

The following information is from Sycamore View Church of Christ's Policies and Procedures (revised 2019, pages 13-17)

POLICIES RELATED TO THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Sycamore View Church of Christ loves kids. Our policy is to ensure the well being of all children and youth. It has not been enacted as a result of a problem or concern, but because we are a church dedicated to ministering to children and youth and committed to being pro-active as it relates to their safety. It is the responsibility of all persons having contact with children and youth participating in church programs to promote the emotional and physical safety of the participants giving regard to all factors and circumstances known to them. If in their opinion, an unsafe condition exists; such persons shall immediately take appropriate precautions under the circumstances to protect all children and youth. Nothing contained in any church policy, procedure or instruction shall be construed to relieve persons having contact with children and youth from this responsibility.

Goal

To ensure the safety of our children/youth attending Sycamore View Church of Christ sponsored programs and activities and protect the integrity of our adults.

Applicability

This policy shall be applicable to all children (age 0 to 5th grade) and all youth (6th grade to 12th grade) and includes all persons less than 18 years of age. A **volunteer** is defined as any adult who spends time in Sycamore View Church of Christ sponsored children or youth activities or church activities where adults and children/youth serve together without pay. A **worker** is defined as any adult who is employed by the Sycamore View Church of Christ to work in or with children/youth activities.

Enforcement

Violations of this policy are grounds for immediate dismissal, appropriate disciplinary action, or re-assignment from children and youth work.

Role of Leadership

All Shepherds, Ministers, Workers, Leaders and Volunteers will communicate any questionable behavior, allegations of abuse or legal convictions of visitors and/or members to the Executive Minister in writing. Questionable behavior includes any violations mentioned in this policy document. The Executive Minister will keep a confidential file on all of these individuals. When appropriate, the Executive Minister will communicate with these individuals concerning boundaries on behavior within Sycamore View Church building and any outside activities involving children and youth. The Executive Minister will also communicate with current and future Children's & Youth Ministers on all individuals within the file.

Primary Features of our Protection Policy:

Sycamore View will maintain a Children's Check-In/Identification system for Children's classes and events. Families must register in the Computer Check-In system in order to tag the child and themselves before entry to any classroom. This allows the volunteer in the classroom to safely identify the child with the corresponding parent for drop off and pick up.

Sycamore View will have at least 2 adults with our children and youth during classes and activities when possible. Visibility into our classrooms will be maintained at all times with open doors, windows and/or a TV monitoring system. Church volunteers/workers are responsible to protect children and youth under their supervision.

It shall be the policy of Sycamore View to comply with all local ordinances and state and federal laws related to the presence of weapons on church property or at church sponsored events.

All threats to kill or harm an individual, whether by Workers, Volunteers, children or youth or any other individuals will be taken seriously and will be reported to the appropriate authorities immediately.

Volunteer/workers will be actively involved at Sycamore View for six months before working with children and youth unless the volunteer/workers are known by Sycamore View for over six months or Sycamore View has verified their experience working with children and youth at another congregation. In addition to collecting criminal background checks on volunteer/workers participating in any capacity with our children and youth, criminal background checks will be conducted on a sampling of volunteers who could have access to children or youth.

Each volunteer/worker will be given a copy of the child and youth protection policy and asked to sign an acknowledgement form indicating that they have received and read both before they begin working with children and youth. This form can be found in Appendix I.

The youth ministry team and the children's ministry team will provide training on this child protection policy to all new childcare volunteer/workers and will strive to provide opportunities for additional training classes or events on an annual basis. All volunteer/workers are strongly encouraged to attend these training events.

The youth ministry team and the children's ministry team will coordinate and oversee the supervision of all volunteer/workers to ensure compliance with this protection policy.

Requirements for Volunteers and Workers

1. Complete the application form for *Children Ministry Volunteer* (Appendix I). Read all policies pertaining to the *Safety of Children and Youth* and sign the Acknowledgement form (Appendix I).
2. Provide information for a criminal background check through an authorized background checking system paid for by Sycamore View. Passing this test is required before anyone can volunteer in any capacity with children and youth. All information provided and obtained as a result of the background check will be submitted to the youth or children minister and/or any others involved in children/youth ministry programs.
3. Must follow the Check-In/Identification system protocol for child safety. This requires that only the parent/family member with the corresponding identification to the child's may pick up the child from the classroom.
4. Will be given training and information about the well being of our children/youth and their areas of involvement.
5. Will adhere to the rules of sexual conduct as described below:
 - No adult volunteer is to date a youth or be romantically or sexually involved with a youth.
 - Physical affection is important for the emotional development of our children and youth. It should be a response to the child/youth's need for comfort, encouragement, or affection. Touching and affection should only be given in the presence of other adult volunteers/workers. Physical affection should be age appropriate.
 - Volunteers will not present curriculum regarding sexual issues without prior notification to the parent/guardian. Sexual discussions may occur during the year due to the nature of Christian education and the Biblical view of sexuality.
 - Conversations with an individual child/youth regarding inappropriate romantic behavior or sexual issues should, if at all possible, be done with two adults present. Adult volunteers/workers will not conduct discussions regarding sexual topics over email, instant messaging, or phones.
6. Will provide a safe environment:
 - Enforce privacy for activities such as showering or changing clothes.
 - Monitor sleeping arrangement when applicable.
 - Adults should never be undressed in the presence of a child.
 - At least two adults should be present in all situations with children or teens.
7. Should never put the children/youth in a situation/environment of possible harm. Volunteers will take appropriate measures to protect children in a violent situation

and/or a situation of real or suspected abuse; and report the incident immediately to the proper authorities.

8. Must promptly report any questionable behavior or abuse by other volunteers or workers to their immediate supervisors, appropriate authorities, and Sycamore View's Executive Minister. In all cases where a volunteer/worker has reasonable cause to believe that a minor may be abused or neglected outside the church, the volunteer/worker must in accordance with applicable law report the abuse/neglect.
9. Will protect themselves from false allegations by avoiding the following behaviors:
 - Do not allow a child to climb all over you.
 - Do not allow a youth to sit directly in your lap.
 - Be extremely discerning if you choose to engage youth with electronic communications. Any social media post or text message is permanent and can be taken out of context. We suggest you include another adult or student in your conversations or allow another adult to read your texts.
 - Do not tickle youth.
 - Do not give hugs from the back.
 - Do not give massages or back rubs.
 - Do not force any physical expression on a child or teen who is uncomfortable with it.
 - An adult should never be alone in private with a child or teen.
 - If a teen seems to be developing romantic feelings for an adult, the situation should be reported to supervisors immediately.
10. Any volunteer/worker suspected of violence or abuse will be removed from his/her position until the allegations are fully investigated and resolved. In the case of paid employees he/she will be placed on involuntary paid leave until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

Discipline Policy

In the interest of helping our adult teachers and activity supervisors (or anyone else charged with the responsibility to care for and/or teach our students) to establish an atmosphere conducive to the study and learning of God's Word and the purpose of any activity, we issue the following discipline policy:

- The volunteer/worker will establish rules of conduct and discuss these with the students so that everyone (students, teachers, parents) will know what the standard of expected behavior is.
- If a student becomes disruptive in class or otherwise, or persistently disregards the established standards, he or she will be taken to his or her parent for the duration of the class or removed for an appropriate period of time, as determined by the Volunteer/worker.

- We believe that it is the responsibility of Christian parent(s) and teachers to teach children to respect the authority of their parents, their teachers or other persons charged with the children's care.

Accidental Injuries to Children

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

- For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, able volunteer/workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
- For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple first aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the volunteer/worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called or the child will be taken to the hospital/medical facility in the discretion of the Volunteer/worker.
- Once the child has received appropriate medical attention a medical professional will complete an incident report in the case of injuries requiring treatment.

Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at Sycamore View. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 24 hours
- Symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Children who are observed by our volunteer/workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

Medications Policy

It is the policy of Sycamore View not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care unless a medical waiver has been signed by parents. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy.