

The Church in Los Angeles

Policy for the Protection of Children and Young People

The church in Los Angeles recognizes the importance of ministry to *children* and *young people* and the need to safeguard them when entrusted to *the church's* care. Since they can become the victims of neglect or of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, the elders and Board of Directors (Board) of the church have adopted the following policy.

Definitions and Distinctions

For purposes of this document:

- The term *the church in Los Angeles* (or *the church*) refers to the Christians meeting on the ground of oneness in the city of Los Angeles, California. *The church* is overseen by appointed elders.
- The term *The Church in Los Angeles* (or *The Church*) refers to the corporation registered with the State of California for administration of business affairs on behalf of *the church*. *The Church in Los Angeles* is overseen by a Board of elected Directors.
- *Children* refers to those in the sixth grade and younger unless further qualified.
- *Young people* refers to junior high and high school students.
- *CYP* refers to *children* and *young people* collectively or individually.
- *Parents* refers to the primary caregiver(s) of a *CYP*; *parents* may refer to the natural or adoptive parent(s) or legal guardian(s).
- *Serving ones* refers to employees or volunteers of *The Church* who have passed a background check, signed an employee or volunteer agreement, and been approved by *the church's* elders to serve with *CYP*.
- *Church facilities* refers to the property that *The Church* owns or leases, including the grounds, buildings, and rooms operated or overseen by *The Church*.
- *Church-sponsored CYP-centered activities* are regular or special activities coordinated by the *serving ones* for *CYP*, including child care, children's meetings, young people's meetings, and conferences for *CYP*.
- *Church-related CYP-centered activities* are activities initiated by one or more members of *the church*, including meetings in members' homes, small group meetings, neighborhood children's meetings, and activities where permission is given to use *church facilities*, including outdoor activities.
- During such activities there may be concurrent *church-sponsored CYP-centered activities* or *church-related CYP-centered activities*. In such cases, the respective standards of responsibility for oversight of the *CYP* apply.
- *Shepherding* refers to spiritual and practical care of *CYP*. Spiritual care includes prayer, fellowship, Bible reading, and other activities aimed to foster spiritual growth. Practical

care includes eating meals together, providing help with homework, providing transportation, and having outdoor recreation, etc.

- *Individual shepherding* refers to arrangements approved by *parents* for the care of their *child* or *young person*, whether or not *servicing ones* are involved.

Objectives

The Church in Los Angeles is committed to:

- Providing a safe environment for *CYP*;
- Providing for the spiritual education of *CYP* in an atmosphere where they can experience Christian fellowship and companionship appropriate to their age and maturity;
- Valuing, listening to, and respecting all *CYP* as well as promoting their welfare and protection;
- Shepherding *CYP* to have proper spiritual life practices and to have a proper human living, including recreation and social grouping;
- Providing an environment in which *servicing ones* can serve our *CYP* without fear of unwarranted claims of abuse;
- Screening, training, and monitoring the service of all who serve with *CYP* in activities sponsored by *the church in Los Angeles*;
- Promptly addressing all reports of suspected abuse or neglect; and
- Reporting as appropriate to civil authorities and complying with all legal guidelines.

General Statement of Policy

The *Church* has safeguards for *CYP* participating in *church-sponsored CYP-centered activities*. Other events or gatherings where *CYP* may be present fall outside *The Church's* responsibility and ability to provide direct oversight. These include but are not limited to small or large gatherings in members' homes, parks, *church facilities* used by permission, and other informal settings where members may meet for mutual care, meals, recreational activities, prayer, and fellowship. Furthermore, *CYP* may participate in *church-sponsored activities* or *church-related activities* that are not *church-sponsored CYP-centered activities*, and thus are not overseen by *The Church* or *servicing ones*. Therefore, in all settings other than *church-sponsored CYP-centered activities*, the responsibility to safeguard the welfare of *CYP* rests directly with their *parents* and not with *The Church*.

Oversight

The Board will designate a minimum of two members of *the church* to serve as *CYP protection compliance monitors* (or *compliance monitors*). The *compliance monitors* will be responsible for establishing procedures for screening of *servicing ones* and volunteers, training, and all record keeping related to the implementation of this policy, under the supervision and guidance of the elders. The compliance monitors will be authorized to perform background checks and review applications.

All applications, background screening reports, memos, and any other paperwork generated in regard to an applicant's service with the *CYP* will be kept confidentially in a secure file

accessible only to the *compliance monitors* and certain elders. All *CYP serving ones* files will be kept on file permanently.

Due to the personal nature of the information required in the application forms, an applicant may request that a specific *compliance monitor* (such as an unrelated elder, etc.) process their application and background screening.

Standards for Serving Ones

1. All adults who desire to serve with *CYP* or who will have regular contact with *CYP* in *church-sponsored CYP-centered activities* must:
 - a. complete an Employee or Volunteer Application;
 - b. provide at least two references of non-family members;
 - c. be screened using a third-party service selected by the elders of *the church in Los Angeles*; and
 - d. be approved to serve with *CYP* by the elders of *the church in Los Angeles*.

These requirements apply to everyone, including directors and officers of *The Church*, even if the applicant is known to the elders in *the church* or to those *serving ones* in leadership roles in *CYP* service.

2. No unmarried male over the age of 30 shall serve with *children*.
3. No unmarried male over the age of 35 shall serve with *young people*.
4. *Young people* may join at least two *serving ones* in the *children's* service, not to bear responsibility for that service, but as a learner, upon submission of an Adolescent Service Participation Agreement by the *young person's parents* and approval by at least two elders of *the church*.

Standards for Church-sponsored CYP-centered Activities

1. General principle: *serving ones* shall observe the “**two-person rule**” or the “**open door policy**” at ALL times:
 - a. The “**two-person rule**” requires that all *church-sponsored CYP-centered activities* will be supervised by two *serving ones*, at least one of whom must be at least 25 years of age. *Serving ones* must make every reasonable effort to avoid situations where a *serving one* is alone with any *CYP*.
 - b. In the event that the “**two-person rule**” cannot be observed, the “**open door policy**” shall be in effect. The door to the room or area must remain open, or the activity must be held in an open area. If at all possible, *serving ones* shall notify parents of the absence of a second *serving one* and have the parents assist until a second *serving one* arrives.
 - c. The “**two-person rule**” will be mandatory with nursery through kindergarten age children. The “**open door policy**” is not an option for supervising this age group ***unless a parent gives written consent*** for their child/children to be attended by a lone caregiver.

2. Teenaged volunteers shall not be left to supervise *CYP* without the presence of a screened adult.
3. Each room for groups of thirty or fewer *CYP* must have an unobstructed view from the outside of the room.
4. *Parents* will be permitted to visit and observe all *church-related CYP-centered activities* at any time, provided they do not disrupt those activities.
5. Non-*parents* who are not serving with the *CYP* will not be permitted where *church-related CYP-centered activities*, except for special purposes with the express permission of the *serving ones* overseeing the service for that age group and at least one elder.
6. No *serving one* shall use any form of corporal punishment on any *CYP* at any time. If physical restraint is required to avoid self-harm, harm to another, or harm to property, the *parents* (or if unavailable an emergency contact) must be contacted to pick up the *CYP* as soon as possible. The *serving ones* who are present must report the incident to a *compliance monitor* and the *parents*.
7. No *CYP* should leave an activity alone or be left outside the area of supervision of the *serving ones*.
8. Following *church-sponsored CYP-centered events*, at least two *serving ones* (at least one of whom must be at least 25 years of age) must remain until the last *CYP* leaves. Twenty minutes following the conclusion of said activity, the *CYP* may be left with one adult 25 years of age or older. If weather permits, both the *CYP* and the supervising adult will wait outside in public view for transportation to arrive.
9. The *serving ones* must obtain written permission signed by at least two elders before holding *church-sponsored CYP-centered activities* in the home of church members. If a home will host such activities more than once every two months, the church members should take the necessary steps to become a volunteer *serving one*.

Sign-in/Sign-out Procedure for Children

1. At all *church-sponsored CYP-centered activities* at which *parents* leave elementary and pre-elementary school children under the supervision of *serving ones*, those children must be signed in by a *parent* or a *parent's* designee. Only the *parent* or their designee who signed the child in may sign him or her out unless the *serving one* releasing the child is able to contact and obtain permission from the *parent* or the designee who signed in the child. The only exception shall be permitted in cases of emergency, as covered below.
2. Prior to a *parent* signing in their child, a Parental Consent and Waiver Agreement must be filled out by a *parent* and shall be provided to the *compliance monitors*. At the same time, a copy of this policy must be made available to the *parent*. A list of emergency contacts must be readily accessible to the *serving ones* for the *children* they supervise while *children* are present.

General Safety for Children

1. No *child* should be allowed at any time in maintenance or mechanical rooms, that is, rooms with dangerous chemicals or electrical equipment, even if they are accompanied by a *serving one*.

2. No *child* should ever be out of sight of the *serving ones*, except as described below.
3. No *child* should leave the premises with anyone, including *serving ones*, other than the person authorized to sign that person out, except in cases of medical emergency, in which cases *parents* should be notified immediately of the medical facility to which the *child* is being taken.

Restroom Use and Supervision

1. At any *church-sponsored* or *church-related activities* using *church facilities*, restrooms shall only be entered as designated for male or females according to an individual's biological gender.
2. Supervision of restroom activities for *children* varies by age and need. Toddlers who are not toilet-trained should be cared for in their meeting room or its immediate vicinity. Pre-K toilet-trained children should not be left without the supervision of an adult at any time but should be within sight of a *serving one* while still respecting the child's privacy.
3. Those supervising restroom activity should avoid being alone with a *child* in a closed restroom.
4. Kindergarten through second grade should be escorted to the restroom by a *serving one* but restroom activities themselves should be self-managed. Depending on the layout of the facility, third through sixth graders may or may not be escorted depending on whether or not the pathway to the restroom is secure. In all cases, the *serving ones* enter the restrooms only for their own biological gender.
5. Any accommodation needed for a *CYP* with a physical or mental disability should be discussed in advance with the *parents*.

Church-related CYP-centered Activities

Except during *church-sponsored CYP-centered activities*, ensuring proper supervision of *CYP* is the sole responsibility of the *parents* of the *CYP* involved.

Church-Related CYP-centered Activities in Homes

The Church recommends that *church-related CYP-centered activities* held in a church member's home be supervised by at least two adults who are not members of the same family.

Shepherding Activities

1. *Shepherding* activities are not considered *church-sponsored activities*, even if they take place during *church-sponsored activities*.
2. Any *individual shepherding* session with *CYP* should take place in a location with unobstructed visibility. This may be a public location approved by a *parent* or a room in a *church facility* with other occupants in the general proximity. In the latter case, the door to the room should remain open for the entire session, unless there is a window in the door or wall which gives a clear view into the entire room.
3. If *parents* and *serving ones* enter into a private agreement in which the *parent* authorizes a specific *individual shepherding* activity for a *CYP*, the *serving one* is acting outside the

scope of his or her agreements with *The Church*. The *serving one* is thus not entitled to the legal protections otherwise afforded by *The Church*.

4. *Serving ones* who do not follow these recommendations are subject to restriction or removal from service.

Transportation to/from Sponsored Events

1. Although *serving ones* may at times assist in the arrangement of transportation to and/or from *church-sponsored activities*, the responsibility to ensure appropriate transportation arrangements lies solely with the *CYP's parents*. Transportation to and from *church-sponsored CYP-centered activities* does not constitute a *church-sponsored activity*.
2. *The Church* recommends that *serving ones*, before providing transportation to *CYP*, obtain a signed Parental Consent and Waiver Agreement that designates the *parents* as having direct responsibility for their *CYP's* safety and approves the *serving one* as a voluntary driver. The transportation of *CYP* under a private agreement between a *serving one* and *parent* is not sponsored or recommended by *The Church* and the *parents* and the *serving one* do so at their own risk.
3. If a vehicle owned or leased by *The Church* is to be used for transporting *CYP*, the voluntary driver must be a *serving one* who is at least twenty-five (25) years of age, must have a valid driver's license, and must have valid automobile insurance.
4. *Serving ones* who transport *CYP*, regardless of the ownership of the vehicle used, may only interact with hands free electronic devices while the vehicle is in operation. Should an electronic device be used for navigation, it should be programmed before commencing and not interacted with while the vehicle is being driven.
5. *Serving ones* who transport *CYP* must not be under the influence of any sedating substance.

Lodging for Overnight Trips

For any overnight trips in which *serving ones* stay with *CYP* who are in families other than their own there should be:

- Either two *serving ones* in a room with *CYP* or at least three young people with a *serving one*.
- A "one room, one biological gender" policy upheld

In no case should the rooms be locked, that is, inaccessible to others for appropriate monitoring.

Reporting

Reporting Procedures for Suspected Child Abuse

Any person who observes something that may not be in compliance with this policy, or who has any concerns about the treatment of *CYP*, must promptly report the conduct to the *compliance monitors* and/or to the directors and elders so that an investigation can be made and remedial action taken, if appropriate.

California law also requires that certain categories of people called "mandated reporters" must report "reasonable suspicion" of child abuse or neglect to certain state agencies or

local law enforcement. Some of the categories of conduct which must be reported include but are not limited to physical abuse, sexual abuse, willful cruelty or unjustified punishment, unlawful corporal punishment or injury, and neglect. “Mandated reporters” include Church employees, ministers, *compliance monitors*, and *serving ones* whose duties require direct contact and supervision of children. Because of these legal requirements and the potential for criminal prosecution for failure to report, any person working with or observing *CYP* must immediately report any “reasonable suspicion” of child abuse or neglect, as set forth above, to the elders of *the church* and to the directors of *The Church*. Exceptions may be made for “penitential communication.” As the definition of what constitutes a penitential communication is subject to change, “mandate reporters” should consult current law or seek legal advice before applying that exception.

Physical signs of molestation *may* include:

- Lacerations and bruises
- Irritation, pain or injury to the genital area
- Difficulty with urination
- Discomfort when sitting
- Torn or bloody underclothing
- Venereal disease

Behavioral signs of molestation *may* include:

- Nightmares
- Anxiety when approaching the church building or nursery or preschool area (beyond normal separation anxiety)
- Nervous or hostile behavior toward adults
- Sexual self-consciousness or acting out of sexual behavior
- Withdrawal from *church* friends and activities

Verbal signs of molestation *may* include statements such as:

- “I don’t like so-and-so.”
- “So-and-so does things to me when we’re alone.”
- “I don’t like to be alone with so-and-so.”
- “So-and-so fooled around with me.”

Reports shall be documented in writing with the date of the report, the time of the report, the telephone number to which the report was made, the name of the recipient of the report, and a brief synopsis of the report. If at all possible, all oral reporting will be done in the presence of a recorded witness.

Response Procedures for Suspected Child Abuse

1. All allegations will be investigated expeditiously by established authorities or legal counsel.
2. All details, interview, and information will remain confidential to those legitimately involved in the investigation.
3. The official spokesperson for the *church* shall be one of the elders or any designated spokesperson authorized by the elders. All inquiries or requests for information from the media, attorneys, or any other parties shall be referred to the official spokesperson. No person other than the official spokesperson is to release any information regarding any alleged incident of child abuse without the express approval of the official spokesperson.
4. The official spokesperson shall immediately report any alleged incident of child abuse to the appropriate local Child Protection Services agency of the city or county, and to the church's insurance carrier.
5. The care and safety of the victim is our first priority. We will fully cooperate with any authorities investigating any allegation of child abuse.
6. We will not prejudge any person accused, but we will take any allegation of child abuse seriously and will reach out in Christian love and support to the victim and the victim's family, extending whatever pastoral care resources are needed.
7. We will treat the accused with dignity and respect. If the accused is a *church* worker that person shall be temporarily relieved of his or her duties until the investigation is finished and the person is cleared by the authorities.
8. All communication by the official spokesperson to the media, congregation, and public will protect the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.
9. All efforts in responding to the alleged incident of child abuse shall be documented by the *compliance monitors* or elders and maintained in a secure and confidential file.
10. No victim involved in an allegation or anyone responsible for reporting a sincere allegation will be retaliated against.