

Guidelines for Volunteers

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 in the churches 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 a child or group of children for whom you are responsible unattended.** Always provide adequate supervision, no matter what.
2. **ALWAYS have at least one other adult 18 or older with you when ministering to children.** If you find yourself in a situation where you are the only adult present, UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES should you allow yourself to be alone with one child.
3. **Always ask a child'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/or shorts. If an injury is within this area, make sure another adult works with you as you provide care.
4. **Physical and verbal attacks are inappropriate** and should never be used as discipline. "Time-out" or "sit-in-that-chair" may be helpful methods with children.
5. **Children 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. As a volunteer you are expected to participate in orientation and training programs conducted by the church or conference.

Adventist Risk Management (ARM) and the North American Division (NAD) recommend the following rules for leaders. These serve as a protection to you and to your ministry against charges of abuse:

- **The volunteer screening rule.** The volunteers must complete the screening process described on the Volunteer Ministry Information Form (available at <https://www.nadadventist.org/asv>).
- **The six-moth 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 a glass in or around it, the door should be left open, so that the teacher is in full view.

I, the undersigned, 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.

DATE _____

SIGNED _____

Print Name _____