

Child and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy And Best Practices

Regeneration Church

Revised and Approved by Regeneration Board of Elders

March 13, 2024

We love children and desire to protect them, therefore Regeneration Church requires all staff members and volunteers working with children or youth (and other vulnerable populations) to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before regular volunteer service can begin.

STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

Regeneration Church policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any suspicious or concerning behavior to a Regeneration church pastor, staff person, deacon, or elder. Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in 'grooming' a child for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or 'gatekeeper'), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip Regeneration Church staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, Regeneration Church requires all staff members and volunteers to complete MinistrySafe's Sexual Abuse Awareness Training (live or online at www.MinistrySafe.com). This training will be renewed every three years.

STEP TWO: Policies & Procedures and Two Adult Rule

Staff members and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this document, sign (electronic signatures ok) a document indicating that he or she has read and understood the material, and agree to comply with policy requirements.

Our most important practice for preventing the abuse of children and youth is the Two Adult Rule. Every effort will be made to assure that there are at least two unrelated adults with any child or youth when they are in a Regeneration Church program or activity.

STEP THREE: Screening Process

Staff members and volunteers are required to complete the Regeneration Church Screening Process, which requires a staff member or volunteer to:

- Complete an employment application and interview process (employees only)
- Volunteers attend Regeneration Church for at least 3 months before being eligible to volunteer with children or youth.
- Volunteers and staff must be willing to be background-checked, fingerprinted and trained in abuse prevention.
- Volunteers must be willing to be interviewed and be known within the Regeneration church community and in ongoing conversation and training with ministry leaders.
- Volunteers and staff agree to abide by our Two-Adult Rule which states that every effort will be made to assure that there are at least two adults with any child or youth when they are in a Regeneration Church program or activity

STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check and Fingerprints

Regeneration Church requires that all staff members and regular volunteers working or volunteering in children's or youth activities or programming undergo a criminal background check and fingerprinting. Depending upon position, differing levels or depth of background check may be required.

Individuals who have committed sexually-oriented or sex-related crimes may not serve in any area providing services to children or minors. In addition, certain other past criminal acts *may* preclude an applicant from serving minors.

Safety Policy

ABUSE TOLERANCE

Regeneration Church has **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at Regeneration Church to act in the best interest of all children in every program.

In the event that staff or volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or have reason to suspect abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is their responsibility to immediately report their observations to a Regeneration pastor, staff person, deacon, or elder.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

Regeneration Church staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Regeneration Church policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or removal from service in any Regeneration program or activity.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

REPORTING ABUSE OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE

Regeneration Church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children, youth, and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behavior or suspicions of abuse or neglect will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to Child Protective Services or criminal law enforcement.

An element of the safe environment at Regeneration Church includes the fostering of a culture of reporting relevant information to a pastor, staff member, deacon, or elder. Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a child for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to one of the leaders mentioned above.

In order to maintain a safe environment, Regeneration Church staff members and volunteers must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation that is a violation of these policies. All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to Regeneration pastors, staff members, deacons, or elders.

Failure to report an inappropriate behavior to a Regeneration pastor, staff person, deacon, or elder is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination or removal. Volunteers who fail to report an inappropriate behavior may be

restricted from participation in any activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable populations at Regeneration Church.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Any person accused of committing an inappropriate behavior or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a minor will be immediately suspended from participation in Regeneration Church programs with children and youth. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have committed inappropriate behavior is prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children, youth, or vulnerable populations at Regeneration Church. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct will result in termination of employment from Regeneration Church.

REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

We report all suspected or alleged abuse or neglect of children to the California Department of Social Services (CASS) or to a local police department.

Alameda County 24 hour Hotline: 510-259-1800

Information on the reporting process is found here:

<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/reporting/report-abuse/child-protective-services>

Suspected Child Abuse Report Form for Mandated Reporters

https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/childabuse/ss_8572.pdf

Because many adults are unfamiliar with California reporting requirements and may be fearful of the process, Regeneration Church utilizes a 'tandem or dual report' model, where permitted. A 'dual report' occurs when a Regeneration Church leader reports the suspicion or allegation *together* with the individual who saw, heard, or received information causing him or her to suspect abuse or neglect.

THIS PRACTICE IS NOT REQUIRED, OR INTENDED TO INHIBIT ANY STAFF MEMBER OR VOLUNTEER FROM REPORTING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT, CPS OR THE ABUSE HOTLINE *DIRECTLY*. Instead, it is meant to facilitate reporting, protect children, and support individuals who may not feel able or willing to report alone.

NO PERMISSION IS NEEDED from Regeneration Church before reporting to law enforcement personnel or the Child Abuse Hotline.

While not required by state law, please report all suspicions of child abuse or neglect or any suspected inappropriate or 'grooming' behaviors to a staff person, deacon, or elder at Regeneration Church. This request is intended to assist the church in properly protecting children involved in Regeneration Church programs.

When in doubt, report.

Ministry Best Practices

BUILDING and ENVIRONMENT SAFETY

Every ministry supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the ministry program area is monitored during programming serving children. This includes unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers and children (cameras). Every effort will be made to have two unrelated adults with children at all times when they are entrusted to any Regeneration Church activity.

SUPERVISION

Only adult family members, guardians, ministry volunteers, church staff members, and children are allowed in areas where ministry to children is occurring. All other adults should be escorted out of the area. If questions or concerns arise related to any person in the area, a ministry leader should be notified immediately.

Two trained, screened adults should supervise children at all times.

Avoid being alone with an individual child in any room or during any ministry program. Every effort is made to have at least two unrelated adults supervising children at all times.

If two individuals serving in a room are related to one another, a third unrelated volunteer or staff member must be present.

If an unusual circumstance occurs and you find yourself alone with a single child, take the child to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: if a child is the last in a class to be picked up by a parent, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present.)

If you need to talk with a child alone, do it in the hallway or a highly visible area, or have another leader with you.

After every ministry event, ensure that every room, area and restroom is checked prior to leaving so that no child is left alone.

CHECK-IN

Upon check-in, every effort will be made to give each child a name tag. The parent or guardian of very young children will be given a corresponding claim tag.

If a claim tag is lost, and the adult is unknown to the ministry leader, please request help from a pastor, staff member, deacon, or elder who can confirm the relationship between the adult and the child. Legal identification may be requested.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

At any time that a child has been entrusted to Regeneration Church staff members or volunteers, the church incurs responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.

Children's Ministries staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians.

It is presumed a person who drops off a child or youth has authority to pick up the child or youth.

In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact the children and youth ministry leader or other staff person, deacon, or an elder to determine together the propriety of releasing the child. ID may be requested and parents or guardians may be contacted.

Restroom Policies

Adults should use a restroom separate and apart from restrooms used by children whenever possible.

When children need assistance with bathroom activities every effort will be made to be sure two adults are present.

Because nursery children may require assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies:

Diapering

- Changing of diapers is done in plain sight of other nursery workers.
- Children will not be left unattended on changing tables.
- Any special instructions given by parents will be honored.
- Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.

Toilet training

- No child will be forced to toilet train.
- When children are taken into bathrooms the door is left partially open.
- Young children will not be left unattended in bathrooms.
- Any special instructions given by parents will be honored.

GRADES 1-6

If you must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, seek out another worker to accompany you. If another worker is not available, go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance.

If a child requires immediate assistance, leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing his or her toileting activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall. If it is necessary to enter the stall to help the child leave the door ajar.

If restroom use is required:

- Only one child in the restroom at a time, in a single toilet facility.

- When a worker is assisting a child, the door must not be locked, and must remain ajar. In general, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities. Encourage children to do all they can for themselves.
- All students in grades 1-3 must be accompanied to the restroom by a leader. 4th and 5th grade students may go to KIDS ONLY restrooms alone with permission of their adult ministry leader.
- Be aware if a student repeatedly asks to use the restroom and stays there for unusual periods of time. Report this behavior to a supervisor if it occurs.
- A single staff member or volunteer should never take a lone child to the restroom.

SPECIAL NEEDS

After the age of 4, parents or legal guardians will change the diapers of all individuals with special needs. If someone with special needs requires assistance using the restroom, a volunteer trained for this purpose may assist them in the restroom.

VOLUNTEERS MAY OPT OUT OF CHANGING DIAPERS. Every effort will be made to have at least one volunteer who is comfortable changing diapers with young children. If such a volunteer is not available and the need arises, a parent or guardian will be contacted to diaper the child.

Medication

Do not administer medication of any kind to any child while serving in ministry programs, including 'over the counter' drugs.

Transportation

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when adult staff or volunteers are involved in the transportation of children:

- Children should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.
- No drivers under age 25 may drive Regeneration Church owned or rented vehicles.

Interactions with Children

No form of physical discipline is acceptable by Regeneration volunteers and staff.

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. Regeneration staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

Physical Contact

Regeneration Church is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, Regeneration Church has implemented a 'physical contact policy' which promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our Children's Ministries while protecting children. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in Children's Ministries programs:

- When welcomed by the child, brief, friendly hugs, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children are important for children's development and are generally suitable in the church setting.
- Young children are often comforted by sitting on an adult lap. However, children over 4 years of age should generally not be sat on the lap of adult, youth or elementary age volunteers.
- Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to a Regeneration Church pastor, staff member, deacon, or elder
- Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
- Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children or children's staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.

- Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in Children's Ministries must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
- Do not force physical contact, touch or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.
- Children's staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
- No form of physical discipline is acceptable by Regeneration volunteers and staff
- Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by a staff member or volunteer must be reported to a pastor, staff member, deacon, or elder

Intoxicants

Staff members and volunteers may not be intoxicated when working with children and youth. Adults working with children and youth may not be in possession of substances meant for adult consumption while working with children and youth.

Sexually Oriented Conversations

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children. Volunteers and staff are prohibited from discussing any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any child or youth.

Sexually Oriented Material

Staff members and volunteers at Regeneration Church are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children or youth.

Nudity

Staff members and volunteers should never be nude in the presence of children other than their own.

In the event that a situation calls for the changing of clothes (i.e. pool party) care must be taken to assure the privacy of each child or youth and to assure that no adult changes clothes in the presence of any child or youth.

Parental Involvement

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents who leave a child in the care of Regeneration Church staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if their child becomes ill or injured, while participating in Children's Ministries programs.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents are encouraged to visit any and all services and programs in which their child is involved at Regeneration Church. Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their children's programs at Regeneration Church will be required to complete the Regeneration Church volunteer application and screening process.

IN CONCLUSION

Regeneration is committed to the safety and flourishing of all children, youth and families in our care. Our practice of the TWO ADULT RULE along with our training, screening and reporting process is meant to create an environment conducive to human growth and faith development. We are grateful to all parents, guardians, staff members and volunteers who work together to create a community of care for our children and youth.

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Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement

This page is to be signed, and returned to a Regeneration pastor, staff member, deacon, or elder.

I have received and read a copy of Regeneration Church Abuse Prevention Policy and Best Practices and understand this material. I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving or working at Regeneration Church. I also agree to be background checked, fingerprinted and trained in abuse prevention.

Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: _____