

GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS & CAREGIVERS

OHIO CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

As a ministry volunteer or caregiver, you are a valuable partner in implementing the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As partners, volunteers are expected to uphold the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as they minister to the men, women, and children in our territory. We anticipate you will treat everyone with love, compassion, dignity, and integrity as demonstrated by God's interaction with each of us.

Because our society is experiencing pain, problems, and litigation caused by the improper conduct of adults working with children and youth, we must have clear guidelines for their ministry. These guidelines will protect both the volunteer/caregiver and those under their supervision while at church and church-related functions. As a ministry volunteer/caregiver, you want parents and others to feel comfortable and confident with your ministry. Here are some practical guidelines:

1. NEVER leave a child, or a group of children, alone.
2. ALWAYS provide adequate supervision, no matter what.
3. NEVER be the only adult serving as a caregiver.
4. ALWAYS have at least one other person 18 or older with you.
5. ALWAYS ask a person's permission before touching him/her anywhere, even when responding to an injury or problem. This is especially true for any area that a T-shirt and shorts would normally cover. If an injury is within this area, ask another adult to assist you in providing care.
6. NEVER use physical or verbal attacks on children (or anyone else). These are inappropriate ways to interact with others and should never be used as a reaction or discipline. Instead, utilizing a "time out," or "sit in that chair" may be helpful methods with children.
7. Kids need to be touched appropriately.
 - a. Appropriate physical contact includes, but is not limited to, a handshake, high-five or side-hug within the sight of others.
 - b. Be sure to keep hugs brief and either side-to-side or shoulder-to-shoulder (A-frame hug).
 - c. Always keep your hands at (not below) the shoulder level.
 - d. Any caregiver's kiss should be to the forehead or cheek only - not elsewhere.
 - e. Encourage small children to sit next to you rather than on your lap.
8. Inappropriate contact, not limited to, prolonged hugs, kissing, tickling, horseplay, etc., is strictly prohibited.
9. When taking small children to the bathroom, take another adult along or leave the door open.
10. Be aware of the signs and symptoms of abuse. In nearly all places, a caregiver can be held legally responsible for failing to report suspected or actual child abuse. Familiarize yourself with your local laws and expectations.
11. 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.
12. Adventist Risk Management and the North American Division mandate the following rules for leaders. These serve as a protection to you and your ministry against charges of abuse:
The Volunteer Screening Rule.
 - a. All volunteers must complete the screening process, including Sterling training & background check.
 - b. The six-month rule. Do not recruit a volunteer who has been a church member for less than six months.
 - c. The two-person rule. Have at least two adults present at all times.
 - d. The glass window rule. So others in the building can see in, if a room does not have a window in either the wall or door, the door should be left open so that the adult is in full view.

I, the undersigned ministry volunteer/caregiver, have read the guidelines listed above and agree to abide by them.

DATE _____ SIGNED _____

DATE _____ WITNESS _____

This form should be on file at the local Church, and the signee should be provided a copy for their reference.