

Keeping Our Children & Teens Safe

Ministry & Adult Responsibilities



- Keeping our children and teens safe is our sacred responsibility. Their safety depends primarily on the teachers and volunteers directly involved with the Youth Ministry.
- The teachers/sponsors should guide and act as a role model and mentor, as well as complying within regulations and safety measures.

Remember that churches can no longer defend themselves from liability by saying that they didn't know what was required of them. The information is out there and you are responsible for knowing and following it.

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**Protecting children and teens from sexual abuse
is an adult responsibility.**



DID YOU KNOW:

The greatest risk to children and teens doesn't come from strangers, but from people we know and trust.

- 90% of children/teens who are sexually abused know their abuser.
- 30% are abused by family members.
- 60% are abused by people the family trusts. Those who abuse gain access to the child in a school, church, sports club, etc. and often move into a position of trust within the family.
- Only about 10% are abused by strangers.
- 40% are abused by older or larger youth, like babysitters or cousins.

People who sexually abuse children often go out of their way to appear trustworthy.

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ABUSE VIA TECHNOLOGY:

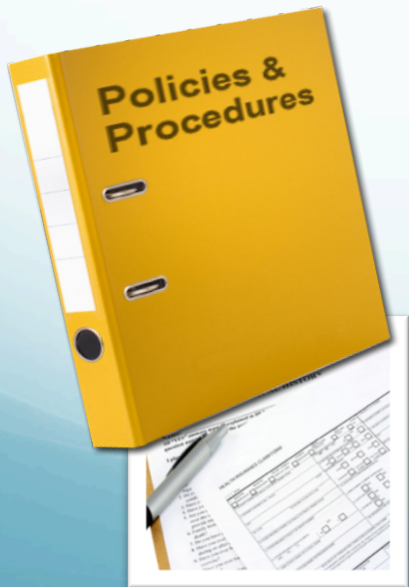
- Approximately 1 in 7 (13%) youth Internet users received unwanted sexual solicitations.
 - 9% of youth Internet users had been exposed to distressing sexual material while online
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- 1 in 25 youths received an online sexual solicitation in which the solicitor tried to make offline contact.
 - In more than one-quarter (27%) of incidents, solicitors asked youths for sexual photographs of themselves.
 - 15% of cell-owning teens (12-17) say they have received sexually suggestive nude/ seminude images of someone they know via text.
 - 11% of teenagers and young adults say they have shared naked pictures of themselves online or via text message
 - 26% of teenagers and young adults say they have participated in sexting.

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Youth Ministry Staff Screening

All persons, whether volunteer or paid, who will be working with children and teens need to be screened before having access to the youth. You are responsible for the people serving.

It is recommended that sponsors for teens be 25 years or older, and that persons are 21 years or older to serve in the nursery and children's ministry.



Recommended Policies

- 6-Month Rule
- Background screening & Application Process
- Volunteer Training
- Establish reporting procedures
- Written standard of conduct for adult/youth relationships
- 2 Deep leadership

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Youth Ministry Staff Screening Details

6-Month Rule

- It is recommended that an applicant have attended the church regularly (two or more Sundays per month) for at least six months before that person can apply for working with the children/teens. Some Unity churches require membership.
- If the possible volunteer/staff member comes from another Unity ministry then contact that ministry and request information about the potential volunteer.

Background Screening

- Perform a criminal background check. If the potential volunteer will be working with the Uniteens or Y.O.U. group a driving record check is also performed.

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Youth Ministry Staff Screening Details

Application Process

- Application form is required
- References are called
- Conduct an interview to determine the qualifications of the potential volunteer and to ascertain what age group they prefer to work with.

Volunteer Training

- Provide training for new volunteers. Include the ministry's safety policies and reporting procedures as well as information needed to facilitate the lesson.
- Require each new volunteer to be a classroom assistant for 2 or 3 months before allowing them to lead in order to help them get a feel for how the program functions.

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Youth Ministry Staff Screening Details

Reporting Procedures

- Each State has laws requiring certain people to report concerns of child abuse and neglect. While some States require all people to report their concerns, many States identify specific professionals as mandated reporters; these often include social workers, medical and mental health professionals, teachers, and child care providers. Specific procedures are usually established for mandated reporters to make referrals to child protective services.
- Children almost never lie about having been molested. Take any comments seriously. Let the authorities investigate; that's their job.

Resource:

- https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/laws_policies/statutes/manda.pdf

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Youth Ministry Staff Screening Details

Reporting Procedures, Continued

- Establish your reporting procedures before you need it.
- Create reporting forms. Check with your insurance agent for any packets, forms, and guidelines they have for reducing the risk in your church. Then check with your lawyer to see if your procedural plan is legally correct.
- Inform all staff of the procedures.
- Maintain confidentiality

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Additional Considerations for Working with Teens

- Have a written standard of conduct for adult/youth relationships.
- Limit physical contact and off-duty contact between teens and adults.
- Avoid “off-duty” time with teens unless other adults are present.
- Limit physical contact ... No prolonged hugs
- Have a Social Media agreement for sponsors.
- Have adults sign the Written Code of Ethics (REQ. FOR REGIONAL EVENTS)

