

The Good Shepherd Children & Youth Volunteer Screening Program For Valley Ranch Baptist Church Coppell, TX

Volunteer Handbook Revision Date August 2006

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." John 10:11

Our Strategy...

- Strive to provide a safe and secure environment for all children and youth (less than 18 years of age) that participate in our church programs.
- Strive to protect children and youth from the possibility of sexual abuse or molestation.
- Reduce the possibility of false accusations against volunteers, paid staff and workers.
- Educate and train our volunteers, paid staff and workers, to identify and guard against child abuse.

The Good Shepherd Team

The Good Shepherd Team shall consist of the ministers of the preschool, children's and youth ministries, the Associate Pastor and a Trustee, to be named at the discretion of the Church Council. In addition it is recommended that the Good Shepherd Team appoint or consult with at least one lay person, with the appropriate expertise, to advise the team in matters of child abuse or neglect. The Good Shepherd Team may, as deemed appropriate, and with Church Council approval add additional persons to this team.

The purpose of this team is to:

1. Monitor compliance of The Good Shepherd Program
2. Periodically review and recommend changes in The Good Shepherd Program of the Church
3. Review and determine the eligibility of those individuals who did not meet all of the volunteer requirements.

Policies

Volunteer Requirements

In order to become an approved person working with children under the age of 18, the following requirements must be completed:

1. Be a regularly attending member of Valley Ranch Baptist Church (referred to as VRBC) or a member of an ABF class at VRBC for at least six consecutive months.
2. Complete a Volunteer Application.
3. Submit to a criminal background check.
4. Complete the interview process with the appropriate age group minister or designee.
5. Have personal references checked.

Those who have completed items 2, 3, 4 and 5 above, will be permitted to volunteer until the successful completion of item 1 above. Such a volunteer does not satisfy the Two Cleared Person Rule.

The Screening Process

Who is screened?

Since all Ministers and Church Staff currently undergo a similar criminal background and reference check, this screening requirement applies to all those who come in contact with minor children (less than 18 years of age) and are not currently subject to the employment screening process.

All volunteers must be at least 18 years of age. However, youth aides will be permitted to assist in group activities. These youth aides do not satisfy the Two Cleared Person Rule. Therefore, youth aides may not supervise a child or children alone.

ALL INFORMATION ACQUIRED DURING THE SCREENING PROCESS WILL BE TREATED AS CONFIDENTIAL AND WILL NOT BE DISCLOSED TO OTHERS OUTSIDE THE GOOD SHEPHERD TEAM.

The Appeal Process

Any person who applies and is not cleared, or any volunteer who is suspended for any reason, has the right to appeal as set forth in the Appeal Process. This information is available through the appropriate age group minister.

Reporting an Observed or Suspected Incident of Abuse or Neglect

A volunteer who is engaged in any activity conducted on the Church premises or under the supervision of the Church and has cause to believe that a child or youth's physical or mental health has been or may be adversely affected by child abuse or neglect, should immediately report their suspicion to the appropriate age group minister. At no time shall any person, either staff or volunteer, attempt to conduct a detailed investigation either through investigation or interrogation of a child beyond that information necessary to

cause such a person to have reason to believe that a child has been abused or neglected.

Suspension of Church Related Duties

Upon notification, Valley Ranch Baptist Church shall suspend any person accused of child abuse or neglect from all Church related duties involving children or youth until such time as the accusation(s) of abuse or neglect are resolved. This determination will be at the sole discretion of the Good Shepherd Team.

As well, the Good Shepherd Team reserves the right to suspend any person from all Church related duties involving children or youth if they are notified of situations involving character or integrity until that situation is resolved. This determination will be at the sole discretion of the Good Shepherd Team.

Special Event Volunteer

Special Event Volunteers are those persons who on certain occasions, assist Cleared Volunteer workers but are not intending on becoming a Cleared Volunteer. To qualify as a Special Event Volunteer, one must complete a Special Event Application form and be recommended by the appropriate age group minister. The Associate Pastor shall approve those events when a Special Event Volunteer may be utilized. Furthermore, a Special Event Volunteer does not satisfy the Two Cleared Person Rule.

Two Cleared Person Rule

It is the position of VRBC that at all regularly scheduled events, a reasonable effort will be made to provide a minimum of two cleared adults at the activities of minor children. At the discretion of the age group minister or their designee, non cleared persons may assist the two cleared persons, on a one-time only basis, as needed.

Only a Cleared Person may supervise Preschool children in the restroom.

Frequency of Criminal Background Check

Follow-up criminal background checks will be conducted at the discretion of the Good Shepherd Team. Follow-up criminal background checks will be conducted no less than once every two years.

Observation of Children

Church activities for children and youth should be scheduled in areas visible to someone outside the room. Such visibility will be maintained by leaving curtains and blinds open on hallway windows and if necessary, leaving the door open. Reasonable exceptions to this rule may be made by the minister in charge of the age group area in which the child or youth is participating.

Parental Permission

Parental Permission is required for all children and youth to attend church sponsored off-campus events and other events as designated by the Associate Pastor, age group minister or designee.

Training and Education

The Good Shepherd Team shall be responsible for overseeing the training of all church volunteers in recognizing and preventing child abuse. All church volunteers will be strongly encouraged to attend. Training should be offered at least once each year.

(Intentionally Left Blank)

Valley Ranch Baptist Church The Good Shepherd Children and Youth Volunteer Screening Program

Consent to perform a Criminal History/Background Check

In compliance with the FCRA (Fair Credit Reporting Act)

As a church, we believe the spiritual, emotional, and physical well being of children and youth is vital. The purpose of the background checks is to assist in promoting a safe environment for the children and youth who participate in our ministries.

I, _____, am a volunteer for Valley Ranch Baptist Church. As a volunteer, I understand it is necessary for the church to conduct a criminal history background check to provide a secure environment for VRBC preschoolers, children and youth. Motor vehicle reports for volunteer drivers of these programs may also be checked when applicable. Updates of these reports and records will be conducted no less than once every 2 years.

I, _____, do hereby consent to the church use of any information provided in performing the criminal history background check and/or motor vehicle report.

The information on this form and obtained through the check will not be disclosed to unauthorized persons and will be stored in a secure area. The VRBC Administrative Coordinator will oversee the background check process and enter the information from the completed forms in the Background Information System. The Administrative Coordinator will analyze the results for "cleared" records or further investigation. If the results of the background check are not clear and criminal records are found, the information will be reviewed by the Associate Pastor and The Good Shepherd Team. Application for volunteering may be granted or denied contingent on the degree of the offense and/or date on which the offense occurred.

As part of the criminal background history check process, I have the right to review and challenge any negative information that would adversely impact the church's decision to allow me to volunteer. I will also be given reasonable opportunity to clear up any mistaken information reported. However, I do understand that time is of the essence and reasonableness of time is within the sole discretion of the church.

The criminal history background check will be performed in compliance with the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA). Under the FCRA, I have certain rights concerning my review of the information reported. Upon request I will be provided the name, address, and telephone number of the reporting agency as well as the nature and substance of all information and the source.

Volunteer background checks will be conducted through First Advantage Enterprise Screening Corporation, dba The Safe Churches Project.

Please answer each question. (Exclude minor traffic misdemeanors).

1. ___ YES ___ NO Have you ever been convicted or pled guilty before a court for any federal, state or municipal criminal offense?
2. ___ YES ___ NO Have you ever received deferred adjudication or similar disposition for any federal, state or municipal offense?
3. ___ YES ___ NO Have you ever received probation or community supervision for any federal, state or municipal offense?
4. ___ YES ___ NO Have you ever been convicted of any criminal offense in a country outside the jurisdiction of the United States?
5. ___ YES ___ NO As of the date of this consent form, do you have any pending charges against you?

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, please explain (include State, County and Date of Offense)

I hereby certify that all information provided in this consent form is true, correct and complete.

Signed this _____ day of _____, 20__.

Applicant (Print Name) _____

Applicant's Signature _____

**The Good Shepherd
Children & Youth Volunteer Screening Program
For Valley Ranch Baptist Church
Statement of Understanding**

I certify that I have received, read and understand the Valley Ranch Baptist Church Good Shepherd Volunteer Handbook, dated, August 2006, a copy of which has been provided to me. I also understand the Volunteer Handbook may be changed by the church at any time, and that the updated Handbook supersedes any and all prior Handbooks issued by Valley Ranch Baptist Church. I further understand that I am not an approved volunteer until all the "Volunteer Requirements" are completed.

NAME _____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____