



POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL (Child Services)

This document is a sample form with several color-coded prompts and instructional comments within the body.

Red type is instructional and should be removed from a final draft of your policy document.

Yellow highlights relate to positions or titles assigned to a person or persons with supervisory responsibility (i.e. Program Director or Administrator). Modify this document such that the correct position or title for YOUR program is associated with the responsibility described. Remove the highlights in your final policy document.

Green highlights relate to new language or requirements created by Texas SB 471. Remove the highlights in your final policy document.

Blue highlights relate to specific state reporting requirements. The reporting requirement for the state of Texas is listed in this form. Remove the highlights in your final policy document.

Green type relates to state reporting requirements and policy language options depending on specific state law requirements

Dear Volunteer or Staff Member:

Welcome to My Program!

At My Program, we take our responsibility to care for children very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for My Program volunteers and staff members. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children, protecting children, you, and the mission of My Program. The following procedures have been adopted and will be strictly enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

My Program

My Program

Safety Policies & Procedures

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Overview of the My Program Safety System

Because we care for children and desire to protect them, My Program requires all volunteers and staff members to complete **4 SAFETY STEPS** *before employment or volunteer work begins.*

STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse and Maltreatment Prevention Training

My Program policies and procedures require that volunteers and staff members avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Volunteers and staff members are required to report any policy violations to a supervisor or a member of the **My Program Safety Committee**.

Volunteers and staff members 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 My Program volunteers and staff members with information necessary to protect a child from sexual abuse or maltreatment, My Program requires all volunteers and staff members to complete the Sexual Abuse Awareness Training provided live or online through Abuse Prevention Systems (www.AbusePreventionSystems.com) or MinistrySafe (www.MinistrySafe.com).

Sexual Abuse Awareness Training is required for all volunteers and staff members and must be renewed every ___ year(s).

**The control panel feature available to Abuse Prevention Systems and MinistrySafe members can be used to track trainees and identify renewal dates.
Best practice is to renew the training annually.*

STEP TWO: Screening Process

Volunteers and staff members are required to complete the My Program Screening Process, which requires volunteers and staff members to:

- complete an Employment Application
- complete the Safety Application
- complete a face-to-face interview
- provide references to be checked.

** Additional steps may be required, based on level of responsibility and access to children. (Example: deeper screening process for case workers and direct-care staff than a volunteer whose access and time with children is structured and limited.)*

**Best Practice- also screen your parent volunteers (Safety Application, interview and references).*

STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures

Volunteers and staff members are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating he or she has read and understood the material, and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check

My Program requires that all volunteers and staff members undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of background check may be required.

*My Program staff and/or administrators should closely follow the background check requirements identified the appropriate licensing body.

*The description of the My Program Safety System is intended to clearly communicate to an *inappropriate applicant* the barriers to access to children at 'My Program'. In addition, the segment describes measures in place to equip other volunteers or staff members to recognize abuser characteristics and behaviors, as well as reporting requirements. This segment provides an '**opt-out opportunity**' for would-be abusers.

PARENT TRAINING

In an effort to increase parent awareness of abuse and maltreatment of children, My Program offers Sexual Abuse and Maltreatment Prevention Training without cost to all parents of children attending My Program.

In the alternative, My Program will provide written materials to parents concerning sexual abuse and maltreatment prevention.

*In the event My Program does not offer live or online Sexual Abuse Awareness Training to parents, the written materials referenced above are available in the Resources section of the Abuse Prevention Systems or the MinistrySafe websites.

Child Safety Policy

ABUSE TOLERANCE

My Program has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in My Program programs and activities. It is the responsibility of every volunteers and staff member at My Program to act in the best interest of each child in every program.

In the event that volunteers or staff members observe any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is their responsibility to immediately report the observations to an **immediate supervisor or the My Program administrator**.

**Designations may vary depending on the size, structure or reporting relationships within a program. This segment should identify the position or title of the individual to whom volunteers and staff members are to report.*

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

My Program is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to the My Program Safety Committee Chair and the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agency.

An element of the safe environment referenced above includes the fostering of a culture of reporting relevant information to a supervisor or a member of the My Program Safety Committee.

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 a supervisor or a member of the My Program Safety Committee.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

My Program staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all My Program policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the My Program Safety Committee or the My Program administrator.

These positions or titles may vary depending on the structure or reporting relationships within a Program organization.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY

In order to maintain a safe environment for our children, My Program 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 abuse of a child should be directed to an immediate supervisor, or the My Program administrator.

These positions or titles may vary depending on the structure or reporting relationships within the Program organization.

CONSEQUENCES OF PROHIBITED OR HARMFUL ACT

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from all child interaction and My Program activities. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or child protective agency.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act should be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children or vulnerable populations at My Program. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from My Program.

Failure to report a prohibited act to the designated person is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination of employment of a staff member or employee. Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act may be restricted from participation in any activities involving children or vulnerable populations at My Program.

REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Staff members and volunteers at My Program are required to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, or any inappropriate behavior of a colleague or co-worker, **to an immediate supervisor or the My Program administrator.**

These positions or titles may vary depending on the structure of reporting relationships within the Program organization.

([Relevant state](#)) law requires that any person having cause to believe a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect must make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

Optional Policy Language depending on state law or desired practice:

State laws vary concerning mandatory reporters and mandatory reporting requirements. Teachers, nurses and day care employees, for example, are usually listed as mandatory reporters. Further, state laws are changing reporting requirements – usually expanding the list of mandatory reporters and shortening the 'reasonable' time periods for a report. In 2013, the state of Texas modified Chapter 261.101(b) of the Texas Family Code (reporting statute) such that 'professionals' (teachers, nurses, doctors, day care employees, more) must personally make a report to the appropriate authorities ... "a professional may not delegate to or rely on another person to make the report".

The reporting process should be clearly outlined in the policy AND comply with relevant state law. Administrators should periodically check state reporting requirements for modification of reporting requirements.

Option 1.

A staff member or volunteer *may* report to an immediate supervisor or Administrator, and allow supervisory personnel to make the appropriate report to law enforcement agencies. [does not comply with Texas Family Code 261.101(b) for ‘professionals’] In no way does any provision in this policy discourage any staff member or volunteer from reporting a suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate [state] authorities.

Option 2.

A staff member or volunteer must report to the appropriate [state] authorities. After having done so, the staff member or volunteer must notify an immediate supervisor or Administrator. In no way does any provision in this policy discourage any staff member or volunteer from reporting a suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate [state] authorities.

Option 3.

A staff member or volunteer will immediately notify an immediate supervisor or Administrator. Together with the immediate supervisor or Administrator, the staff member or volunteer will make a report to the appropriate [state] authorities. In no way does any provision in this policy discourage any staff member or volunteer from reporting a suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate [state] authorities.

Staff members and volunteers are required to verbally report an incident to supervisory staff as soon as possible after the incident. After receiving a report from a staff member or volunteer, the My Program administrator will speak with the person or volunteer to whom the child spoke in order to get detailed information about the entire conversation. The My Program administrator will be notified as soon as reasonably possible.

These positions and titles may vary depending on the structure or reporting relationships within the Program organization. State reporting requirements vary state by state, with most including the language above. Research your state’s law for specific reporting requirements for your Program.

RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE

The My Program Safety Committee will take appropriate action on behalf of the Program when a report of abuse occurs.

Any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously, and will be reported in accordance with this policy to the My Program administrator. If appropriate, the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (1-800-252-5400), or Child Protective Services (817-321-8680) will be notified. For more information regarding responsibilities to report suspicions of abuse or neglect, see page ___ of the Employee Handbook.

*This section may be modified depending on My Program policies and state reporting requirements. State reporting requirements vary state by state, with most including an

aggressive reporting requirement meant to encourage reports of suspicions of abuse. Research your state law for specific reporting requirements related to your program. Specific *internal* reporting requirements should be clearly outlined and included with a companion handbook, and referenced here.

WHEN A CHILD HAS BEEN VICTIMIZED

If a staff member or volunteer has knowledge or a suspicion that a child is a victim of sexual abuse or other maltreatment, the information will be reported to supervisory staff and the appropriate authorities as outlined above.

In addition to notifying the appropriate authorities (if required), My Program will provide the child or the child's parent/caregiver/guardian with information to allow the child (or parent, on the child's behalf) to obtain assistance and intervention, as well as available counseling options.

An entity should create a written description of steps a parent/caregiver/guardian (or the child) should take to get help. This written description should include a list of counseling options available in the community. For assistance in creating the written description and a list of counseling options in communities throughout Texas, go to "Helpful Links" under the "Resources" tab at www.AbusePreventionSystems.com or www.MinistrySafe.com.

BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINE

Nursery-age children

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

Diapering

- 1) Only female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.
- 2) Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.
- 3) Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
- 4) Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in nursery will be recorded on the registration cards ("Seth Adams has a medicine in the bag for rash.")
- 5) Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
- 6) Children should be changed on changing stations only.

Toilet training

- 1) No child will be forced to toilet train.
- 2) Only female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children of either sex.
- 3) When children are taken into bathrooms the door will be left partially open.
- 4) Young children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
- 5) Parents should be consulted on each child's progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with volunteers or staff members. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery will be recorded on the registration card ("Georgia can use the toilet, but she needs to be reminded – ask her if she needs to go").
- 6) Children should be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.
- 7) "Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child, and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing. Extra clothing and diapers are available from My Program in the children's area, if the parent has not furnished a clothing change.

School-age children

School age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. (However, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities.) Staff members and volunteers should never take a lone child to the restroom.

If a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another worker to accompany him/her. If another worker is not available to accompany, he/she should go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if

the child needs assistance. If the child requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall.

Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer.

Special needs

Parents will offer instruction to staff members or volunteers to change the diapers of special needs individuals.

Programs dealing with special needs or handicapped children should create specific bathroom and diapering policies tailored to the age and abilities of children served. Diaper changing of special needs children over age four should be supervised by a program director.

MEDICATION

Medication may be given to a child by a staff member or volunteer with a doctor's prescription. The medication must be in the original packaging, including over the counter medication. The only exceptions to this policy are diaper ointment/medication and insect bite cream, after a parent information sheet is signed by a parent or guardian.

GIFT GIVING

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from providing special gifts to any individual child. Special occasions or special accomplishments should receive group acknowledgement and can easily be rewarded with group recognition (i.e., mention during announcements; have the entire group sing Happy Birthday, etc.) Any requests for variance from this policy must be addressed to the **My Program administrator**.

**This position/title may change depending on the Program structure.*

INTOXICANTS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in the facility, during a Program activity, or while working with children at My Program (see page __ of the Employee Handbook). Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from providing alcohol or illegal drugs to children.

TOBACCO

My Program is a tobacco-free facility. My Program requires staff members and volunteers to refrain from the use or possession of tobacco products in the facility, and while in the presence of children or their parents. My Program staff members and volunteers are prohibited from providing tobacco products to children.

NUDITY

Staff members and volunteers at My Program should never be nude in the presence of children in their care.

*The 'One-to-One Interactions' and 'Individual Meetings' policies below contemplate a program that allows for the necessity of such meetings. Modify the below sections if your particular program does not necessitate such interaction, or if specific instructions or meeting places/circumstances are necessary.

ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

My Program recognizes that meeting program objectives may occasionally require that staff members and volunteers interact with children on an individual basis. Workers should observe the following guidelines when interacting with children:

Individual Meetings

Staff members and volunteers should conduct one-to-one meetings with an individual child at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed. There will be no one-to-one meetings between a staff member or a volunteer and a child behind closed doors. If a circumstance arises where a private one-to-one meeting does occur, the staff member or volunteers will notify the My Program administrator immediately before or after the meeting.

Transportation

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

- 1) Children should never be transported without parental permission.
- 2) Children should be transported directly to their destination. No unauthorized stops should be made.
- 3) Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
- 4) No cell phones may be used by the driver while providing transportation for children.
- 5) No drivers under age 25 may provide transportation for children.
[check your insurance policies]
- 6) Children should not use a vehicle belonging to a staff member or volunteer.

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents who leave their children in the care of My Program staff members and volunteers for services and activities will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in My Program activities.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents are encouraged to be a part of any and all services and programs in which children are involved at My Program (see Handbook). A parent accompanied by a child to any My Program program or activity is responsible for their child's safety.

VOLUNTEERS PARENTS

A parent who desires to participate in such a way as to have ongoing contact with children in the Program other than his/her own will be considered a Volunteer Parent. All Volunteer Parents will be required to complete My Program's Volunteer Parent Application.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

My Program is committed to protecting the children in our care. The Program has implemented a physical contact policy that will promote a positive, nurturing environment while protecting children. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of My Program staff members or volunteers must foster trust at all times – personal conduct must be above reproach. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in My Program programs:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children are important for a child's development, and are generally suitable in the My Program setting.
2. Physical affection should be appropriate to the child's age. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection should be immediately reported to the **My Program administrator**.
3. Physical contact and affection should only be given when in the presence of other children or My Program staff and volunteers. It is much less likely that touches will be inappropriate or misinterpreted as such when more than two individuals are present and the touch is open to observation.
4. Do not force any physical contact, touch or affection upon a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

At the end of the program day or activity, My Program volunteers and/or staff members are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated in writing by parents or legal guardians.

In the event that a staff member or volunteer is uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, he/she should immediately locate or contact the **My Program administrator or his/her designee** before releasing the child.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children. Staff members and volunteers are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating, or sexual activities with any child in the program. This provision includes the use of cellular phones, text messages, e-mail, instant messaging and online chat rooms.

POSSESSION OF SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS

My Program staff members and volunteers are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, etc.) on Program property or in the presence of children. If any such materials are purportedly necessary for classroom instruction, they must be approved in advance by the **My Program administrator**.

INTERNET/ELECTRONIC MEDIA

No computer at or related to My Program is to be used by staff members, volunteers, children or volunteers to engage in computer chat room discussions or visit pornographic or sexually inappropriate websites. Violation of this policy will lead to discipline from the **My Program administrator**. Any questions about inappropriate use of computers or the suitability of a particular website should be discussed with the **My Program administrator**.

**It may be valuable to make a list of inappropriate sites; filters are also an option.*

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. My Program staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission to provide nurturing care to children. Staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

Policies and Procedures Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of My Program's Safety Policies and Procedures Manual and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at My Program.

Further, I understand that the manual may be modified at any time, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by My Program.

[For Volunteers]

I acknowledge that I have reviewed and agree to fulfill the duties listed in my position description. While, ideally, I will serve in this position for the full term specified in the position description, I understand that I am serving as a volunteer and that I may choose to end this service at any time. (If possible, I agree to provide two weeks' notice to my supervisor).

I further acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this policy statement in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between My Program and me. If I am applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no compensation for the hours I work.

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which are created and distributed, as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of this policies and procedures manual.

Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: _____

[This page to remain attached to the My Program Safety Policies]

Policies and Procedures
Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

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Staff Member or Volunteer’s name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer’s signature

Date: _____

[This page to be signed, detached and delivered to the **My Program Administrator**]