

AURORA FIRST ASSEMBLY OF GOD

MINISTRY TO MINORS GUIDEBOOK

DESIGNED TO KEEP
OUR KIDS, VOLUNTEERS
AND CHURCH **SAFE!!**

September, 2006

Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction - Ministry to Minors Safety Plan	2
AFA Ministry to Minors Safety Plan Outline	2
Ministry Team Member's Information	5
Touching Policies	5
Rest Room Policies	5
Safety Attitude	5
Child/Staff Groupings/Visibility	5
Contact with Minors Outside of Church Events	6
Disclosing Information	6
Role of Child Safety Team	6
Confidential Records Retention Policy	6
Approved Ministry Team Members	6
Discipline Policies	7
ID Tags	7
Reporting Policy Violations	8
Reporting Physical, Emotional, or Sexual Abuse	8
Administration of Medication	9
Playground Safety	9
Parental Communication	10
Church Safety Policies	10
Fire/Emergency Evacuations	10
Disaster Procedures	10
Medical Emergencies/Injuries	10
Supervision of Children During Church Events	10
Van/Bus Policies	10
Response Plan	11
Additional Information	11
Appendices	11

Introduction - Ministry to Minors Safety Plan

Scope and purpose of the Ministry to Minors Safety Plan at Aurora First Assembly:
The Ministry to Minors Safety Plan has the primary purpose of providing safety measures for children and youth, children's & youth workers, and the church body. However, the ministry carries a broader scope of responsibility that also includes safety for other church ministries and other age groups.

Leadership: Pastor Andy in consultation with Pastor Roncone and the AFA Church Board.

Guidebook: The developed work of the Ministry to Minors Safety Plan is published in this document with appendices and forms attached so that all stakeholders have easy access to all safety information and policies. Training materials and safety summary sheets will also be produced. *This handbook* is designed to administer effective safety and security measures to ensure the well-being of all children and children's workers at Aurora First Assembly. This document is church policy. Frequent reviews will occur to maintain constant document effectiveness and implementation.

The requirements in this book are mandatory and failure to comply with these policies will result in disciplinary action including the potential termination from ministry involvement.

Definition: The term "Approved Ministry Team Member(s)" or "AMTM" will be used throughout this guide. Refer to the section with the same title for more details about this designation.

AFA Ministry to Minors Safety Plan Outline

The Acronym S.T.O.P. outlines the four core elements of the AFA Child Safety Plan:

- S. SCREEN - Maintain responsible hiring and volunteer placement practices.
- T. TRAIN - Provide appropriate supervision and training of workers.
- O. OPERATE - Provide adequate supervision and operations.
- P. PLAN - The plan for response.

The four aspects of S.T.O.P. are not chronologically achieved; it is necessary that all four are cared for on a consistent basis.

An overview of each element.

S. SCREEN - Maintain responsible hiring and volunteer placement practices.

Includes:

- Use of job descriptions.
- Creating and securing written applications for staff and volunteers.
- Classifying volunteers (by security clearance and training).
- Obtaining reference (pastoral, church) checks (for some workers such as people newer to the church).
- Completing criminal background and records check.
- Defining standards and causes for exclusion from ministry.

T. TRAIN - Provide appropriate supervision and training.

Training of workers will include:

- Recognizing a perpetrator of child abuse.
- Identifying victims of child abuse.
- Understanding appropriate interaction with children.
- General rules for those who work with children.
- Discipline procedures.
- How to report abuse.
- Emergency and safety training.
- CPR and first aid training.

O. OPERATE - Provide adequate supervision and operations.

Create policies and procedures that will govern the church ministries in areas that include:

- Touching policies.
- Rest room procedures.
- Safety policies.
- Enrolment and child pick up policies.
- Parental communication.
- Confidential records retention policy.
- Child/staff groupings and visibility.
- Overnight care and travel policies.
- Operation of Sunday Child Safety Team.

P. PLAN - The plan for response

This element involves the creation and implementation of an effective response to reports of or instances of child abuse.

Included is:

- Assembling a response team.
- Defining notification procedures.
- Notifying proper authorities at the proper time (parents, police, insurance).
- Congregation notification strategies.

Ministry Team Member's Information

Touching Policies

We adhere to a safe touch policy designed to keep kids and volunteers safe.

- Any safe touching should take place in public. Never touch a child behind closed doors or behind a barrier.
- Make sure touching is age and gender appropriate. Putting a toddler on your lap may be age appropriate but having a twelve year old is not.
- Absolutely avoid any kind of contact that could be construed as sexually stimulating to an adult or child. This would include excessive tickling.
- Avoid front body hugs. Give minors a side hug with your arm around their shoulders.

Rest Room Policies

- Younger children who need to be assisted in a rest room must have two adults present.
- When two adults are assisting a younger child, the stall door should remain open.
- If an AMTM is supervising a child on a restroom visit (rather than assisting) the AMTM should remain outside the door of the restroom.
- If a child needs assistance with undoing or doing up their clothing the AMTM must be the same gender and have a second AMTM present.

Safety Attitude

- No approved worker is to do anything that will place a minor at risk of injury or emotional harm.
- Safety must be thought through in the planning of all games and activities.

Child/Staff Groupings and Visibility

- No AMTM should spend time alone with a minor.
- Two adult rule - two or more adult AMTM (not related such as husband and wife) must be present when working with minors.

Contact with Minors outside of Church Events

- No AMTM should email or phone a minor without the knowledge of the parents. When permission is given, conversations must not cover areas of sexuality or personal issues.
- AMTM should not drive a minor home by themselves. Another adult should be present.

Disclosing Information

AFA considers it each person's responsibility to disclose any information they are aware of that could lead to improved safety of minors. This would include information about individuals who could pose a threat to the safety of minors or the church.

Role of Child Safety Team

The important role of the Child Safety Team is to help provide a safe environment for children, parents, workers and the church. They accomplish this through the following:

- Patrolling hallways during all Sunday (AM, PM) and Wednesday PM activities
- Observing for violations of safety protocol.
- Maintaining communication with CM workers to troubleshoot potential concerns.
- Watching for suspicious persons.

Please see the attached appendix **Aurora First Assembly Child Safety Team Mission Statement and Training** for more detailed information about this team of caring workers who are assisting to keep our church a safe place for minors.

Confidential Records Retention Policy

Security checks (once returned to the church) are stored in a locked safe and are not accessible to anyone other than the Children's Pastor (and the Senior Pastor and Church Board upon request.)

Approved Ministry Team Members

Requirements for working with minors and securing the designation of "Approved Ministry Team Member":

Ministry Perspective

- Must be a born again Christian.
- Must be living a life consistent with God's Word. You need to be actively growing in God.
- Must regularly attend adult services at Aurora First.

Safety Perspective

- Signing of form titled "Security Check for Volunteer Ministry".
- Clearance based on criminal background check. Disqualification will occur if a criminal check reveals information that is deemed to pose a threat to the safety of minors or the church.

Causes for exclusion - The following convictions would cause the denial of an application to minister to minors. Although this list is not exhaustive the following is agreed upon:

- Registered sex offender
- Child abuse or neglect
- Record of violence (i.e. assault, weapons charges, etc.)
- Recent alcohol related offenses (including DUI/DWI)
- Recent drug related offenses
- Contact with prostitutes
- Prostitution

The following areas are questionable behavior which could lead to the denial of an application to minister to minors.

- Frequent contact with law enforcement
- Domestic disputes
- Identity theft (as crimes may have been committed under another identity)
- Previous drug related offenses
- Previous alcohol related offenses (including DUI/DWI)

All AMTM who have been cleared to work with minors will be added to the approved workers list. Names can be removed at any time if knowledge of security risk becomes available.

AMTM may not appoint or use additional workers who are not AMTM approved without first contacting their ministry leader.

Discipline Policies

- No approved worker is to use any form of physical punishment on a minor.
- Never threaten to harm a minor.
- Do not verbally abuse any minor or use profanity.
- Comply with all discipline guidelines as outlined by your ministry area leader.

ID Tags

All AMTM are required to wear an approved Children's Ministry Team Member ID tag. Only people with this ID tag will be allowed to work directly with children in a church ministry setting.

Notes about ID tags.

- Stage presenters (storytellers, worship leaders, etc.) are asked to remove their ID tags just prior to entering the stage and to put them back on immediately after leaving the stage.
- ID tags are never to be taken outside church property (including to your car or home) unless being used on an approved Children's Ministry event.

Guests and Visitors

- Pastor Andy and those he designates are allowed to temporarily issue guest/visitor ID tags for those who are wishing to observe a class or have permission to be involved in some way (e.g. guest speaker).

Lost Name Tags

- Please immediately turn in any misplaced or lost ID tags to your ministry supervisor. If you lose your ID tag, please notify Pastor Andy immediately.

Reporting Policy Violations

- If you notice a violation of the policies outlined in this handbook, please report them to your ministry area leader promptly.
- If a child is in immediate danger, remove the child from the situation and contact a member of the Child Safety Team or a member of the pastoral staff.
- Do not confront a AMTM member who you feel is not following policy unless there is immediate danger to a child. Contact your ministry area leader first.

Reporting Physical, Emotional or Sexual Abuse

It is the responsibility of all approved workers to immediately (within 24 hours) report any suspicion of child abuse. This report should be verbal and directed to the Children's Pastor or another full time member of the pastoral staff if the Children's Pastor is not available. The church will then respond according to state regulations.

What is Child Abuse?

The following are not legal definitions of abuse. These definitions are examples intended to give you a better idea of the meaning of the following terms.

Child abuse is any mistreatment of a child that results in physical or emotional harm or injury.

Physical abuse - for example, hurting a child by hitting, biting, shaking or burning.

Emotional abuse - for example crushing a child's spirit by using extreme methods of punishment or by use of threats or put downs; causing undue fear in a child.

Sexual Abuse - for example, sexual contact with a child; using a child for sexual media or prostitution; obscene gestures or languages directed toward minors.

Neglect - for example, not meeting a child's emotional, physical or educational needs.

Potential Signs of Child Abuse

Physical Signs

- bruises, welts or broken bones
- cut, scrapes, or burns
- injuries or redness around genitals
- injuries at different stages of healing
- injury or medical condition that has not been treated properly

Behavioral Signs

- aggressive or withdrawn behavior
- unusual fears (of certain people or going home, etc.)
- fatigue
- lack of concentration
- hunger, begging for food, stealing
- unusual knowledge of sexual topics
- unwillingness to give reasons for injuries or injuries that are not in line with an explanation

It is obvious from the above lists that some of these signs are part of the everyday life of a child. We are not asking you to report every one of these instances, but rather to use your perception and discretion and make a report when you feel there is a valid suspicion that a child may be abused or neglected. You do not need to know for sure that abuse has taken place, but rather a valid suspicion is all that is needed to require you to make a report.

Before and after contacting the Children's Pastor, please do not share the details with other persons.

Administration of Medication

No AMTM is to administer medications to minors without the knowledge of and written approval of the Children's Pastor.

Playground Safety

Dangerous play on church playgrounds can lead to serious injuries. Equipment should be used carefully and minors should never be allowed to use the playground without adult supervision. At least two adults must be present.

Children should never be pressured to try any activities they feel uncomfortable to attempt.

Parental Communication

Parents are encouraged to know the contents of this guidebook. Parents are also invited to provide feedback designed to make this safety plan even more effective.

Church Safety Policies

Fire/Emergency Evacuations

The sounding of the church fire alarm necessitates that a safe and orderly fire evacuation must begin immediately. If the alarm is found to be false or the situation is cleared, church leaders will allow re-entry into the building.

Kidzuma Kid's Church and other ministry areas are required to conduct an annual "silent" fire drill.

Disaster Procedures

Natural or other disasters of any kind need to be handled with calmness and safety. There are many scenarios that could arise that would be difficult to plan for. The following should be done in the event of a disaster:

- Move all persons to the safest possible location in (or out) of the building.
- Cooperate with all emergency personnel.
- Observe and alleviate any potential problems or hazards.
- Remain calm and help others to do the same.

Medical Emergencies/Injuries

During medical emergencies, the first contact should be to a member of the Child Safety Team and/or a church pastor/staff member. First aid should only be administered by persons who have taken qualified first aid training unless no person is available.

Contacting an ambulance should only be done by a pastor or someone they designate, unless a pastor is not available and an ambulance is deemed necessary.

If an injury occurs, make sure the person is removed from immediate danger. Stay with the child until a person trained in first aid arrives or administer first aid if you have taken qualified training.

Supervision of Children During Church Events

Children ages 0-11 must always be supervised by two adults (18 years of age or older) at all times. This applies to events planned by any ministry in the church where a children's program or child care is being conducted. This applies to onsite and offsite activities. If the event is onsite, appropriate room bookings must also be made through the church office.

Van/Bus Policies

TBA

Response Plan

- for when critical incidents occur, TBA

Additional Information

Areas to soon be added to this guidebook include:

Nursery Guidelines

Overnight Care and Travel Policies

- Bus and van policies and safety
- Permission form policies

Youth Ministry Section

- Details pertaining specifically to the Youth department

Enrolment and Child Pick Up Policies

Infant Safety

Appendices

Forms and documents attached to this document (all marked as sample)

- 1) Security waiver form
- 2) Child abuse report form (TBA)
- 3) Field trip request form (TBA)
- 4) Aurora First Assembly Child Safety Team Mission Statement and Training (TBA)