

SCREENING OF THOSE WORKING WITH MINORS POLICY

PURPOSE:

To provide guidelines and a process for screening those who work with minors in the course of their ministry or job in order to avoid the risk of improper conduct on the part of workers to and with minors. We do this to protect weak people from temptation, strong people from opportunity and innocent people from suspicion.

DEFINITIONS:

The definitions given are intended for clarification of this policy only and are not necessarily legal or legislative definitions.

- **Minors** – those who are under 18 years of age. Also included for purposes of this policy are individuals of any age who are mentally or physically handicapped.
- **Majors** – those who are 18 years of age or older and are not mentally or physically handicapped.
- **Workers** – those who work with minors at _____ Church, either directly or indirectly. Those who might have occasion to have interaction with minors as a result of the ministry or job they perform at _____ Church. This includes hired staff and volunteers who are either majors or older minors.
- **Improper Conduct** – conduct initiated by a worker that may result in physical or emotional harm to a child. It includes but is not limited to physical abuse, physical neglect, sexual abuse and exploitation, emotional abuse, emotional deprivation, inadequate supervision, and any other act or omission which may result in physical or emotional harm to the child.

POLICY/PROCEDURE:

A. **Written Application**

1. All workers who might have occasion to have interaction with minors as a result of the ministry or job they perform, are required to complete an “Application For Service”. This applies to all those who presently work in this capacity and to all new applicants.
2. Completed applications are to be turned in to the department head of the ministry in which the individual desires to work.

B. **Interviews**

1. All individuals whose application receives an initial approval and who desire to work with minors, either directly or indirectly, must be interviewed by a department head, ministry director or an individual designated by a department head. If the applicant is unknown to the interviewer, his/her identity must be confirmed by requiring photographic identification (such as a state driver’s license). The requirement of an interview applies to all new applicants after the date of approval of this

POLICY/PROCEDURE: (Continued)

policy, as indicated at the top of page one, and to any individual who is presently serving in a capacity covered by this policy who answered yes to any of the questions on page two of the Application for Service.

2. All individuals who conduct interviews with high risk individuals (e.g., single males) and persons applying for high risk positions (e.g., boys groups, child care, overnight or largely unsupervised activities involving either male or female children or adolescents) must have been trained to identify child molesters prior to being involved in these interviews.

C. **References** – References should be checked on all new individuals by the interviewer or the department head.

D. **Criminal Records Check**

1. All individuals who desire to work with minors, either directly or indirectly, and who pass the interview and reference processes, are required to complete a fingerprint background check done by the California Department of Justice. This requirement will begin with all new staff and volunteers who apply after the date of approval of this policy as indicated at the top of page one and to any individual who is presently serving in a capacity covered by this policy who answered yes to any of the questions on page two of the Application for Service.
2. All staff employed in the Early Childhood, Children's, Junior High, High School and Facilities Department are required to complete a fingerprint background check done by the California Department of Justice.

E. **Confidentiality**

1. All applications and records of contacts with references will be kept in strictest confidence and will be filed with the Family Life Minister. Such information should be marked "confidential" and access is to be restricted to those few persons with a legitimate need to view the information
2. Only the Family Life Minister and the Minister of Administration are authorized to look at rap sheets provided by government authorities. Both of these individuals must pass a fingerprint background check and be approved by the California Department of Justice.
3. The Executive Minister must be informed of all individuals who do not pass acceptance at any level of the screening process. The purpose of this is to provide ministry, and possibly a restorative process, for the individual.

F. **Six Month Rule** – No volunteer will be permitted to work with minors in any capacity until they have been a part of _____ Church for at least six months. No employee will be permitted to work with minors in any capacity until they have passed the Criminal Records Check.

G. **“Second Chances”** – Under no circumstances will applicants with a history of improper conduct with minors be allowed to work with minors at _____ Church. What the church views as mercy may be viewed as negligence by a jury.

H. **Approval**

1. Before starting their work those working with minors must be supplied a copy of the following documents and after reading the documents must sign that they have read, had an opportunity to ask questions, understand and agree to comply with them.
 - a. Statement of Faith Policy
 - b. Volunteer Manual (when available)
2. New workers are not permitted to work with minors unless approved by the department in which they will be working. This approval must come from the department head, a ministry director or an individual designated by the department head and must be based on successful completion of the application, interview, reference checks and criminal record check and signed an agreement that they will comply with the above new worker policies. Exception: Parents or teens may be asked by a department to help at the last minute for a specific situation or substitute for a given service. These individuals must always be assigned to work with other approved workers and may never work in a room by themselves or with another last minute recruit.

These samples are provided as input to assist you in developing procedures, but are not a substitute for considering the risks at your church and establishing your own policies and procedures to reduce those risks to acceptable levels. Transformation Ministries provides these as a convenience for its churches but directly states to you, the user that Transformation Ministries is not providing these to you as legal advice or even a substitute for legal advice. Use of these samples is at your own risk. Laws change and best practices change, sometimes rapidly. It is your church’s responsibility to stay abreast of changes in laws and best practices. It is recommended you always consult with your attorney and/or CPAs part of the process of developing your policies and procedures.