



Green Valley Community Church / Safe Sanctuaries

Child Protection Policies and Procedures

Protecting children and those that work with them

Part I.

Purpose

1. To provide a caring and secure environment for children and you in all phases of church life.
2. To minimize the risk of legal liability.

Part II

Goals *The Goal of these guidelines is threefold:*

1. To prevent abuse from happening to the children and youth in our care.
2. To prevent false allegations of abuse against individuals and the church.
3. To enable staff and volunteers to recognize and report suspected abuse.

Part III

Policy Statement

Green Valley Community Church seeks to express God's love of children and provide for their personal wholeness. Our goal is to nurture all children in our care, through teaching and example, that they may be guided to accept God's grace for themselves.

We take seriously our responsibility to maintain a safe, secure and nurturing environment in which our ministry for children and youth take place. Green Valley Community Church seeks to prevent any form of abuse to our children and youth and to be in ministry to families where abuse may occur. Therefore, each year this policy will be reviewed, dated and signed again by all volunteers who have been through Safe Sanctuaries training and wish to continue in service to children/youth.

Part IV

Definition of Child Abuse

Child abuse refers to an act committed by a person in a position of trust which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child's physical, emotional, mental health or welfare.

Part V

Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse

In an effort to create a safe environment for children and youth within Green Valley Community Church, all classrooms doors will have windows. In addition, the following abuse prevention measures will be utilized.

1. Screening

The Christian Education Coordinator will be responsible for screening anyone working with children or youth. All paid staff and volunteer workers will be asked to complete a screening form (*GVCC-Screening Form*) of background information. Questions will include but not be limited to, previous experience of working with children and youth, prior church membership and criminal convictions. A conference will be arranged with anyone failing to complete and sign the screening form. If a volunteer does not sign the form after consultation, that person will not be permitted to serve.

2. Background Checks

A check with the National Criminal Records File and the National Sex Offender Database will be performed by the Christian Education Coordinator on all staff and volunteers that have contact with child and youth. The Staff Parish Relations Committee is responsible for checking the Christian Education Coordinator. An authorization form (*GVCC- Criminal Records Check form*) must be completed and signed.

All records will be kept in a secure location, and the person performing the checks will protect the confidentiality of those being checked.

Anyone convicted of child or sexual abuse will be denied the opportunity to work with our children or youth

3. Training

New volunteers and staff will be required to attend the Safe Sanctuaries training. These training sessions will be offered by the church, conducted by a qualified instructor under the direction of the clergy/staff liaison of Christian Education, and held at various times throughout the year. Persons new to our congregation should wait 6 months prior to being able to volunteer with children or youth. Any volunteer who has not completed the training will be assigned to work with another volunteer who has completed the training.

Each volunteer will be required to read the Safe Sanctuaries Child Protection Policy/Procedures, and sign an acceptance form (*GVCC Acceptance Form*) indicating he/she has read and understands the policy and agrees to abide by it.

Youth Volunteers

Any youth under 18 serving as a classroom assistant, will be required to read and sign acceptance of the Policy/Procedures and complete and sign the screening form. In addition, he/she must have permission (*GVCC-Permission to Volunteer Form*) signed by a parent/guardian. The parent/guardian must also read/sign and understand the Safe Sanctuaries Policy.

Safe Sanctuaries training sessions will include:

- a. Awareness in understanding the nature of child abuse.
- b. Explanation, requirements and confidentiality of the screening form.
- c. Understanding of Arizona state law concerning child abuse reporting obligations
- d. A clearly defined reporting procedure for all alleged or suspected incident of abuse.

4. Group of Three (Two Adult Leadership 18 years of age and older)

Every effort will be made to have adult leaders assigned in teams of two or more, for every class, group or activity involving children or youth. Every effort will be made to recruit sufficient numbers of volunteer workers to permit such team teaching.

“Two adult” leadership will apply also to all other church sponsored activities where children or youth may be involved, e.g., child care during a program; as well as to any community group involving children or youth who use our facility.

- a. At least one volunteer in each class or group will have completed the required Safe Sanctuaries Training.
- b. In an unusual situation where two volunteers are not available despite every effort, other safeguarding arrangements will be made, e.g., combining classes.
- c. Leaders of children and youth (teachers, camp counselors, youth workers) should be at least four years older than the participants that are under their immediate supervision.
- d. Youth under 18 may volunteer w/ adult supervision.

5. Abuse between Minors

Along with the safety measures stated in the Safe Sanctuaries Policy/Procedures, every effort will be made to avoid situations where abuse between minors is most likely to occur. Any alleged or suspected incident must be reported immediately to the Christian Education office.

6. Bullying

Green Valley Community Church will not tolerate behavior that infringes on the safety of any child. One child shall not intimidate or harass another through words or actions. Such behavior includes: direct physical contact, such as hitting or shoving; verbal assaults, such as teasing or name-calling; and social isolation or manipulation.

Teachers/volunteers are to immediately report incidents of bullying to the Christian Education office and teachers are expected to immediately intervene when they see a bullying incident occur. If needed a meeting with the parents, the Senior or Associate Pastor and Christian Education Director will be scheduled.

7. Parent/ Teacher Responsibility (Nursery-5th Grade)

To ensure the safety of younger children, each child must be signed-in at the classroom and picked up and signed out at the end of the session by the parent/guardian (or person authorized in writing by the parent/guardian).

8. Special Activities/ Events

A permission form (*GVCC- Permission/Medical Release form*) signed by the parent/guardian is required for activities that youth participate in. (The standard church form is a combined permission and medical release form as described below). Individual notices regarding specific dates and times will be sent home prior to each event. At the end of an event at least two volunteers must remain until all children/youth have been picked up.

Permission and Medical Release Form, as required by Arizona Law, must be notarized. It must include information about any health problems such as diabetes, seizures, etc., information about all medication being taken and provide name and phone number of person to notify in an emergency. It gives parent/guardian consent for emergency medical treatment in the event the parent/guardian cannot be reached. The form must be signed and dated. Permission /Medical Release forms must be carried with the group on any trip.

9. Transportation

Drivers transporting children/youth for church sponsored activities must complete and sign a Driver Qualification Form (*GVCC- Driver Qualification Form*). They must provide a valid driver's license and proof of insurance on their vehicle. Driver's license record checks may be made if the applicant indicates they have 1 or more citations or convictions due to accidents or moving violations in the last 5 years; this excludes parents driving their own children and youth to and from meetings of events.

Per the recommendation of Church Mutual, drivers under the age of 25 shall also have a record check. Staff and volunteers may be denied the opportunity to drive for children/youth events if undesirable results appear on these checks.

10. Accident/Injury Reporting

Any injury occurring during a church sponsored function must be documented no matter how minor. Incident report forms (*GVCC- Incident Report Forms*) are available in the First Aid Kits, which are located in Sunday School Rooms 1&2, Youth Room, Kitchen and Church office. Incident reports should be given to the Christian Education Director.

11. Open- Door Counseling

At any counseling sessions with children or youth, the door of the room used should remain open for the entire session if the door has no window. Ideally, the session will be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance.

12. Appropriate Written and Electronic Communication between Youth and Adults.

Written and electronic communications between adults and children and youth should be as open and public as possible. Persons wishing to post pictures or information on the internet, specific to church events or activities may do so only with express permission of the organization that sponsored the activity, i.e, ACTS or VBS.

Part VI

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE -We are both morally and legally responsible to report actions that surround suspected or know child abuse.

ARIZONA LAW REQUIRES certain persons who suspect that a child has received non-accidental injury or has been neglected to report their concern to Child Protective Services or local law enforcement (ARS 13-3620.A)

Should there be an allegation of child abuse at Green Valley Community Church or reasons to suspect abuse has occurred, these procedures are to be followed.

1. Treat any allegation of abuse or reasonable suspicion of child abuse seriously. **Do not ignore any reported or suspected incident.**
2. Immediately report the allegation or suspicion of abuse to the Senior Pastor or Associate Pastor, Christian Education Coordinator or Sunday School Superintendent. **Maintain Confidentiality.**
3. Immediately document all actions taken in the handling of the allegation. (*GVCC- Abuse Form*).

If it is suspected that a child or youth in our care has been subjected to abuse or neglect **in their home**, the Senior Pastor or designate must immediately notify:

- Pima County Child Protective Services: 1-888 SOS- CHILD (1-888-767-2445)

When it is alleged that a child or youth in our care has been subjected to abuse by **someone in the church** the following contacts should be made immediately.

1. Sheriff's Office: Monday – Friday 625-2200
2. The District Superintendent- 325-2775
3. Insurance Company: (Church Mutual - (715) 536-5577

The initial phone report to the civil authorities must be followed by a written report within 72 hours.

Part VII

POLICY/PROCEDURES REVIEW

1. The responsibility for screening compliance of the Green Valley Church Safe Sanctuaries Policy/Procedures for paid staff workers will begin with the Staff Parish Relations Committee. The cost for background checks for paid staff will be the responsibility of Staff Parish Relations Committee.
2. The responsibility for screening compliance of the Green Valley Church Safe Sanctuaries Policy/Procedures for volunteers will be that of the Christian Education Office. The Christian Education Coordinator will screen and train volunteers. The cost for background checks for volunteers will be determined by the group requesting volunteers, i.e, Christian Education, ACTS Youth, and Vacation Bible School etc.

3. The responsibility for screening compliance of the Green Valley Church Safe Sanctuaries Policy/Procedures by outside groups providing child care during their meetings in the Green Valley Community Church will begin with the Board of Trustees.

The Trustees will require outside groups providing child care to comply with the following:

- a. Read the Green Valley Community Church's Safe Sanctuary Policy/Procedures
 - b. Sign the Green Valley Community Church acceptance form (GVCC-Acceptance Form) indicating they have read and understood the Safe Sanctuary Policy.
4. Should the need arise to amend the Policy, the Administrative Board Chairperson will appoint a sub-committee to work with the Christian Education Coordinator, the Staff Parish Relations Committee and the Board of Trustees. Serving as an ex-officio member of the group shall be the Senior Pastor and /or his or her representative.

The Child Protection Policy was adopted and put into effect by the Board on April 9, 1998.

Amended by the Administrative Board, February 13, 2003

Amended by the Administrative Board, May 2005

Amended by the Administrative Board, March 2006

Amended by the Safe Sanctuaries Sub-Committee, September 8, 2011

Accepted by the Administrative Board, Sept 22, 2011