

Policies and Procedures for Safeguarding Youth, Staff and Volunteers of Tampa Unity Church

I. Goal

It is the goal of Tampa Unity Church to make it a safe place for children, our youth education workers and volunteers while establishing a program that meets the standard of reasonable care and lowers Tampa Unity Church's risk regarding child abuse claims.

II. Purpose

Tampa Unity Church seeks to insure a safe environment for our children and the staff and volunteers who work with the children. Additionally, Tampa Unity Church seeks to safeguard Tampa Unity Church against any allegations or claims of child abuse. A five part strategy has been developed, reviewed, adopted and approved by the Board of Trustees, Ministers, Youth Education Director and Youth Education Council. This document has been prepared and approved by the Church attorney, A. Fletcher Dyches. The five part strategy includes but is not limited to the following:

- Worker Selection
- Worker Supervision
- Reporting Obligations
- Responding to Allegations
- Safeguard Committee

III. Policies and Procedures

A. Worker Selection and Screening

1. An Employment Application must be completed by all paid YED and volunteer workers and must include authorization for personal screening and a national back ground check.
2. A personal interview must be conducted by the Youth Education Director and/or a Safeguard Committee member.
3. A reference check will be performed by the Youth Education Director or designee. A written record of each contact and response will created which will include date, time and a summary of the remarks of the reference. If the applicant has prior church work referenced, each church shall be contacted and a written record created including any refusal to provide information.

4. After permission is granted, a national back ground check shall be obtained through the Guide One system.
5. The Church Administrator or Office Manger shall periodically check the State of Florida abuse registry regarding all people working or volunteering in the Youth Education Department. This should be done quarterly.
6. The Youth Education Director shall conduct ongoing orientation sessions for new staff and volunteers explaining the application and screening process along with its purpose in relation to Tampa Unity Church's goal and purpose.
7. All volunteers shall have attended and participated in Tampa Unity Church for at least 6 months prior to volunteering in the Youth Education Department.
8. No one with criminal abuse violations shall be allowed as a worker or volunteer with any contact with youth or children of any age.
9. All adult survivors of misconduct and/or abuse shall be encouraged to counsel with the senior minister.
10. Formal screening may be waived for youthful volunteers who are active in the youth education or whose parents are approved volunteers and who assist under an approved youth education worker or volunteer.

B. Supervising Procedures for Youth Education Workers and Volunteers

1. Two supervisors are recommended as follows:
 - a. In the nursery or use of video cameras,
 - b. On all field trips and/or retreats, and
 - c. On all Church sponsored "sleep-overs" or "lock-ins".
2. A signed parental permission will be obtained whenever an adult worker or volunteer would be alone with a child for any reason. This signed parental permission is also required for items B1b and B1c listed above.
3. Any and all suspicious behavior must be discussed with the Youth Education Director and/or Minister immediately. Suspicious behavior includes but is not limited to the following:
 - a. Inappropriate language,
 - b. Inappropriate jokes,
 - c. Inappropriate touching,
 - d. Inappropriate dress, and
 - e. Any use of inappropriate printed or visual material from any source.
4. All classroom doors shall have windows and all activities monitored. Workers and volunteers are not allowed to take children into windowless confined areas other than restrooms as needed and requested by the child.

C. Reporting Procedures

1. All incidents involving children shall be reported to the Youth Education Director and/or the Minister immediately.
2. The alleged offender shall be removed from all contact with children immediately.
3. The Youth Education Director, Minister or a person designated by the Minister shall follow the law of the State of Florida regarding reporting of incidents involving children which shall include reporting the incident to the Florida Department of Children and Family Services.
4. The Minister shall ensure that the Church response plan is followed, which plan is as follows:
 - a. The Senior Minister will appoint a person to prepare an incident report regarding the incident.
 - b. The Senior Minister will select a spokesperson from the Safeguarding Committee should the incident warrant.
 - c. The spokesperson will review the incident report prepared and develop and develop a position statement.
 - d. The Senior Minister will report the incident to the Church attorney.
 - e. No one other than the selected spokesperson should have any comment or be interviewed by any member of the news media. If possible this individual shall be the Church attorney.
 - f. No one will engage in denial, minimization or blame under any circumstance.

D. Safeguarding Children Committee Members

Michelle Miller, LMHC
Officer Brenda Hunt, Tampa Police Department
Jean Wynne, Youth Education Director
Rev. Debbie Moss, Associate Minister Tampa Unity Church
A. Fletcher Dyches, Attorney

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