



***Ontario Conference of the
Seventh-day Adventist Church***
**ADVENTURER, PATHFINDER, & MASTER GUIDE
MINISTRIES**

**Code of Conduct to
Protect Children**

Effective Date: _____

Introduction

The Adventurer, Pathfinder, and Master Guide Ministries of the Ontario Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church have adopted the following *Code of Conduct to Protect Children* to guide leaders and volunteers in their interactions with children.

The safety, rights and well-being of children we serve are at the core of our daily operations. We nurture supportive relationships with children while balancing and encouraging appropriate boundaries.

Why a Code of Conduct to Protect Children?

Our Church is committed to ensuring all children are protected and safe. A *Code of Conduct to Protect Children* is an important part of creating safe environments for children. The safety, rights and well-being of children participating in our programs is a priority in our daily operations.

The intent of the *Code of Conduct to Protect Children* is to guide our volunteers in developing healthy relationships with the children involved in activities or programs delivered by our Church and to model appropriate boundaries for children.

Treating Children with Dignity and Maintaining Boundaries

All leaders/volunteers must:

- Treat all children with respect and dignity
- Establish, respect, and maintain appropriate boundaries with all children and families involved in activities or programs delivered by the Church

It is important to monitor your own behaviour towards children, and pay close attention to the behaviour of your peers to ensure that behaviour is appropriate and respectful, and will be perceived as such by others.

All of your interactions and activities with children:

- should be known to, and approved by, your supervisor/designated person and/or the parents of the child
- tied to your duties , and
- designed to meet the child's needs not your own needs.

Always consider the child's reaction to any activities, conversations, behaviour or other interactions. **If at any time you are in doubt about the appropriateness of your own behaviour or the behaviour of others, you should discuss it with your church pastor, elder, or Conference Risk Management director.**

Examples of unacceptable behaviour toward a child:

- criticizing
- embarrassing
- shaming
- blaming
- humiliating

General Rules of Behaviour

Church leaders/volunteers must not:

- Engage in any sort of physical contact with a child that may make the child or a reasonable observer feel uncomfortable, or that may be seen by a reasonable observer to be violating reasonable boundaries.
- Engage in any communication with a child within or outside of volunteer duties, that may make the child uncomfortable or that may be seen by a reasonable observer to be violating reasonable boundaries.
- Engage in any behaviour that goes against (or appears to go against) the organization's mandate, policies, or *Code of Conduct to Protect Children*, regardless of whether or not they are serving the church organization at that moment
- Conduct their own investigation into allegations or suspicions of potentially illegal or inappropriate behaviour – it is a leader's/volunteer's duty to report the matter to his/her church pastor or elder, or Children's Aid Society, not to investigate.

What Constitutes Inappropriate Behaviour

Inappropriate behaviour includes:

1. Inappropriate Communication. Communication with a child or his/her family outside of a volunteer context, regardless of who initiated the exchange. For example:
 - Personal phone calls
 - Electronic communications (email, text message, instant message, online chats, social networking (including "friending"), etc.)
 - Personal letters
 - Excessive communications (online or offline)
2. Inappropriate Contact. Spending unauthorized time with a child or the child's family outside of designated volunteer times and activities. You must report all contact with a child or the child's family outside of designated volunteer times and activities BEFORE the contact occurs to the designated person within your church organization.
3. Favouritism. Singling out a child or certain children and providing special privileges and attention. (for example, paying a lot of attention to, giving or sending personalized gifts, or allowing privileges that are excessive, unwarranted or inappropriate.)
4. Taking Personal Photos/Videos. Using a personal cell phone, camera or video to take pictures of a child, or allowing any other person to do so, as well as uploading or copying any pictures you may have taken of a child to the Internet or any personal storage device. Pictures taken as part of your job duties (when known to your supervisor) are acceptable; however, the pictures are to remain with the church organization and not be used by you in a personal capacity.

Inappropriate behaviour also includes:

5. Telling sexual jokes to a child, or making comments to a child that are or is in any way suggestive, explicit or personal.

6. Showing a child material that is sexual in nature, including, signs, cartoons, graphic novels, calendars, literature, photographs, screen savers, or displaying such material in plain view of a child, or making such material available to a child

7. Intimidating or threatening a child

8. Making fun of a child

Inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated, especially as it relates to the well-being of the children involved in activities or programs delivered by the organization.

Whether or not a particular behaviour or action constitutes inappropriate behaviour will be a matter determined by the organization having regard to all of the circumstances, including past behaviour, and allegations or suspicions related to such behaviour.

Reporting Requirements

All leaders and volunteers must report suspected child sexual abuse, inappropriate behaviour or incidents that they become aware of, whether the behaviour or incidents were personally witnessed or not.

Where to report:

1. All allegations or suspicions of potentially illegal behaviour (for example, child sexual abuse) that a leader/volunteer witnesses first-hand, must be promptly reported to police and/or Children's Aid Society (CAS).
 - Children's Aid Society of Toronto – Phone #: 416-924-4646
 - For other regions, check out the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies at <http://www.oacas.org/childrens-aid-child-protection/locate-a-childrens-aid-society/> or call for inquiries at (416) 987-7725 or 1-800-718-1797.
2. To ensure the protection of all children in our care, all allegations or suspicions of potentially illegal behaviour that a leader/volunteer learns of must also be promptly reported to police and/or CAS. Police and/or CAS will make the determination as to whether the allegation or suspicion requires further investigation.
3. All allegations or suspicions of inappropriate behaviour (see above examples), that a leader /volunteer learns of or witnesses first-hand, must be reported to your church pastor or elder.

Keep in mind that you may learn of potentially illegal or inappropriate behaviour through the child or some other third party, or you may witness it first-hand. Examples of the type behaviour you may learn of or witness and that you must report as set out above includes:

- a. Potentially Illegal behaviour by a leader/volunteer of the organization
- b. Potential Illegal behaviour by a third party, such as a parent, teacher, babysitter, leader, etc.)

If you are not sure whether the issue you have witnessed or heard about involves potentially illegal behaviour or inappropriate behaviour, discuss the issue with your church pastor, elder, or Conference Risk Management director, who will support you through the process. Remember: You have an independent duty to report all suspicions of potentially illegal behaviour directly to police and/or CAS.

Follow up on Reporting

When an allegation or suspicion of potentially illegal behaviour is reported, police and/or a CAS will be notified. The organization will follow up internally as appropriate.

When an allegation or suspicion of inappropriate behaviour is made, the organization will follow up on the matter to gather information about what happened and determine what, if any, formal or other disciplinary action is required.

In the case of inappropriate behaviour, if:

- multiple behaviours were reported
- inappropriate behaviour is recurring, or
- the reported behaviour is of serious concern

the organization may refer the matter to CAS or police.

Policies for the Safety and Protection of Children

The Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual lists several policies on pages 168 and 169 that provide a measure of safety for children and efficient screening of volunteers. Such policies should include:

- **Two-Adult Policy** - Having two adults present in children's classrooms or during activities.
- **Open Door** – Discourage private or one-on-one contact and encourage an open-door policy in all situations. Where an open door is not possible, station a second adult at the door.
- **Volunteer Screening** - Have all volunteers complete a volunteer information form, check their references, and, if required by law, do a background check (i.e., Vulnerable Sector Screening).
- **Six-Month Policy** - Require a waiting period of six months for newly baptized or transferring members who have indicated a willingness to work with children.
- **Training** - Provide regular training for teachers and volunteers to help them understand and protect children during activities.
- **Local Legal Requirements** – Local church leaders should consult with the conference to learn conference procedures and requirements, including local legal requirements for individuals working with children.

Additional resources are available from Adventist Risk Management at www.adventistrisk.org.

Note:

Please retain a copy of this document for your file. Kindly sign **My Commitment** (page 6) and send to the Ontario Conference (AMP Ministries):

By Mail:
1110 King St. East,
Oshawa, ON L1H 1H8

By Fax:
905-571-5995

By E-mail (choose one):
adventurers@adventistontario.org
pathfinders@adventistontario.org
masterguides@adventistontario.org



Ontario Conference Adventurer, Pathfinder, & Master Guide Ministries
Code of Conduct to Protect Children



My Commitment

As a leader/volunteer serving in Adventurer/Pathfinder/Master Guide Ministries, I will:

1. Comply with the *Code of Conduct to Protect Children* for the Adventurer, Pathfinder, & Master Guide Ministries of the Ontario Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
2. Provide appropriate adult supervision at all times for the children for whom I am responsible.
3. Have at least one other adult, eighteen (18) years of age or older, to help with the supervision of children. If I find myself in a situation where I am the only adult present, under no circumstances will I allow myself to be alone with one child (the “two-person rule”). This protects the child as well as protecting the adult from possible allegations.
4. Ask a child’s permission before physically touching him/her anywhere, even when responding to an injury or problem. This is especially true for any areas that would normally be covered by a T-shirt and/or shorts. If an injury is within this area, make sure another adult works with you as care is provided.
5. Refrain from physical and verbal attacks and corporal punishment which are inappropriate behaviors and should never be used as discipline. “Time outs” or “sit-in-that-chair” may be helpful discipline methods to use with children.
6. Affirm children with appropriate touching by keeping hugs brief and “shoulder-to-shoulder” or “side-to- side.” I will keep hands at (not below) the shoulder level. For small children who like to sit on laps, I will encourage them to sit next to me.
7. Provide extra care when taking small children to the restroom. I will take another adult along, or leave the door open.
8. Be aware of conducting activities in rooms that do not have an interior viewing area, or I will leave the door open during the activity to allow easy observation by others.
9. Cooperate with the volunteer screening process and complete the Volunteer Ministry Information form, as required by the church/conference (i.e., Vulnerable Sector Screening).
10. Be aware of the signs and symptoms of child abuse and aware of the legal requirements for reporting suspected cases of abuse. In addition to any legally required reporting, I agree that if I become aware of any behavior by another individual which seems abusive or inappropriate towards children I am supervising, I will report that behavior to the church pastor, elder, or directly to the Conference Treasurer’s or Risk Management Director.
11. Cooperate with church leadership in conducting children and youth ministries by being a volunteer who is loving, kind, firm, and always a thoroughly professional person. Working with children and youth is not only a privilege; it is also a serious responsibility that must be approached with utmost care.
12. Participate in orientation and training programs (i.e., Basic Staff Training, Child Protection, Risk Management, etc.) conducted by the church/conference.
13. Uphold the standards of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Leader’s/Volunteer’s Name: _____ Church: _____

Ministry Involvement (Please check): [] Adventurer [] Pathfinder [] Master Guide