

Guidelines for Adults Working with Children or Youth

Use these general guidelines for specific programs or activities as appropriate. These guidelines are required for corps or program/service activities such as character building programs, youth programs, tutoring, social services, etc. But they will require modification for such diverse activities.

Note: We live in an age where child abuse is a reality in our society. The Salvation Army must deal with this issue as a “good shepherd” by taking steps to protect the children in our care. The Southern Territory has implemented a program to safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. The guidelines below are to be strictly followed by anyone working with youth in The Southern Territory. We pray for God’s blessing for our children, workers, and ministry.

Before You Begin

- Six-Month Guideline — Volunteers for corps ministry positions should be members or regular attendees of the corps for at least six months before becoming volunteers in children’s or youth ministry.
- Completion of Application — All applicants must complete and sign an application form.
- Agreement, Authorization, and Consent for Release of Background Information — All applicants must complete and sign this form.
- Statements for Work with Children – All applicants for positions working with children or youth must complete and sign the appropriate statements (This is required by The Salvation Army’s National Policy Statement on Sexual Abuse of Children).
- References — After gaining the applicant’s permission, references will be contacted. Persons asked for references may be suggested by applicants or selected by unit leaders. For volunteer positions, the unit may contact employers, former ministers, and persons who have supervised applicants.
- Interview — All applicants must be interviewed to determine their suitability for working with young people. Information from this interview will not be released to unauthorized persons.
- Background Check and Social Services Registry — After gaining the applicant’s permission (see above), leaders will submit paperwork to Divisional Headquarters for criminal background and registry checks. (Social services registry checks may not be available in all states.)
- Motor Vehicle Report — All youth workers who will be driving children or conducting other Salvation Army business must complete and sign a Motor Vehicle Report form.
- Signed Agreement to Follow Guidelines — All applicants must sign the agreement at the end of these guidelines to show their commitment to observe these guidelines.

Appl. Initials _____

Guidelines

- Two Adult Guideline — A youth will not be in the primary care of only one adult. Teams of adults (preferably male and female) will supervise activities. This guideline has two purposes: it provides for more than one adult to help ensure appropriate levels of supervision, and it protects adults from unfounded allegations.

Guidelines for Touching

We live in an age where child abuse is a reality in our society. The Salvation Army should deal with this issue as a “good shepherd” by taking steps to protect the children in our care. The Southern Territory has implemented guidelines for touching that will safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. The guidelines below are to be carefully followed by anyone working with children and youth.

1. Hugs and other forms of appropriate physical affection between workers and children are important for a child’s development and are generally suitable in our environment.
 2. Physical affection should be appropriate to the age of the child or youth. (For example, it is generally appropriate for a four-year-old to sit in a nursery worker’s lap, but it is not appropriate for a teenager and youth leader to behave this way.)
 3. Touching should be initiated by the child or youth. It should be a response to the child’s need for comforting, encouragement, or affection. It should not be based upon the adult’s emotional need.
 4. Touching and affection should only be given when in the presence of other children’s ministry or youth workers. It is much less likely that touches will be inappropriate or misconstrued as such when two adult workers are present, and the touching is open to observation. This rule is especially important when diapering a baby or helping a young child change clothes or use the restroom.
 5. Touching behavior should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. As Salvation Army representatives, our behavior must foster trust at all times; it should be above reproach.
 6. A child’s preference not to be touched should be respected. Do not force affection upon a reluctant child.
 7. When touching a child, it is generally appropriate to touch the hand, shoulder or upper back. It is not appropriate to touch a child on any areas that would be normally covered by a bathing suit.
 8. Workers must promptly discuss inappropriate touching or other questionable behavior by other workers with their supervisor or officer in charge.
- Overnight Activities—At least two adults will supervise overnight activities. If the participants are male and female, then two male and two female chaperons (4 total) must be present. If these conditions cannot be met, then the event should be postponed. It is never appropriate for an adult chaperon who is not a family member to share a bed with a youth. Males and females attending events must not share the same sleeping quarters and should have separate access to bathroom facilities. Experienced adult workers should be included with adults who are newcomers to youth ministry.
 - Individual Counseling—Team counseling is preferable whenever possible. When team counseling sessions are not feasible, notify another adult of the location and with whom you are meeting. Counseling should be done in a public place where private conversations are possible but occur in full view of others; guard carefully to avoid seclusion. If possible, have female adults counsel female youths and males counsel males. A male/female team is generally appropriate for counseling either gender.

Appl. Initials _____

- Initiation -- Children will not be subjected to "initiation" rites or hazing rituals by either youth workers or other children or youth, as these practices may be abusive in nature.
- Long-Term Counseling—Workers should not meet with youth more than three times to discuss the same issue. Youth workers are not prepared or supported or long-term counseling or formal therapy. Adult leaders are encouraged to refer youth who they suspect have a serious need for counseling to professionals in the community. Questions about referral must be discussed promptly with the youth program leader or the service/corps.
- Informal Contact (Independent of Salvation Army Activities)—Informal contact refers to phone calls, letters, contact via the Internet, or face-to-face contact between an adult worker and a youth that is not connected to official Salvation Army activities. The Salvation Army recognizes that informal contact between worker and youth frequently occurs. For example, workers may hire teens as baby sitters for their own children, or workers may see kids during social events with the child’s family. This interaction is usually legitimate and beneficial. However, workers should seek permission of parents before having informal contact with their child. The worker should clearly let the parent know the nature of the contact, and that it is not part of an official Salvation Army activity. Parents are responsible for monitoring this informal contact.
- Agree to abide by the Guidelines for Technology Use and Communication with Minors located in “Our Current Policies” and on the SFH resources website.
- Transportation To and From Meetings—Transportation to and from meetings is not part of program activities except in those cases when Salvation Army vehicles and drivers are provided as a component of the activity.
- Parents are responsible for providing or arranging transportation to all activities that do not include planned transportation by the corps/service/program. Parents are discouraged from asking workers to transport children informally.
- Transportation as a Part of Corps Activities—Units may provide transportation as an official part of some activities if parents have given written permission (i.e. Permission/Waiver form). For example, corps may provide transportation to out-of-town events or field trips. When children are transported as a part of unit activities, all relevant guidelines will apply. Following the “two adult guideline” and having all drivers complete a Motor Vehicle Record Check are especially important. Workers must be added to the approved driver’s list before being permitted to drive.
- Confidentiality—Workers must report to an appropriate leader if a minor discusses harming himself or others, committing a crime, or being abused. There are limits to confidentiality when working with youth. Questions about such cases or other issues of confidentiality must be discussed promptly with the supervisors or commanding officer/administrator. Conferring with an officer on sensitive issues is not considered breaking a confidence. Remember that when working with children or youth in Salvation Army programs you may be subject to state laws regarding “mandatory reporting.”
- Youth Supervising Youth—Minors may help adults lead youth activities only under the direct leadership of adults. A minor may not be used to meet the team leadership or team counseling guidelines discussed above.

Appl. Initials _____

- Gifts—Workers are generally discouraged from giving personal gifts or money to youth. When the giving of personal gifts is desired, the worker must first notify parents and his or her supervisor. Gifts can be easily misinterpreted. Gifts given to groups of young people are appropriate, such as graduation presents or awards for participation. Group gifts do not require notification of parents or supervisors.
- Corporal Punishment—Corporal punishment (hitting or spanking) and other forms of punishment involving physical pain are not appropriate in Salvation Army activities. This rule holds true even if parents have suggested or given permission for corporal punishment. Workers must consult their supervisors if they need help with misbehaving youth or discipline techniques.
- Open Door Guideline—All children’s and youth events should be open door. This means that workers, parents, and corps members have a right to observe any activity. Minors and parents should be informed that there are never secret activities or initiations in any Salvation Army programs.
- High Adventure Activities—Special precautions must be taken on high adventure activities such as: rock climbing, hiking, overnight camps, raft trips, or the like. Both physical safety and safety from abuse are at risk in high adventure situations. A high ratio of adults to youth is recommended. Guides for high adventure activities should be licensed by the sports governing body or government authorities to guide groups whenever possible. High adventure camping often raises unique circumstances involving individual privacy, sleeping arrangements, bathroom facilities, and so on. Adult leaders must be vigilant to avoid suspicious or misinterpreted behavior in these circumstances.
- Dating or Sexual Involvement—No adult worker is to date a youth or be romantically or sexually involved with a youth. Any adult with prior incidents of sexual misconduct may not be a youth worker or serve in any capacity caring for minors in The Salvation Army. In addition, workers may not share details of their romantic lives with children or youth.
- Workers must report suspected or observed misconduct by other workers to the youth program leader or officer/administrator immediately.
- Supervision and Communication—Youth workers must meet on a regular basis with the youth program leader, and the youth program leader must meet with the officer in charge/administrator periodically to discuss any issues regarding these guidelines. Appropriate topics that must be discussed include problems, accountability, guideline clarification, personal feelings, or other issues that may interfere with youth ministry efforts.
- Workers must avoid even the appearance of misconduct. This is necessary in order to maintain parental confidence and avoid mistaken allegations.
- Workers who disobey these guidelines may be reassigned or relieved from youth program duty at the discretion of corps/program leaders or administrators.

I have read the guidelines above. I agree to observe them faithfully:

Signature _____ Date _____
 Print Name _____
 Witness _____ Date _____
 Print Name _____