ministry leaders can create a public social media page for the ministry. Staff, volunteers, and minors are instructed to communicate through this public page instead of through individual personal profiles. This approach allows the ministry leaders to monitor communication and ensures that staff and volunteers do not have private (and possibly inappropriate) communications with minors. Most social media sites try to limit usage to only minors who are 13 years or older. Staff, volunteers, and ministry pages certainly should not follow or be online “friends”

with minors who knowingly violate the age requirement for any social media platform.

- Ministry leaders monitor their social media pages and remove any posts that violate the ministry's policies for appropriate behavior.
- Inform parents/guardians if their minor is involved in (as giver or receiver) such prohibited posts or online behavior.
- Encourage staff and volunteers to use platforms designed for smaller groups, clubs, or team communication, which allow all communication to be seen by all minors and/or parents/guardians (e.g., Remind, GroupMe, Slack). Consider adding a supervisor to these groups to ensure adherence to communication standards.
- Set "office hours" outside of which staff and volunteers may not send or respond to electronic communications.
- Keep communications professional in nature and limit discussion to programmatic purposes.
- Train staff and volunteers on how to respond to private electronic communication from minors. Examples include:
  - Alert a ministry leader about private communication. Forward the communication according to the ministry's guidelines. For most ministries, staff and volunteers should not respond privately to minors except to state that the Code of Conduct prohibits such communications.
  - Exceptions may occur in emergencies, where private messages may be exchanged to locate a minor and secure their safety.
- If a minor reveals abuse of any kind, the staff or volunteer must follow the guidelines in this manual for responding to a report of child abuse.
- Include another adult (such as a supervisor or the ministry leader) in direct communications with a minor.
- Requests to discontinue: If parents/guardians request in writing that a minor not be contacted through any form of electronic communication or social media by the organization, comply with the request.
- Photos of minors: Taking pictures and/or posting images of minors may only be done with prior parent/guardian permission.

#### **D. Managing Minor's Access to Church Electronic Devices**

Staff and ministry leaders should take appropriate precautions to promote the safety of minors around church-owned devices. This applies to check-in devices, computers used for program media, etc.

Examples of precautions include:

- Ensuring all devices have parental controls and web-filtering software to block inappropriate content.

- Minors may not log into personal emails, social media, or gaming accounts on church devices. Church leaders are encouraged to consider what personal information is available on devices minors use, such as their open email, social media, etc. Church devices should only be used by minors under adult supervision.

## 1.3 Monitoring Guidelines

### A. Adult-to-Minor Ratios

Specific adult-to-minor ratios help define the level of supervision necessary to be effective and safe. Ratios also enable staff, volunteers, and ministry leaders to identify when additional personnel are required. Ratios can depend on other considerations such as the type of activity, the needs of minors being supervised (behavioral, physical, medical, or emotional needs), and the location of the activity. Churches and ministries are to ensure all programs adhere to the following specific minimum adult-to-minor ratios:

- |                                     |                                      |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| • Birth to 12 months:               | no more than three minors to 1 adult |
| • Toddlers (1 to approx. 3 years):  | no more than four minors to 1 adult  |
| • Preschool (approx. 3 to 5 years): | no more than seven minors to 1 adult |
| • Kindergarten through 3rd grade:   | no more than 10 minors to 1 adult    |
| • 4th grade to 6th grade*:          | no more than 12 minors to 1 adult    |
| • Youth (12 and older):             | no more than 20 minors to 1 adult    |

\*If your local context has 6th grade as part of middle school/junior high, you may follow the “Youth” ratio. If 6th grade is paired with elementary grades, use the 4th to 6th grade ratio.

**Notes:** 1) While the ratios are listed as “1 adult” per X number of minors, at least two adults must always be present with minors. For example, two toddlers require two adults, even though the ratio is no more than four minors to 1 adult. 2) Security systems or cameras do not take the place of a fully-screened adult in the room. 3) If a particular activity or scenario has a higher hazard, risk or more levels of isolation, consider lowering the number of minors per adult. Higher-risk activities may include using swimming pools, bounce houses, obstacle courses, play structures, or similar facilities that offer reduced visibility or a higher risk of injury.

The Ministry Leader (or his/her designee) is responsible for periodically supervising programs to ensure ratios are followed and following up with staff and volunteers if ratios drop below the required levels. If ministries have different age groups than those listed above or ‘mix classes/groups,’ in that case, the ministry, its staff, and volunteers should always follow the lowest applicable ratio (i.e., higher on the list above).

## **B. Junior Helpers**

Junior helpers may not be counted as part of the supervision ratios above (neither as an “adult” nor as a “minor”). They do not count as adults for ratios or as “minors” for the above ratios. Junior helpers are just additional “helpers” and are not “supervisors” of minors. Additionally, junior helpers may not serve independently of adult staff members or volunteers.

## **C. Monitoring Minor-to-Minor Interactions**

Staff and volunteers must effectively monitor minor-to-minor interactions to prevent inappropriate minor behaviors and abuse. When supervising minors, it is essential to remember that adult staff and volunteers model appropriate behavior, and minors should not determine what is and is not acceptable behavior.

Staff and volunteers should ensure:

- Interactions with and between minors are age and developmentally appropriate.
- Minors respect each other’s boundaries.
- Minors are not bullying, teasing, dominating, or displaying sexualized behaviors toward others.

**Note:** For purposes of this manual, bullying is not simply an isolated incident of one or more minors being mean to another. Bullying refers to intentional, repeated behavior by an individual or group that causes physical, emotional, or psychological harm to another person. It involves a real or perceived power imbalance and may take the form of recurring intimidation through hazing, physical aggression, verbal abuse, social exclusion, or cyberbullying.

- Minors solve problems without fighting.
- Minors are not engaging in one-on-one interactions that aren’t observable or interruptible.

Staff and volunteers should utilize monitoring and supervision best practices, such as line-of-sight supervision, zone monitoring, and listening and observing for inappropriate behaviors between minors. They should use these methods to frequently monitor high-risk areas (e.g., restrooms, playgrounds, rooms that are off limits, or areas with obstructed views that impair visibility, such as library bookshelves) where inappropriate behavior (sexual or otherwise) between minors is more likely to occur.

## **D. Guidelines for Monitoring Playground and Recreational Activities**

Playgrounds and recreational activities can allow mixed-age groups of minors to have access to one another and create increased opportunities for inappropriate interactions between minors. Staff and volunteers can become distracted by a minor who does not behave appropriately in less structured situations. They may get involved in conversations with each other or step away to tend to personal business, such as phone calls. Playgrounds may have blind spots or equipment that obstruct supervision.

To reduce risk, consider these procedures for playgrounds and recreational activities:

- Maintain minimum adult-to-minor ratios noted previously and consider how to spread out most effectively (i.e., zone monitoring).
- Consider:
  - Age and number of minors present.
  - Special or unique minor needs.
  - Type of structures and equipment, and the number of distinct activities occurring simultaneously.
  - Size and configuration of playground/recreation area, i.e., barriers to supervision, whether physical boundaries like fences exist, geography and location, and whether other outside groups will also be present.
- Define specific authorized areas and boundaries, including:
  - If and how outside groups can be cleared from activity areas during programming, or be separated by clearly delineated and appropriate boundaries.
  - If different age groups use facilities simultaneously, delineate appropriate boundaries to ensure the safety of all age groups.
- Consider specific instructions on how to monitor barriers to supervision (such as storage sheds, playhouses, tunnels, and shrubs):
  - Identify in advance any blind spots or equipment obstructing line of sight supervision, and designate them off limits or plan regular walkthroughs of those areas.
  - Position staff and volunteers near playground equipment, such as tunnels and slides, to reduce the appearance of privacy.
- Assign staff and volunteers to specific areas to supervise, i.e., zone monitoring:
  - Ensure staff/volunteers are adequately spaced around the whole area.
  - Proactively monitor and move within assigned zones.
  - Take note of the perimeter of the recreation area to ensure ample supervision and that minors remain in approved spaces.
- Active supervision:

- Staff and volunteers should position themselves to be able to see and hear all minors to whom they are assigned.
- Anticipate what minors will do and redirect when necessary.
- Listen and notice changes in sound, such as a change in tone of voice, silence, or sounds of distress.
- Remain engaged with minors rather than socializing with other staff or volunteers.
- Review boundaries and rules with minors before the activity, including that they are to always remain in the line of sight of staff and volunteers, and how to report inappropriate behaviors.
- Consider restroom procedures to ensure having enough staff and volunteers to maintain ratios.
- Periodically scan and conduct headcounts for each age group whenever moving from one activity or space to another.
- Prohibit staff and volunteers from using cell phones unless explicitly related to supervising the minors or the ministry programming.
- If possible, have a means of communicating with other program volunteers, including ministry leaders, so they can get assistance when needed.
- Ministry leaders conduct periodic check-ins and assessments of the activity period and the entire activity area.

#### **E. Specific Guidelines for Young Minors (elementary age and below):**

##### *1. Minors Entering and Exiting Programs (i.e., Check-in/Check-out)*

Standard procedures for monitoring the checking-in and checking-out of minors help churches identify who is present in programming and allow staff and volunteers to document when and with whom minors exit programming. Such procedures allow staff to quickly identify any minor who may be missing and decrease opportunities for minors to be left unsupervised.

When minors are “in” our ministry programs, they are under our care and supervision. We are responsible! Knowing when minors are “in” or “out” of ministry programs is important.

Guidelines for monitoring elementary age and below entry/exit from ministry programming:

- The church must have a procedure defining expectations for minor sign-in/out of programming.
- Minors may only be picked up from the facility or program by individuals authorized by the parent/guardian.



- Create a single entry and exit point in the facility or program when possible.
- If there is more than one entrance or exit, ensure these other access points are routinely monitored.
- Be mindful of periodic headcounts or conduct attendance checks to ensure continuous awareness of which minors are in programming.
- If reasonably practical, maintain written or electronic documentation of attendance in programming.

## *2. Naptime/Sleeping Areas*

- Staff, volunteers, and minors may not sit or lie on anyone else's bed or mat or be in anyone else's sleeping bag.
- Each minor must have their own separate sleeping space, mat, or cot.
- Encourage minors to draw an imaginary line around their sleeping space and encourage them to report violations to a staff member or volunteer.
- Staff and volunteers will always keep a line of sight on all minors during nap time.
- Staff and volunteers may not use cell phones during nap time.
- Pay attention to who is sleeping next to whom.
- Arrange sleeping areas with as much space as possible between each minor.
- Do not let minors nap in areas not visible to staff and volunteers.
- Keep the room sufficiently lit so that you can easily observe all minors.

## *3. Secluded Areas*

- Lock doors to unused or seldom-used rooms and spaces.
- Use signage to deter minors from trying to access secluded areas.
- Ensure staff and volunteers frequently monitor secluded areas like stairwells and hallways.

## *4. Guidelines for Monitoring Restroom Procedures, Diapering, and Toileting Young Minors*

Take great care to ensure the safety of all minors, staff members, and volunteers during restroom visits. Adult offenders and minors who are offenders can use the privacy afforded in restrooms to abuse minors. Restrooms are high-risk locations for sexualized behavior against/by/between minors. Consequently, restrooms require close monitoring, and appropriate practices must be carefully managed. Each

church must establish a restroom visit procedure that works for its church facility. Staff members/volunteers may never be alone with a minor in the restroom. When supervising restroom use, staff or adult volunteers should quickly scan the restroom before allowing minors to enter to ensure the restroom is vacant. **Junior helpers should never be responsible for monitoring restroom procedures. The following is a list of appropriate procedures for ministry leaders to consider and a list of prohibited protocols that must be avoided.**

### *5. Appropriate Restroom Procedures*

The following are appropriate and allowable restroom procedures. Not all of these are required elements to an effective restroom procedure; these are samples and ideas. Your ministry leader will explain the restroom procedure they developed for your church.

- Ongoing supervision of minors in restrooms that does not compromise minor privacy (e.g., standing outside but remaining within earshot). If visual supervision compromises minor privacy or is otherwise not feasible, ensure auditory supervision in/near the restroom.
- Make it a point to walk through multi-stall restrooms and let your presence be known by making noise, saying hello, or singing a song.
- Limit the number of minors who enter restrooms to the same number as the number of stalls or urinals.
- If the restroom only has one stall, only one minor should enter the restroom while the others wait outside with the staff or a volunteer.
- If there are multiple stalls, only send in as many minors as there are available stalls.
- Minimize minors of different age groups using the restroom at the same time.
- Periodic restroom checks for loitering or unsupervised minors.

The following are prohibited:

- Junior helpers monitoring restroom visits in any way at all.
- Staff members/volunteers being alone with a minor in the restroom.
- An adult taking a minor (or multiple minors) to the restroom without another adult.
- More than one person (whether adult or multiple minors) in a single stall at a time.
- Staff or volunteers using the restroom themselves while minors are in the restroom, even if there are multiple stalls.

For Diapering:

- Place the changing table in an open area where others can observe adult actions.
- Diapers should only be changed when at least two adults are present.
- Written documentation of diaper changes is recommended, such as an information sheet given to parents.
- Inform ministry leaders if you notice anything unusual or concerning, such as a rash, while changing the minor's diaper.
- Junior helpers may never be responsible for helping with diapering.

For Toileting Young Minors (preschool age and younger):

- If staff or volunteers must enter the restroom to assist a minor, ensure that the door to the restroom remains open.
- When possible, send in only one minor at a time. If that is not possible, send in only as many minors as there are stalls.
- If a young minor needs assistance, such as during toilet training, the staff member or volunteer should inform the parent or guardian that the minor needs assistance.
- Junior helpers may never be responsible for helping with toileting.

## *6. Procedures for Monitoring Personal Care Assistance*

Personal care may involve various activities, such as dressing young minors or assisting with medical devices. It is important to follow personal care procedures to protect minors from harm and guard against false allegations. Junior helpers should never be responsible for helping with diapering, toileting, dressing, or other personal care assistance matters.

Personal care procedures should consider the minor's age and development and particular needs for assistance, regardless of the setting in which the minor receives assistance. A good practice for assisting with personal care procedures for minors is to obtain advanced and written instruction, knowledge, and consent of the minor's parent/guardian.

Staff and volunteers should use verbal prompts to guide minors in self-assisting tasks as much as possible (based on the minor's age and ability). The primary goal when providing personal care or hygiene-related activities is to ensure guidance and documentation that outlines when and under what circumstances staff and volunteers may engage in these activities with minors (beyond identified medical care needs).

The following are additional recommended procedures:

- Always use the least intrusive methods possible. For example, allow the minors to do as much as they can alone. To the degree possible, use verbal prompts to guide the minor in self-assisting tasks instead of physically touching the minor.
- Explain your actions first and ask the minor's permission before touching their body or assistive devices (e.g., insulin pump, glucose monitor, etc.). Intervene and redirect if you see other staff or volunteers not requesting permission before touching minors or their assistive devices, and report it to a ministry leader.
- Use your normal tone of voice when speaking to a minor who requires assistance with personal care unless they request that you speak a certain way (for example, louder or more slowly).
- Avoid staring at the minor's body.
- Document any observed injury, disclosures of abuse, or interactions that may have been misinterpreted.
- Maintain privacy and dignity as much as possible. For example, if possible, keep the restroom door cracked so passersby can see the adult assisting but not the minor.
- Make every attempt to have staff or adult volunteers of the same sex as the minor provide personal care while always maintaining a minimum of two fully screened adults present.

## **1.4 Training Requirements of Staff and Volunteers**

The Foursquare Church requires that staff and volunteers who work with minors be trained on the foundational abuse prevention topics using Foursquare's Child and Youth Protection Training, created by Praesidium. This training is available online at [Foursquare.Church/CYPM](https://Foursquare.Church/CYPM) can be accessed by individuals or used in group settings.

The Foursquare Church recommends that local churches keep documentation of the training records for each of their staff and volunteers, including the person's name and the training date. [See Appendix 5](#) for helpful information on this.

### **A. Ongoing Abuse Prevention Training Requirements**

Ongoing child safety and abuse prevention training refreshes previously learned concepts (and, in some cases, may provide additional knowledge or skills) to enhance the ability of staff and volunteers to protect minors. Churches are encouraged to create a plan for ongoing training opportunities. All staff and volunteers are responsible for completing training on the following concepts.

- The organization's up-to-date policies related to preventing and responding to abuse;
- Clear definitions of appropriate and inappropriate interactions with and between minors and additional topics that contribute to staff and volunteers' skills and knowledge related to abuse prevention.

**Note:** These may vary according to a staff member's role within the ministry.

## **1.5 Behaviors to Identify, Address, and/or Report**

This section outlines how to identify, address, and report behaviors that require action, ranging from slight inappropriate interactions that need interruption/coaching to allegations of (or actual) abuse that need reporting. The Foursquare Church distinguishes between inappropriate behaviors (e.g., policy violations like lap-sitting) and abuse (e.g., physical, sexual, or emotional harm) to ensure volunteers and ministry leaders respond appropriately. The goal is to create a safe environment by addressing concerns early, before abuse happens, and reporting abuse properly.

### **A. Addressing Inappropriate Behaviors and Policy Violations by Minors**

To the extent that discipline of a minor is warranted, ministries must only apply discipline in a professional, loving, and kind manner (and never physical discipline). Staff or volunteers engaging in any discipline beyond verbal redirection should document the behavior and disciplinary method. Churches can exclude minors from future programs based on disciplinary issues.

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from using physical contact for disciplinary purposes. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate minor behaviors. The only exception to using physical contact is in urgent situations where a minor is believed to be a danger to him/herself or others, and only the minimal physical contact necessary to neutralize the threat may be used. Volunteers should speak with their ministry leader if they have questions about how to address inappropriate behaviors by minors.

### **B. Addressing Sexualized Behavior by Minors**

Sexualized behaviors by minors can include inappropriate touching, exposing body parts, using sexualized language, making threats of sexual activity, engaging in sexual activity, showing pornography, and similar types of interactions.

If staff or volunteers witness sexualized behaviors by minors, these are appropriate guidelines to follow:

- If you observe sexual activity between minors, you should safely separate them as soon as possible.
- Calmly explain that such interactions are not permitted and separate the minors.
- Notify your ministry leader and follow the ministry leader's instructions on these topics:
  - When and how to notify the parent/guardian (and who should be involved).
  - If and how to complete an incident report and other necessary documentation (and who should do it), including what you observed and how you responded.
  - If, when, and how to notify the authorities (and who should do it).
- Do not attempt to determine whether the minor's behavior was "sexual curiosity." There is no standard definition of what normal sexual curiosity looks like. Child protective service organizations and the authorities utilize criteria to investigate and determine whether the minor's behavior is sexual curiosity. Any sexual activity between minors is inappropriate in a ministry program setting. If there are concerns of sexual abuse or assault, work with your ministry leader on how to notify the appropriate authorities.
- Identify how minors will be managed or supported to prevent further occurrences of sexual activity (i.e., safety or behavioral plans, including additional supervision requirements).
- If the problem recurs, additional action may be required, including preventing one or both minors from returning to the program. For additional helpful resources, consult [Appendix 1](#) and [Appendix 9](#).

### **C. Addressing Inappropriate Behaviors and Policy Violations by Adults**

It is imperative that every staff member or volunteer actively participate in the protection of minors.

If staff or volunteers observe inappropriate behaviors and/or policy violations by other adults, we expect staff and volunteers to address inappropriate behaviors by holding one another accountable to the standards in this manual. All adults are responsible for protecting minors and maintaining a culture of mutual accountability for Godly conduct. Inappropriate behaviors of lesser severity (e.g., piggyback rides, tickling, harsh comments, etc.) can be addressed adult to adult or volunteer to volunteer without the need to report to your ministry leader; however, if you observe a volunteer or staff member doing a severe inappropriate behavior (e.g., massaging, sexualized touching,

discussing/showing sexual items to minors, etc.), interrupt the behavior and report to your ministry leader as soon as reasonably possible.

#### **D. Reporting Abuse**

##### **Foursquare Follows the Law in Reporting Child Abuse!**

This manual contains policies, protocols, guidelines, recommendations, and considerations on various topics, but absolutely nothing in this manual overrides the law. No one with a legal duty to report information to a government agency, whether by virtue of a designated role, occupation, or otherwise, shall be prohibited or hindered from so reporting in compliance with the law.

Each state has its own laws on what is and is not subject to reporting and how confidentiality laws interface with reporting. It is the responsibility of each pastor and ministry leader to know the laws of their state. The Foursquare Church has a legal team available to pastors and ministry leaders for assistance, consultation, and direction on these matters.

Abuse exists when a minor's health is harmed due to injury by act or omission. Every state has different definitions of abuse. If ministry volunteers see evidence that a minor has been harmed or endangered, they should report it immediately to their ministry leader. However, if a ministry leader or staff member is responsible for, or complicit in, harm to a minor, immediately alert that person's ministry overseer and submit a misconduct incident report to Foursquare denominational leadership using the toll-free hotline at 844.704.9401 or through [Navex's secure online web form](#).

Types of abuse include:

- **Neglect:** Failure to provide adequate food, water, shelter, care, or supervision.
- **Physical Abuse:** Hitting, shaking, slapping, or using unnecessary restraints.
- **Verbal Abuse:** Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating language.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Inappropriate touch, exposing oneself, sexually oriented conversations, or coercing a minor to expose themselves.
- **Emotional Abuse:** Degrading, threatening, cursing, shaming, humiliating, or demonstrating cruelty.

If you suspect or witness abuse, follow these steps:

- **Ensure Safety:** Immediately ensure the minor is safe and separated from the alleged abuser.
- **Report to Ministry Leader:** Inform your ministry leader or supervisor immediately, providing all relevant details.
- **Take Action with Ministry Leader:** Your ministry leader is trained on handling allegations of child abuse, and your ministry leader has access to the denomination's legal counsel, who can assist in complying with the law. Follow the instructions of your ministry leader, which may include the ministry leader asking for your assistance with:
  - **Mandatory Reporting:** If state law requires, report directly to law enforcement or child protective services. Nothing in this manual prohibits or discourages compliance with mandatory reporting obligations.
  - **Completing an Incident Report:** Use [Appendix 1 \(Sample Incident Report Form – Misconduct\)](#) to document the incident, including what was observed, heard, or reported, and any actions taken.
  - **Notifying Parents/Guardians:** Unless the parent/guardian is the alleged abuser, ministry leaders should inform parents/guardians promptly, following local protocols.
  - **Cooperating with Authorities:** The Foursquare Church will fully cooperate with law enforcement and child protective services during investigations.

**Note:** Volunteers should not attempt to investigate allegations of abuse. Instead, they should report concerns to ministry leaders and, if required, external authorities. Investigating allegations of abuse can impede an investigation by the authorities, cause emotional harm to the victim, and/or cause the victim to suffer greater harm.



## Section 2 – Staff and Ministry Leaders

### 2.1 Behaviors for Staff and Ministry Leaders to Identify, Address, and/or Report

#### A. Addressing Inappropriate Behaviors and Policy Violations by Minors

Ministry leaders must:

- Be available to all staff and volunteers who discover concerning behavior of minors.
- Discern when it is appropriate to have an incident report filled out (and work with staff/volunteers most knowledgeable of the facts to fill out the report).
- Discern when it is appropriate to meet with the parents/guardians (with or without the minor present) to discuss the behavior and any disciplinary actions (keep in mind the concepts in the Minor Progressive Discipline Policy).
- Discern whether to exclude the minor from future programs if behavior escalates to Level III or recurs, ensuring documentation supports the decision.

If disciplinary issues concerning a minor arise, we suggest the ministry utilize a progressive discipline process ([See Appendix 3](#)) to ensure fair and consistent disciplinary practices. Progressive discipline refers to increased severity if a minor repeatedly violates rules or becomes harmful to themselves or other minors. We recognize that not all inappropriate behavior is equal, so we have broken behaviors into three categories: Level I, II, and III. Below, you will find examples of behaviors in each category. These are just examples; other behaviors exist, and we trust ministry leaders to discern how to categorize other behaviors. We suggest ministry leaders consider appropriate consequences based on the offense/level.

Level I	Level II	Level III
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Disrespectful towards staff and volunteers</li><li>• Disrespectful towards other minors</li><li>• Disruptive behaviors</li><li>• Repeatedly not following direction</li><li>• Repeatedly not following program/game rules</li><li>• Excessive horseplay</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pushing</li><li>• Tripping</li><li>• Hitting</li><li>• Kicking</li><li>• Spitting</li><li>• Threatening comments or gestures</li><li>• Uncontrollable behaviors</li><li>• Inappropriate language</li><li>• Aggressive behavior towards other minors/staff and volunteers</li><li>• Teasing or embarrassing others</li><li>• Willful destruction of the program property</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fighting</li><li>• Sexual jokes</li><li>• Display of pornographic material</li><li>• Sexual activity</li><li>• Masturbation</li><li>• Harassment</li><li>• Intimidation</li><li>• Bullying</li></ul>

## *1. Addressing Sexualized Behavior by Minors*

Ministry leaders should:

- Be familiar with the appropriate/inappropriate behaviors outlined in Section 1, the category levels of offenses outlined above, and the guidelines noted for staff/volunteers in Section 1.5.B. regarding addressing sexualized behavior by minors.
- Be available to all staff and volunteers who discover concerning behavior of minors.
- Discern when it is appropriate to have an incident report filled out (and work with staff/volunteers most knowledgeable of the facts to fill out the report).
- Ensure volunteers followed the guidelines in Section 1.5.B. (e.g., separating minors, etc.).
- Determine if the behavior requires reporting to authorities based on state laws. Foursquare's legal team can be consulted at (213) 989-4210.
- Discern when it is appropriate to meet with parents/guardians (with or without the minor present) to discuss the incident and any safety or behavioral plans.
- Discern, if the behavior recurs, whether to implement additional supervision or exclude the minor from future programs.

## **B. Addressing Inappropriate Behaviors and Policy Violations by Adults**

Ministry leaders should:

- Be familiar with the appropriate/inappropriate behaviors outlined in Section 1 and the guidelines noted for staff/volunteers in Section 1.5.C. regarding addressing inappropriate behaviors and policy violations by adults.
- Be available to all staff and volunteers who discover concerning behavior by adults.
- Promptly address reports of inappropriate behavior by volunteers (e.g., lap-sitting, private messaging).
- Discern when it is appropriate to have an incident report filled out (and work with staff/volunteers most knowledgeable of the facts to fill out the report).
- Meet with the offending volunteer to discuss the violation, referencing this manual's policies.
- Discern when it is appropriate to document the incident and any corrective actions (e.g., retraining, suspension).

- If the violation is severe or repeated, dismiss the volunteer and document the dismissal-to prevent reentry.
- Notify the parents/guardians of the minor (or minors) involved in the violation committed by the adult.

### *1. Reporting Abuse*

#### Foursquare Follows the Law in Reporting Child Abuse!

This manual contains policies, protocols, guidelines, recommendations, and considerations on various topics, but absolutely nothing in this manual overrides the law. No one with a legal duty to report information to a government agency, whether by virtue of a designated role, occupation, or otherwise, shall be prohibited or hindered from so reporting in compliance with the law.

Each state has its own laws on what is and is not subject to reporting and how confidentiality laws interface with reporting. It is the responsibility of each pastor and ministry leader to know the laws of their state. The Foursquare Church has a legal team available to pastors and ministry leaders for assistance, consultation, and direction on these matters. Pastors and ministry leaders are welcome to call the legal team anytime they have questions at (213) 989-4210.

Abuse exists when a minor's health is harmed due to injury by act or omission. Every state has different definitions of abuse. If ministry volunteers see evidence that a minor has been harmed or endangered, they should report it immediately to their ministry leader. However, if a ministry leader or staff member is responsible for, or complicit in, harm to a minor, immediately alert that person's ministry overseer and submit a misconduct incident report to Foursquare denominational leadership using the toll-free hotline at 844.704.9401 or through [Navex's secure online web form](#).

Types of abuse include:

- **Neglect:** Failure to provide adequate food, water, shelter, care, or supervision.
- **Physical Abuse:** Hitting, shaking, slapping, or using unnecessary restraints.
- **Verbal Abuse:** Harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating language.
- **Sexual Abuse:** Inappropriate touch, exposing oneself, sexually oriented conversations, or coercing a minor to expose themselves.

- **Emotional Abuse:** Degrading, threatening, cursing, shaming, humiliating, or demonstrating cruelty.

Ministry leaders should:

- **Know Volunteer Guidelines:** Be familiar with the abuse reporting process for volunteers and staff members outlined in Section 1.5.D.
- **Receive Information and Document:** Be available to receive and review information and/or incident reports (verbal or written) from volunteers/staff members and ensure all details are documented.

**NOTE:** Do not conduct investigations into abuse. Listen, document, provide pastoral care support, and ensure compliance with mandatory reporting laws. Leave all investigations to the authorities or as directed by Foursquare's legal team.

- **Ensure Compliance with Law:** It is your responsibility to ensure that you/the ministry follow the law regarding what does and does not need to be reported to the authorities. In almost all situations, abuse must be reported. Some states do not make ministry leaders/pastors mandatory reporters, and all states have laws about confidentiality as it pertains to pastors. Be sure to know your state's specific laws and comply. Foursquare's legal team is available for consultation should you need any assistance at (213) 989-4210.
- **Inform Parents/Guardians:** Unless the parent is the alleged abuser, notify parents promptly. If a parent/guardian is the abuser, avoid all contact/communication with all parents/guardians and absolutely make sure to contact the authorities immediately and let the authorities contact the parents/guardians.
- **Dismiss Volunteers/Staff Members:** If a volunteer or staff member is implicated, dismiss them immediately and document the dismissal in their file. Even if it is just an allegation that is raised, dismiss them until the matter is resolved. The person may not return to their position until the authorities render a decision (or the Foursquare legal team advises otherwise).
- **Cooperate with Authorities:** Provide the legal authorities with all necessary documentation and support.
- **Document:** Use [Appendix 1](#) to record all actions taken, ensuring records are maintained privately so as not to be accessible to others who do not have a viable need to know. Contact Foursquare's legal team at (213) 989-4210 for guidance.

## *2. Visitors and Managing Access to Minors by Non-Screened Individuals*

**Identification Guidelines:** It is recommended that each ministry consider a way to identify fully screened adults (e.g., badge, lanyard, wristband, nametag, t-shirt, etc.). The identification item should be worn on the person at or above the waist level and clearly visible to other volunteers and security personnel at all times. Hence, it is clear who is permitted to be with minors.

When a parent/guardian, a volunteer, or other adult arrives at the ministry location without the appropriate identification item, or is known not to be serving as a volunteer at the time, the ministry leader (or his/her designee) should be contacted to address the situation and work with the individual seeking access to the ministry location. The ministry leader (or designee) should:

- Identify the purpose/intent of the visitor.
- Determine if there is a legitimate reason the visitor should be granted access to the ministry location.
- No identification is needed if the visit is short enough for a chaperone to walk the person in and out.
- If the visit is longer in duration (e.g., a parent staying in a young minor's class to help the minor adjust), all staff and volunteers must know that the visitor is not screened, not a volunteer/helper, and is not to be relied upon. A good way to ensure everyone knows this is with some sort of "VISITOR" badge.
- Visitors should never be allowed to be in the ministry area by themselves.

## **2.2 Screening and Selecting Staff and Volunteers**

Generally speaking, most studies over the years show that around 90% of sexual abuse is committed by someone that the minor knows and trusts. Screening individuals who will have access to minors is the first opportunity to prevent abuse within The Foursquare Church. The important steps listed below outline our best efforts to allow minors to flourish within our ministries, as God intends. We want individuals who are seeking opportunities to harm others to know abuse is not tolerated, abuse will be detected, and abuse will be reported to the authorities.

All ministers, staff members, and volunteers who will have access to minors must be thoroughly screened as part of the selection process per the following guidelines. The Foursquare Church screens Foursquare pastors as part of receiving a ministerial credential. The local church/ministry must

screen staff members and volunteers. Junior helpers must be screened like adult volunteers; the only difference is that criminal history background checks cannot be run on minors.

*Note: Several forms to help you complete the screening process are included in the Child and Youth Protection section of the Foursquare Website: [Foursquare.Church/CYPM](https://Foursquare.Church/CYPM).*

The screening steps required to work with minors in a Foursquare ministry setting are as follows:

- The candidate's completion of an appropriate application form.
- A six-month church attendance period is recommended before the candidate can serve.
- A criminal history background check.
- An in-person candidate interview.
- Reference checks.

Any individual with a prior history of perpetrating physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or neglect towards a minor or who, in The Foursquare Church's sole discretion, is found otherwise unsuitable to work with minors will be prohibited from working with minors and will not be accepted for volunteer service within any minor's program of The Foursquare Church.

- **Application:** All volunteer service applicants (including junior helpers) must complete an approved application form. A sample form is available in [Appendix 4](#).
- **Attendance:** All applicants (including junior helpers) for volunteer service are recommended to regularly attend the church for six months before being accepted for volunteer work.
- **Background Check:** All adult volunteer service applicants must submit to criminal history background checks.

#### **A. Criminal History Background Checks**

The Foursquare Church requires a criminal background check, including a National Sex Offender Registry Search, on all staff and volunteers before the person may work with any ministry for minors. The background checks should be re-run as often as local, state, or federal law requires and retained forever. See background check best practices and resources on [Foursquare's Child and Youth Protection webpage](#). For staff or volunteers who are returning, rehired, or seasonal workers, the ministry must conduct a criminal background check, including a National Sex Offender Registry Search, when the staff member/volunteer returns from an absence longer than twelve months. Each

Foursquare church must keep documentation that the checks have been completed in the church's permanent records.

*Note: Following state laws on background check requirements and consent forms is important.*

An important word about background check limitations: Criminal background checks are vital to a cohesive screening system. The national checks Foursquare has contracted to conduct can detect convictions in locations other than those listed on a candidate's application.

However, it is important to understand that all criminal background check systems have inherent limitations. Errors can and do occur because, among other things, the databases and records available may not be complete, up-to-date, or accurate, and there may be gaps and time periods in which information is missing. These limitations are embedded in third-party systems outside of the ministry's control. Furthermore, most child abuse is perpetrated by individuals who do not have a criminal record that would indicate a propensity to abuse. Therefore, such checks should never be viewed as the sole (or essential) element of your screening process. Instead, you will want to be sure your staff is aware of these limitations and takes seriously the responsibility of implementing all other areas of the complete screening process referenced in this manual.

There are occasions when an individual serves in multiple roles within Foursquare at various locations. For example, a local church volunteer may serve as a volunteer in the church's kids' ministry and as a cabin leader when the church's youth group goes to camp. In those cases, the primary Foursquare entity (in the above example, the church would be the primary entity) must perform the entire screening process per Section 2 of this manual. The secondary Foursquare entity (in the above example, the camp) must verify with the primary entity that the individual has been screened and received a clean background check.

#### *1. Procedures for Screening Volunteers Without a US Social Security Number*

If the volunteer has a Social Security Number (SSN), it must be used as part of the criminal background check process. However, not everyone has an SSN; sometimes, even if they do, standard background checks would be inadequate in certain situations. These include cases where an applicant (volunteer) has not lived in the United States for the last seven years, is lawfully living in the United States without an SSN (via a visa or other mechanism), or is living in the United States without legal immigration status.

If the volunteer does not have a valid SSN or has not lived in the United States for the past seven years, the following steps are required:

- Perform a U.S. criminal background check without an SSN.
- Query the National Sex Offender Registry ([www.nsopw.gov/](http://www.nsopw.gov/)) to verify that the applicant is not currently a registered sex offender. Also, check the local state sex offender registry (if the state where the applicant resides has a state registry).
- A written document from the applicant stating that he/she has never (1) been convicted of any crime (or if so, provide substantial details of the conviction(s)) nor (2) ever committed any form of abuse of a minor, or engaged in sexual activity of any kind with a minor, and signed under penalty of perjury under the laws of the state in which it is signed.

The church must request an international background check for each non-U.S. country the volunteer has previously lived in. The church will be responsible for the costs of the international background check.

Please consult the website for information on international background checks.

**Interview:** All volunteer service applicants (including junior helpers) must undergo a candidate interview.

The Foursquare Church requires all churches to conduct face-to-face interviews with all applicants, including applicants for volunteer service. Suggested standardized questions are available on the Child and Youth Protection Resource page of the Foursquare website: [APPENDIX 14](#)

The standardized questions are designed to assist the interviewer in assessing the risk of the applicant engaging in abusive behaviors. At the church's discretion, additional questions may be asked. Two people representing the local Foursquare church should be involved in the interview process whenever possible. Please review the interview questions, red flags, and performance skills before the interviews.

## *2. Red Flags*

Below are some warning signs of potential problems with an applicant. Please be aware that one item in itself may not be a cause for worry. If two or more signs arise during the screening process, extra care should be taken in screening and overseeing the individual. Remember, it is okay to politely turn people away from working with minors. Not everyone should work with minors. Trust your instincts, and the Holy Spirit will guide you.



Examples of warning signs:

- Unstable employment or residence history.
- Inconsistency in ministry or volunteer work.
- Evasive responses.
- Willingness to accept any position, regardless of significant differences in pay and/or responsibilities.
- Chronic dissatisfaction with previous churches or organizations.
- Unwillingness to submit to authority; recurring problems with authority; negative responses to instruction.
- Inordinate need to be with minors; displays pattern or themes of gaining access to minors.
- Inordinate need to be with minors of a specific age range, with no reasonable explanation for the preference.
- History of inappropriate behavior or accusations of inappropriate behavior.
- Defensive/angry responses.

### *3. Skills Evaluation*

The following traits would be considered critical for adults working with minors. Use the definitions to help you listen to the applicant's examples of previous work with minors. Specific examples of previous situations will help you evaluate the applicant's suitability for working with minors:

- **Trainability:** Able to comprehend and behaviorally incorporate new information and skills; willing to use training and supervision to modify and improve known techniques.
- **Policy adherence:** Able to conform to established policies and procedures and address issues consistent with existing procedures for the organization.
- **Patience:** Able to maintain a mature, calm, problem-solving demeanor when faced with interpersonal conflict, personal rejection, hostility, or other stressful circumstances.
- **Supportiveness:** Able to show genuine concern for others, determine when a person needs comfort, and helpfully provide appropriate comfort.
- **Judgment:** Able to generate useful, effective solutions. Exhibits a realistic understanding of issues and uses reason, even when dealing with emotional or sensitive topics.
- **Boundaries:** Able to understand and abide by organizational policies and maintain appropriate, professional contact with minors; exhibits a clear understanding that minors are not peers.
- **References:** All volunteer service applicants (including junior helpers) must provide references.

References validate information provided by the applicant. The Foursquare Church requires all churches to contact at least two references for each applicant for a position that includes access to minors. A list of suggested standardized questions is available on the Child and Youth Protection Resource page of the Foursquare website: [Foursquare.Church/CYPM](https://www.foursquarechurch.org/cypm). The questions are designed to ensure that the screening process is thorough and that the applicants are treated fairly. Additional questions may be added at the church's discretion. Reference checks are required for all applicants, regardless of whether the applicant is well-known in the church.

#### *4. Red Flags Regarding References*

- References were reluctant to participate in an interview.
- References did not know the applicant well.
- References have short-term relationships with the applicant.
- References refused to answer particular questions.
- References' information differed from that of the applicants.
- References described the applicant as having high-risk characteristics.
- References were evasive.
- References reported specific concerns about the applicant.

The information gathered during the reference check process (whether positive or negative) is recommended to be documented and kept in the applicant's file.

## **Section 3 – Guidelines for Overnight or Off-site Ministry Events**

### **3.1 Monitoring Off-Site Activities**

- Require written parent/guardian permission and signed medical releases for all minors participating in off-site activities. Ministry leaders should take these permission forms and medical releases with them unless they are easily accessible digitally.
- Ministry leaders must obtain prior approval from parents/guardians of the minors involved and from the supervising pastor.
- At times during travel or off-site events, having a minimum of two adults present with minors is not feasible. In such cases, at a minimum, use the “rule of three” when supervising minors: At least two adults must supervise a single minor, or at least two minors must be present if supervised by a single adult.
- Maintain adult-to-minor ratios as specified in Section 1. Consider increasing the number of adults depending on higher-risk activity, sleeping arrangements, etc.
- Conduct regular headcounts to ensure all minors are accounted for.
- Prohibit minors from accessing secluded areas without supervision.

### **3.2 Transportation Activities and Transporting Minors**

#### **A. General Guidelines**

- At times during travel, having a minimum of two adults present with minors is not feasible. In such cases, at a minimum, use the “rule of three”. However, always follow the minimum prescribed adult-to-minor supervision ratios when transporting minors. Any vehicle that holds 10 or more passengers must have at least two adults.
- Require staff or volunteers to have a list of the minors on the trip. The staff or volunteers take attendance every time minors board and leave the vehicle, and periodically throughout the trip.
- Maintain supervision ratios during travel stops at rest stations/truck stops.
- Require staff or volunteers to sit in seats that permit maximum supervision. Every individual (adult and minor) must have their own space/seat (e.g., no sharing seatbelts). In vehicles with bench-style seating (e.g., buses, back seats of personal vehicles), staff or volunteers should not share such seats with minors if possible.
- Discourage mixed-age groups or developmental levels from sitting together.
- Prohibit the sharing of blankets or other coverings while in vehicles.

- Prohibit drivers from using cell phones while driving.
- Prohibit drivers from making unauthorized stops. Minors may not be brought to the staff member's/volunteer's home or the home of any staff member's/volunteer's family member without prior approval from parents/guardians.

#### **B. When Public Transportation is Used**

- Minors should remain in one area of the bus/train, if possible.
- Staff and volunteers assigned to a group should stay with that group.
- At least one adult volunteer must remain awake for periodic safety checks when transporting minors overnight.

#### **C. When Transporting Minors in Personal Vehicles**

- Staff and volunteers must not transport only one minor at a time without another staff member or volunteer present, except in an emergency.
- If an emergency requires a staff member or volunteer to transport a single minor, the minor should sit in the backseat.
- In such an emergency, another adult must be notified when just one minor is transported by one staff member; examples could be the parent/caregiver or the ministry leader on duty.
- Be mindful that the music or audio playing in the car is appropriate.
- Staff/volunteers must notify ministry leaders of all transportation activities.
- Staff/volunteers must follow all the same policies on physical interactions with minors in vehicles.
- When possible, staff/volunteers should avoid engaging in sensitive conversations with minors.

### **3.3 Monitoring Cabin and Sleeping Areas**

Sleeping arrangements can vary and, at times, present differing challenges. Our primary concern is the safety and well-being of all minors in our care. To that end, we want to create environments that minimize risk and promote accountability.

In overnight settings, increased adult presence promotes increased safety. Supervision should be intentional, especially in hotel and hotel-style settings (e.g., separate smaller sleeping quarters where an adult may be unable to be in every room), which often pose the greatest challenges. Leaders are encouraged to plan proactively to ensure safe and appropriate oversight of all sleeping arrangements.

These are requirements, regardless of room layout or setting:

- Each minor must have their own individual sleeping space (e.g., bed, cot, or mat).
- Minors are prohibited from sharing or lying on another person's bed, cot, or sleeping bag. This includes during night sleeping hours, and during the day (i.e., it is prohibited for multiple minors to lie down, even during the day, in the same bed).
- The use of phones or any device with camera capability is prohibited in showering or restroom areas. Great care should be taken to substantially minimize and monitor the use of phones/devices in sleeping areas.
- Conduct regular head counts to ensure all minors are accounted for.

These are guidelines to promote safety, recognizing that adaptation may be necessary depending on the room layout or setting:

- Staff and volunteers should provide regular line-of-sight supervision of all minors, as reasonably often as possible, considering the circumstances of the area.
- Arrange sleeping areas to maintain appropriate spacing between each minor.
- Staff and volunteers should limit personal cell phone use during overnight hours to remain attentive to supervision responsibilities.
- When making hotel-style room assignments, consider the age and maturity of the minors to determine whether adult presence is necessary in the room.
  - Example: Two 10-year-olds sharing a hotel-style room with one adult provides more accountability than three 10-year-olds in a hotel-style room alone. However, three mature 17-year-olds in a shared hotel-style room may not require adult presence in the room, but should still be regularly monitored.

### **3.4 Monitoring Restroom/Shower Procedures**

Please keep in mind that these guidelines are for multi-stall restroom/shower facilities when off-site (e.g., at a campground or a concert venue) and do not apply in local church contexts (i.e., on church property) where the protocols in Section 1 above apply.

Groups of minors should not be unmonitored in restrooms or showers for extended periods of time. We aim to maintain privacy but avoid secrecy.

#### **A. Shower Area**

- Only one minor can be in a shower stall at any given time, and an adult should never be in the same shower stall as a minor.
- If there are multiple stalls, only send in as many minors as there are stalls available.
- If there are multiple stalls, minimize minors of different ages showering at the same time.
- Staff and volunteers should stand outside the shower area but remain within earshot.
- Adults may not use the shower facilities when minors are using them.

#### **B. Restroom + Sink Area**

- Only one person can be in a toilet stall at any given time.
- As may be appropriate and practical, staff and volunteers should remain within earshot while minors are in the restroom.
- Adults and campers may use multi-stall restroom/sink facilities simultaneously, but always in separate stalls.
- Brushing teeth and doing hair/make-up activities are permitted in the shared common area of the multi-stall restroom/sink area (so long as no one is showering).

Changing clothes/other dressing changes should be done only in bathroom stalls. Changing clothes should not happen in cabins.

### **3.5 Monitoring Aquatic Programs**

- Maintain adult-to-minor ratios as specified in Section 1. Consider increasing the number of adults depending on the situation, and some aquatic activities are higher-risk activities.
- Assign staff and volunteers to specific zones around the aquatic area to ensure comprehensive supervision.
- Prohibit minors from engaging in horseplay or unsupervised activities in or near water.
- Ensure lifeguards or certified personnel are present, if required by local regulations.
- Conduct regular headcounts before, during, and after aquatic activities.

### **3.6 Monitoring Night Games and Evening Events**

- Maintain adult-to-minor ratios as specified in Section 1. Depending on the activity's nature, consider increasing the number of adults.
- Define clear boundaries for the event area and prohibit minors from leaving without supervision.

- Use zone monitoring to ensure all areas are supervised, especially in low-light conditions.
- Prohibit one-on-one interactions between minors or between minors and adults.
- Conduct regular headcounts to ensure all minors are accounted for.
- Ensure adequate lighting to maintain visibility.

# Appendices

**APPENDIX 1 – Form: Sample Misconduct Incident Report (fillable)**

**APPENDIX 2 – Form: Sample Accident/Injury Report (fillable)**

**APPENDIX 3 – Form: Sample Minor Progressive Discipline (fillable)**

**APPENDIX 4 – Application + Checklist: Screening Workers**

**APPENDIX 5 – Checklist: Responding to Incidents and Emergencies**

**APPENDIX 6 – Spreadsheet: Sample Team Member Training Schedule and Tracking**

**APPENDIX 7 – Resource: Sample Policies and Procedures for Junior Helper Programs**

**APPENDIX 8 – Resource: Sample Social Media Code of Conduct**

**APPENDIX 9 – Resource: Sample Procedures for Leaders Responding to Minor Sexualized Behavior**

**APPENDIX 10 – Resource: Procedures for a Missing Child**

**APPENDIX 11 – Resource: Sample Volunteer Code of Conduct**

**APPENDIX 12 – Waiver: Waiver/Release Form for Events Under 24hrs**

**APPENDIX 13 – Waiver: Waiver/Release Form for Transporting Minors**

**APPENDIX 14 – Resource: Sample Interview Questions**