

CODE OF CONDUCT

For the Protection of Children and Young People

United States Army Chapel Religious Education Programs

As professional religious educators in the United States Army Chaplaincy, we believe that all children have the right to be protected at all times and that the welfare of the child and young person is paramount. We recognize that child abuse occurs in all sections of society. All children and young persons have the right to be safe and not hurt physically or emotionally. In certain critical circumstances, confidentiality issues may have to be overridden by the need to act for the welfare of the child.

Definitions:

Child or young person as mentioned above: a person below the age of eighteen years.

Child abuse: Sexual abuse or other physical, mental, or emotional harm caused to a child, either intentionally or due to gross negligence.

Purpose Statement:

The primary goal of our emphasis on child protection is to serve the needs and protect the well-being of children and young people. Acting on behalf of the best interests of the children and young people, and in agreement with applicable Public Law, DoD Directives, Army Regulations, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, we strive to design and implement programs that protect children and young people from dangerous or hazardous activities, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. ***We do not tolerate child abuse in any form.*** All children and young people have equal rights to protection.

Responsibility for the health, safety and wellbeing of children and young people participating in Chapel programs rests with every one of us - Chaplains, Chaplain Assistants, paid religious education staff, contractors, volunteers, and parents.

Religious Education Professionals, will ensure that:

1. Parents and volunteers are aware there is a child protection policy and can see it on request.
2. All volunteers have an understanding of what constitutes child abuse and procedures that need to be followed to report or prevent it.
3. There is a recognized procedure for volunteers to report allegations of or suspected child abuse.
4. The risk of volunteers being potential, actual or convicted perpetrators is reduced by one or a combination of the following procedures prior to working with children or youth in Chapel programs:

- The completion of a volunteer registration form
- An interview
- Requiring Criminal Record/Background checks
- Making any volunteer assignment conditional on the successful completion of the background checks
- Pairing new volunteers with “seasoned” volunteers (where possible) for at least the first 3 months

Chapel Volunteers will:

- Familiarize themselves with situations which may present risks and learn how to deal with those situations;
- Contribute to an environment where children are able to recognize unacceptable behavior and feel able to discuss their rights and concerns;
- Wherever practical, ensure that they and others meet with children openly;
- Raise concerns about any situation of suspected abuse in accordance with applicable procedures.

Further, as participation in Chapel programs bespeaks a bond of trust between Chapel staff (including volunteers) and the sponsored children and their families, Chapel staff and volunteers will:

- Refrain from disclosing information (including the use of children's last names and their community information, including name and location) that could be used to identify participating children or their families to unauthorized persons, including the general public;
- Handle with sensitivity the use of images of participating children on the internet. To ensure the protection and privacy of participating children, Chapel staff will use children's first names only and under no circumstances will they be authorized to release exact dates of birth.

Chapel staff and volunteers should not take a child or children into a private place out of view of other adults. Chapel staff and volunteers are required to be accompanied by parent/legal guardians and/or other designated Chapel staff members or volunteers on trips, outings, and retreats involving children or youth.

Chapel staff and volunteers must not stay alone with one or more children who are not part of their immediate or extended family, whether in the chapel, special activity location, or elsewhere.

Where possible, and practical, the 'two-adult' rule, wherein two or more adults supervise all activities where children or young people are involved and are present at all times, should be followed.

Chapel staff and volunteers need to be aware that they may work with children who, because of circumstances and abuses they may have experienced, may use a relationship to obtain 'special attention.' The adult is always considered responsible for maintaining an appropriate relationship, even if a child behaves inappropriately. Adults should not place themselves in compromising or vulnerable positions. Inappropriate behavior towards children, including failure to follow these stated behavior protocols, policies, and standards may be grounds for disciplinary action, including dismissal from employment (where applicable), termination of volunteer participation, or other appropriate measures under applicable regulations or statutes.

Every volunteer is responsible for:

- Identifying possible physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children while participating in Chapel programs and taking appropriate action
- Listening to concerns expressed by parents, fellow volunteers or children and advising them how to report abuse
- Reporting abuse themselves in certain circumstances

Where there is an allegation of or suspected child abuse the interests and safety of the child/children involved must always come first.

Print Name

Date

Signature

Date