

St. Andrews Parish Parks & Playground Commission
Policy Manual

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Introduction

A central tenet of our business ethics is the inherent value and worth of all children. Children are least able to protect themselves in our society and are particularly vulnerable to abuse and neglect. The Commission is desirous of doing what it can to protect the children who participate in the activities of St. Andrews Parish Parks and Playground Commission (SAPPPC).

SAPPC believes in implementing a policy and adopting procedures to protect our children recognizes that:

Tragically, many organizations in our country have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse and exploitation occurs in organizations, both, large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines. This policy has been created to make our facilities safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from abuse.

I. Definitions

A. “Child” and “Adult”

South Carolina defines a “child” as a person under the age of 18. An adult is anyone 18 years of age or older.

B. “Paid Staff Person” and “Screened Adult Volunteer” (see Section II.)

A Paid Staff Person is someone paid by the organization, overseen by a manager or supervisor and screened. A Screened Adult is a volunteer who has gone through the screening process.

C. “Child Abuse”

For purposes of this Policy, child abuse is defined as any of the following:

1. Physical Abuse:

Violent non-accidental contacts that result in injury. This includes, but is not limited to, striking, biting, or shaking. Injuries include bruises, fractures, cuts, and burns.

2. Sexual Abuse:

Any form of sexual activity with a child, whether at one of our facilities, at home, or in any other setting. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another minor.

3. Emotional Abuse:

A pattern of intentional conduct which crushes a child’s spirit or attacks his/her self-worth through rejection, threats, terrorizing, isolating, or belittling. This abuse can occur in private or public settings (such as bleachers).

II. Screening and Selection of Staff and Adult Volunteers

- A. Adult volunteers who are exposed to or regularly work with SAPPPC's children and each paid staff person will be screened. Those who are exposed to or work regularly with children will be trained on child protection issues prior to beginning their involvement with children. The procedures for screening are as follows: Each person being considered to work with or in proximity to children whether as a volunteer or paid staff person, shall fill out an application form that is available in the office of each agency.
- B. Before placing the applicant in a position of responsibility with children, a designated paid staff member, usually the department head, or other person charged with specific responsibility will interview the applicant.
- C. The person conducting this interview will contact the references provided on the application form and any additional persons as the circumstances dictate. A written record of such contacts will be retained with the application form.
- D. Each person applying to volunteer or work with children shall authorize SAPPPC to conduct a criminal background check and pose for a photograph. They will also be required to bring proof of identity with them when posing for the photograph.
- E. Before beginning work with children, each paid staff member and volunteer will sign a statement that they have read, understood, and agree to abide by this Child Protection Policy.
- F. After the interview and background check have been completed, the Executive Director will make the decision to accept or reject the applicant as a paid staff member or adult volunteer who will work with children.
- G. Where it has been determined that an applicant should not work with children, those persons involved with the decision should handle it in a sensitive manner. The Executive Director or his designee should inform the applicant in person. The specific reasons for the decision should be given, whenever possible.
- H. It is important that all records be kept in a locked cabinet in the Human Resources Director's office.
- I. Although not required to personally accomplish the above tasks, the Executive Director over the agency shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with subparagraphs (A) through (H) above.

III. Ongoing Education of Persons Who Work With Children

The organization shall ensure that training focused on current issues of child protection is available to and received by those working with children. Attendance at this training shall be required of all paid staff members. Screened adult volunteers who work with children will be strongly encouraged to receive this training.

The training should include:

- A. The definition and recognition of child abuse.
- B. The organization's policy and procedures on child abuse and the reasons for having them.
- C. The appropriate behavior for those charged with the care of children.
- D. Abuse reporting responsibilities and procedures.
- E. Definition of appropriate interpersonal boundaries.

IV. Supervision of Children

A. General Rules

1. All activities involving children will be supervised by at least one screened adult.
2. When reasonably feasible, each room set aside for children should have a door with a window. (Windows in doors tend to remove the opportunities for secrecy and isolation, conditions every child abuser seeks).
3. The “Two Person Rule” will be used, which is defined as having at least two people in any room or setting, one of which must be a screened adult volunteer or paid staff person.

B. Open Door Policy

Parents, volunteers or staff should be permitted, as reasonableness dictates, to visit and observe all programs and classrooms at any time.

C. Sign-in/Sign-out Procedure

Adults responsible for children should sign-in their child and indicate in writing the names of the authorized person(s) to whom the child may be signed-out. Adults responsible for children should sign their child in and out of children’s activities. Picking-up children by unauthorized adults is forbidden.

D. Time Following Group Events

Following child group events, it is inevitable that occasionally a child’s transportation arrives after all other participants have departed. In those circumstances, a child may unavoidably be supervised by one screened adult. In this event, it is recommended that the adult supervisor asks the second to last participant’s transportation to please stay until the last arrives. If they cannot stay, they should move to a spot that is easily observable to the public. If this is not possible, the general rule requiring the presence of two screened adults is suspended and the screened adult is responsible for exercising his/her best judgment for the participant’s well-being.

V. Transportation

A. General Rules

Transporting children is an important concern. Their safety can be at risk in a variety of ways. Therefore, certain discretion must be used depending upon the event attended, the locale of the event, and the age group participating. This Policy includes both Requirements and Guidelines. When feasible, there should be adherence to the recommendations in the Guidelines. It is expected that the Requirements will always be followed.

B. Requirements

1. All drivers of children in our programs must be known to the agency and will be placed on an “approved drivers list” maintained by the Human Resources Department.
2. When a child is transported in any vehicle, the driver must be either the child’s parent/guardian, a screened adult who is at least 21 years old, or a paid staff person who is at least 18 years old.

3. When a Child is transported in a company-owned vehicle, the driver must be at least 21 years of age. However, exception is made when the driver is a paid staff member who is at least 18 years of age and for whom a motor vehicle record search has been made and the record has been found to be satisfactory.
4. Drivers must have a valid driver's license for the vehicle being operated. For example, if driving a bus, a commercial driver's license is required. A copy of the driver's license should be on file at the agency.
5. Drivers must require that seat belts be used at all times and the number of passengers must not exceed the number of seat belts.
6. In order to be listed on the "approved driver list" a Motor Vehicle Record search must be conducted and the Executive Director must determine if the record is satisfactory.

C. Guidelines

1. Drivers should be accompanied by at least one other adult.
2. Drivers should read and sign an acknowledgement form indicating that the Child Protection Policy has been read and will be followed.
3. Drivers should receive training for the company owned vehicle being operated.

VI. Trip Supervision

Travel settings can call for different child protection requirements depending on the circumstances. What follows are Requirements and Guidelines of this Policy. The Requirements should always be implemented. Depending on the circumstances of the setting, who is in attendance, etc., some or all of the Guidelines should be implemented. Those in charge of the trip should be mindful of both Requirements and Guidelines, in addition to applying their own wisdom to the needs of a given occasion.

A. Requirements

1. There should be at least two screened adults present for all trips, retreats and other events where the children gather overnight at, or away from, the agency.
2. There should be at least one screened adult for each gender present at co-ed overnight events. At single gender overnight events, at least one of the two screened adults present shall be of the same gender as the children.
3. The person in charge of the children for each overnight trip shall carry parental permission slips including permission for emergency medical care.

B. Guidelines

In a hotel-type setting, rooms should be assigned as follows:

1. Assignments should be made so that a Screened Adult Volunteer of the same gender is in the same room with at least two children.
2. In cases such as all-star travel where the regular volunteer (coach) is not of the same gender as the players, parent volunteers will be utilized to chaperone hotel rooms. These volunteers will undergo the same screening process as the regular volunteers.
3. When adults are not assigned to a room (generally for older children), random monitoring hall trips and room checks at night should be made by two adults of the same gender as those being checked.

4. If possible, the hotel should have the rooms open to the interior of the building (i.e., do not open to the outside).

VII. Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

- A. Everyone in the organization has a moral responsibility and a legal duty to report suspected abuse whenever it comes to their attention, regardless of where that abuse takes place. Reporting abuse is a form of assistance to those crying out for help. Therefore, immediately notify your supervisor, who will bring it up the chain of command. The Executive Director or his designee will then notify the proper authorities (i.e., the local law enforcement agency in the jurisdiction in which the Child resides or in which the suspected abuse occurred and/or the appropriate department of children's services).
- B. The Executive Director or his designee will immediately, yet with dignity and respect for the accused, remove the accused from further involvement with children. Once the proper authorities have been contacted and the safety of the child is secured, the Executive Director or his designee should inform the accused that abuse has been reported.
- C. If abuse is observed by, disclosed to, or suspected by a volunteer and/or paid staff member of the agency, the observer shall report the incident immediately to the supervisor. If the supervisor is not available, the matter should be reported to the Executive Director. If the accused is the supervisor or a member of her/his family, the allegations shall be immediately reported to the Executive Director and immediately reported to the proper authorities as required by state or local law. The Executive Director will take responsibility and act according to established policy with respect to claims against a supervisor.
- D. Notify the parents of the victim and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety and well being of the child or until the parent(s) arrive. (NOTE: If one or both of the parents is the alleged abuser, follow the advice of the authorities concerning notification of others.)
- E. Take all allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Show care and support to help prevent further hurt. Extend whatever resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority. Respond in a positive and supportive manner to the victim and the victim's family.
- F. The organization should provide a supportive atmosphere to all those who are affected, offering both objectivity and empathy as it seeks to create a climate in which healing can take place.
- G. Keep a written report of the steps taken by the organization in response to the reported abuse. The report should be brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation. It should be kept in a secure place. It should be sent electronically whenever possible, or written in ink or typed to prevent it from being changed.
- H. Any contact with the media is handled exclusively by the Executive Director.
- I. If the Executive Director is not available, his duties will fall to the Deputy Director and the HR Director respectively.

VIII. Implementation

Unless otherwise specifically stated, it shall be the responsibility of the Executive Director to implement this policy, to design and conduct future training, and to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of this policy. Several additional guides and forms are available for use in implementing this policy. All supervisory employees of the organization and any adults that work with children are required to read the complete policy and guidelines. A copy is available online or in the administrative office.

IX. Application

All of those who participate in the activities of this organization and use its facilities – individuals, organizations, and groups within and outside this organization - are expected to respect, implement, and adhere to these provisions as a minimum.