

Dear Children and Youth Ministry Volunteers:

Part of our Church's mission is to care for our children and youth and to protect them. To this end, the New Apostolic Church USA (NAC USA) requires all volunteers working with minors to complete **THREE SAFETY PROTOCOLS** before volunteering begins. Volunteers will be notified and given access to the Safety Protocols when the volunteer's status in NACStat has been appropriately updated via the Committees Management tab in NACStat.

**PROTOCOL ONE: Safety Policies & Procedures**

All Children and Youth Ministry volunteers will receive an email from our trusted partner Protect My Ministry ([message@mobilizemyministry.com](mailto:message@mobilizemyministry.com)) containing the NAC USA Children and Youth Safety Policies and Procedures, and are required to read the policies in their entirety and electronically sign an acknowledgement that he or she has read and understood the material, and an agreement to comply with policy requirements.

**PROTOCOL TWO: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training**

NAC USA policies and procedures require that volunteers do not engage in abusive behavior of any kind. Children and Youth Ministry volunteers 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 our volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, NAC USA requires all Children and Youth Ministry volunteers to complete sexual abuse awareness training. This training is provided by our trusted partner Protect My Ministry ([message@protectingourkids.com](mailto:message@protectingourkids.com)) via an email link, and has to be renewed every year.

**PROTOCOL THREE: Background Check**

NAC USA requires that all volunteers working or volunteering in Children and/or Youth activities or programming undergo an annual background check that searches for criminal and sexual convictions. An email will be sent from our trusted partner Protect My Ministry ([message@mobilizemyministry.com](mailto:message@mobilizemyministry.com)) for volunteers to complete a background check application and consent to the background check.

Volunteers who have committed sexually-oriented or sex-related crimes may not serve in any area providing services to children. In addition, certain other past criminal acts *may* preclude a volunteer from serving children.



## **Children and Youth: Safety Policies and Procedures**

While there are a variety of congregation sizes and situations around the country, the safety of children and youth remains important to NAC USA. The following best practices and recommendations have been developed by educators and ministry professionals to help protect not only our children and youth, but also our volunteers that have committed to serving Christ by working with children and youth.

Anytime a volunteer works with children and/or youth on a consistent basis, understood as two or more occasions a year, whether as a teacher, a teacher assistant, or an occasional classroom/event volunteer, that volunteer is required to complete the NAC USA Safety Protocols.

### **Ethical Responsibility to Children and Youth, and Families**

#### ***Ethical Responsibilities to Children and Youth***

Sunday school is a unique and valuable stage in a child's spiritual development. Our paramount responsibility is to provide care and teaching in settings that are safe, healthy, nurturing, and responsive for each child. We are committed to supporting children's development and learning; respecting individual differences; and helping children learn to live, play, and work cooperatively. We are also committed to promoting children's self-awareness, competence, self-worth, resiliency, and physical well-being, all while pursuing a deepening relationship with Jesus Christ.

#### ***Ethical Responsibilities to Families***

Parents are of primary importance in a child's development. Because the family, parents, or primary care-givers and the Church have a common interest in the child's well-being and spiritual development, we acknowledge the importance of open communication, cooperation, and collaboration between the home and Children and/or Youth Ministry. As a volunteer, you are a partner with parents in caring for their child in spiritual, emotional, and physical ways. Parents entrust you as a volunteer to work with them in teaching and training their children.

These guidelines and best practices are designed to:

- Provide a safe space
- Protect each individual
- Promote faith development and discipleship



## Abuse Tolerance

NAC USA has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in Children and Youth Ministry programs and activities. It is the responsibility of every volunteer to act in the best interest of all children in every program.

In the event a volunteer observes 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 their observations to their Children/Youth Ministry Leader, a local minister, or NAC USA's Reporting Hotline at 773-654-2201 or [reporting@nac-usa.org](mailto:reporting@nac-usa.org).

Any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse by volunteers will be taken seriously and reported as required by law. Volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all NAC USA policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate removal from their volunteer position in Children and Youth Ministry.

## Disciplinary Policies

It is NAC USA's policy that volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavior management of children and youth. **No form of physical discipline is acceptable.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children and youth. When a child is misbehaving, follow these steps:

- Go to the child and calmly ask him or her to stop the behavior. (Most children respond immediately and correct the behavior.) Give a warning and remind the child of expectations, and redirect to a positive behavior. Do this individually when possible, try not to single out a specific child in a group setting.
- If the child repeats the action, guide them to a quiet place – separate from the other children – for a short but designated period of time. Stay within sight of others, and avoid being alone (or unseen) with the child. Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the separation, and a clear explanation of your expectations.
- After a 3<sup>rd</sup> time, inform a parent or guardian, who may be asked to become involved in redirecting misbehavior.

NEVER...

- Never yell at a child.
- Never grab a child.
- Never threaten a child. Always follow through with your word.
- Never hit a child.
- Never confront a parent in front of others.
- Never openly humiliate a child in front of the class.



## Supervision of Children and Youth

### ***Children's Ministry***

Children's Ministry includes Sunday School (K-5th grade) or Religious Instruction (6th-7th grade) age children.

The Two-Adult Rule states that there should always be two non-related adult volunteers present when supervising one or more child(ren). This rule is designed for the safety of children, as well as adult volunteers, and is required across all areas of serving with few exceptions (see guidelines for the exceptions below). Planning ahead will help avoid the potential of being alone with one or more child(ren). Compliance to the Two-Adult Rule includes the following:

- There should always be two adult volunteers present when supervising one or more child(ren).
- Where possible, the adult volunteers should not be related (a married couple would be considered "related"). If two related adult volunteers are teaching together, a third adult volunteer should be in attendance.
- The adult volunteers should be in sight of each other at all times.

The purpose of the Two-Adult Rule is to make sure the actions of any one adult volunteer are known to at least one other adult volunteer, and to help hold each other accountable and promote conduct according to the best practices in this document.

### ***Guidelines for exceptions to the Two-Adult Rule***

Occasionally, adult volunteers will find themselves without another adult volunteer present due to unforeseen circumstances. The following procedures should be followed.

- Immediately inform the Children's Ministry Leader or a local minister
- For any time when there is only one adult volunteer present, the group or class should be in a location that is visible to others with an unobstructed window, open door, etc.
- When under the supervision of a Children's Ministry volunteer(s), a child should never be left unattended

If the normal situation of the congregation does not allow for the above guidelines and exceptions, the parents and Children's Ministry volunteers are encouraged to decide on an appropriate procedure for that given class/congregation, regardless of what has or what is currently taking place.

### ***Youth Serving as Volunteers in Children's Ministry***

We encourage older youth to serve as assistants for children in younger grades.

Youth volunteers in Children's Ministry should be assigned to an adult volunteer as an assistant for mentoring and supervision. As the youth volunteer is still a youth, the youth volunteer and adult volunteer should adhere to all policies in place to protect minors.



## Supervision of Children and Youth - continued

### **Youth Ministry**

Youth Ministry includes Youth age children (8th-12th grade).

In the course of ministering to youth, it will sometimes be necessary for conversations to take place that would be considered private and personal.

Ideally, all activities and conversations with youth should occur in non-private spaces. Activities and conversations should be observable. Inside and outside windows should be clear of obstructions. Doors without windows should remain open unless there is an unobstructed window next to the door.

A minimum of three people should be present at every function or program involving youth sponsored by the church (two adult volunteers and one youth OR one adult volunteer, one youth volunteer, and one youth). This rule also applies to when youth are being dropped off and/or picked up from a youth activity. This guideline applies to official Church activities that take place outside of the church building, as well as those on church premises. For classes, events, or activities that include a larger number of youth, adult volunteers should be increased according to the needs of the group. Youth Ministers will be responsible for monitoring how many volunteers are needed.

### **Bathroom Procedures**

Children in grades K-5 must be escorted to the restroom by an adult volunteer. The adult volunteer must take at least two children of the same gender, and must be of the same gender as the children. The adult volunteer must determine if anyone is in the restroom. If the restroom is empty, the children may go in and the adult volunteer must remain outside the restroom. If someone is in the restroom, the adult volunteer should enter the restroom with the children or wait until it is empty. If another person arrives while the adult volunteer is waiting outside, the adult volunteer should go into the restroom and stay there while the children use the facility. No more than 1 child should be present in an individual stall or in a private restroom.

Adult volunteers must not enter a private restroom or individual restroom stall with a child. Should an emergency occur in the restroom due to a child being sick or having an accident, the adult volunteer should address the situation to the best of their ability. The adult volunteer should immediately communicate with the child's parent regarding the incident.

It is understood that having an adult volunteer take children to the bathroom may leave one adult volunteer or youth volunteer alone in a room with multiple children for a short period of time. If there are no windows in the room, the door should be left open until the adult volunteer returns from the restroom with the children.

### **Physical Contact Guidelines**

Respect, safety, and appropriate boundaries are the guiding principles for physical contact between Children and Youth volunteers and minors. The guidelines below are intended to avoid contact that is, or may appear, threatening or inappropriate.



There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children and youth. Examples of positive and appropriate forms of affection:

- Brief side hugs
- Pats on the shoulder or upper back
- Handshakes
- High-fives, hand slapping, and fist taps
- Verbal praise
- Arm around shoulders
- Holding hands while walking with small children
- Sitting beside small children
- Kneeling or bending down for side hugs with small children
- Holding hands during group prayer

The following forms of affection are considered inappropriate between volunteers and children and/or youth. Many of these behaviors are used by child molesters to groom children or youth and their parents for later molestation. Others may be considered to be sexual abuse.

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces (Hugs should be “side” hugs.)
- Kisses
- Holding children over three years old or youth on the lap
- Touching bottoms, chests, or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff-only areas, or other private rooms
- Occupying a bed with a child or youth
- Touching knees or legs of children or youth
- Wrestling with children or youth
- Tickling children or youth
- Piggyback rides
- Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult
- Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth
- Any form of unwanted affection
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written, or electronic) that relate to physique or body development
- Snapping bras or giving wedgies, or similar touch of underwear, whether or not it is covered by other clothing
- Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth
- Private meals with individual children or youth

### Field Trips/Driving

It is understood that, from time to time, adult volunteers will provide transportation for children and/or youth. When possible, children and/or youth should be dropped off at their home and the adult volunteer should check in with the parents/family.



A great policy is to have the child and/or youth call or text their parent/family when arriving at a destination or leaving to return home, so there is a record of your time of departure in relation to your time of arrival.

Adult volunteers should generally not be alone with children and/or youth in a vehicle, especially those of the opposite sex. However, this situation may be unavoidable. In situations when that scenario is absolutely necessary, the adult volunteer should clearly communicate it to the parents as soon as possible.

Adult volunteers providing transportation for children and/or youth to or from a church related event or activity must be over 21 and have had their driver's license for a minimum of 3 years. Adult volunteers providing transportation for children and/or youth must have automobile insurance of at least the state required minimum for all coverages.

### **Children's Ministry**

Minors under the age of 12 should be transported in the rear seat(s), and each must have their own seat belt.

### **Youth Ministry**

Ideally, adult volunteers transporting youth should have at least 2 adult volunteers per youth or 1 adult volunteer and 1 youth volunteer per youth.

*Exception: In last minute situations, a parent may give an adult volunteer verbal permission to transport a youth to or from a church-sponsored activity. This should not become routine transportation for youth. Adult volunteers should call/text the parent when they leave to bring the youth home for documentation purposes.*

### **Communications** (emails, contacting families, etc.)

#### **Children's Ministry**

All communication to Sunday school children should be through the parents.

- Volunteers may call children in their program if the adult volunteer first talks to the parent and gets verbal permission.
- Volunteers may e-mail children only if the adult volunteer obtains verbal permission and cc's the parent(s) on any messages.
- Volunteers should not contact children through Instant Messaging, social networking sites, text messaging, or other forms of electronic communication, except phone and email.

#### **Youth Ministry**

Generally, NAC USA requests that all ministers and volunteers adhere to the "Safety Policies and Procedures" for Children and Youth, even during informal contact. However, the Church recognizes that informal contact between volunteers and youth/children may occur. For example, adult volunteers may hire youth as babysitters for their own children, or may see children during social events with the child's family in the community. This interaction is usually legitimate and beneficial. However, volunteers should seek permission of parents before having informal contact with their youth. The volunteer should clearly let the parent know the nature of the contact and that it is not part of NAC USA-sponsored activities. Parents are responsible for monitoring this informal contact.



Phone conversations and electronic communications should take place with as much transparency and openness as possible. Youth often choose to communicate with volunteers via phone, e-mail, and texting. Whenever possible, the youth's parent should be informed and give consent for this communication to take place.

### **Emergencies and Injuries** *(Medical Supplies, etc.)*

All volunteers should have the local emergency phone numbers programmed into their cell phones. *(Note that 911 calls by cell phones are often not as direct as dialing the local emergency authorities.)*

#### ***Medical Supplies***

A first aid kit and basic medical supplies should be available and onsite at each church location. Volunteers should know where the medical supplies can be found and who (if anyone) is a trained medical professional at your location.

For medical problems that require more serious attention, call 911 or a local emergency phone number immediately.

### **Suicide Prevention or Endangerment to Others**

There is always a possibility that a volunteer may receive information that a child or other person has thoughts or desires to harm themselves or others. This information should be taken seriously and should be reported immediately to the appropriate authorities as required under applicable state law, to the parents, and the Church's leadership when safely possible. If the child seems to have the imminent intent to do harm, an adult volunteer should stay with the child, call 911, and notify the child's parents immediately.

### **Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse**

#### ***Definitions***

Physical abuse: Violent non-accidental contact that results in injury. This includes, but is not limited to, striking, biting, or shaking. Injuries include bruises, fractures, cuts, and burns.

Sexual abuse: Any form of sexual activity with a child/youth, whether at the Church, at home, or any other setting. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another minor.

Emotional abuse: A pattern of intentional conduct and bullying that crushes a child's/youth's spirit, and/or attacks his/her self-worth through rejection, threats, terrorizing, isolating, or belittling.

NAC USA is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for our children and youth and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behavior or suspicions of abuse or neglect will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to Child Protective Services or criminal law enforcement.

Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible that a volunteer may witness behavior intended to groom a child for sexual abuse. Please report 'grooming' behavior, policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to a Children/Youth Ministry Leader, local minister, or NAC USA's Reporting Hotline at 773-654-2201 or [reporting@nac-usa.org](mailto:reporting@nac-usa.org), so that the Church may take appropriate action to safeguard our children and youth.





Because many volunteers are unfamiliar with state reporting requirements and may be fearful of the process, NAC USA utilizes a 'tandem or dual report' model, where permitted. A 'dual report' occurs when NAC USA's Legal Department reports the suspicion or allegation either *on behalf of* or *together* with the individual who saw, heard or received information causing him or her to suspect abuse or neglect.

THIS PRACTICE IS NOT REQUIRED, OR INTENDED TO INHIBIT ANY VOLUNTEER FROM REPORTING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT, CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES OR THE ABUSE HOTLINE *DIRECTLY*. Instead, it is meant to facilitate reporting, protect children and support individuals who may not feel able or willing to report alone. NO PERMISSION IS NEEDED *from NAC USA before reporting to law enforcement personnel or the Child Abuse Hotline*.

While it may not be required by state law, please report all suspicions of child abuse or neglect (or any inappropriate or 'grooming' behaviors of another volunteer) to a Children/Youth Ministry Leader, local minister, or NAC USA's Reporting Hotline at 773-654-2201 or [reporting@nac-usa.org](mailto:reporting@nac-usa.org). This request is intended to assist the Church in properly protecting children and youth involved in Church programs and activities.

***Sensitive information***

Never agree to keep something in confidence. Always communicate with children and youth that before they share with you, that you may share with a minister or adult volunteer, and/or their parents, should it be something very serious and necessary.



## Safety Policies and Procedures – Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

I have reviewed and read New Apostolic Church USA's "Children and Youth: Safety Policies and Procedures," and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the document.

I understand, given the variety of situations, that these are guidelines and best practices.

I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines, to the best of my and my congregation's abilities, during my service at the New Apostolic Church USA, and understand that I am accountable to God for my actions and intentions.

REFERENCE ONLY

