

# Policy & Procedures for Adults working with Children

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<b>Revision</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Comments</b>
R1	Document Created	2012	Approved by Parish Council
R4	Reviewed	May 2013	Due Concerns voiced by Sara G. a parishioner who is a lawyer
R4	Revised	July 2013	Revisions based on changes recommended in May
R5	Changes	Aug. 11 2013	Add definition 2.5 (J. Ayoub); changes to Section 4 (G. Mamary). Approved by all members of Parish Council
R5	Approved as is by the Parish Council	Aug. 11 2013	Approved in current format knowing that Section 3.10.1 needs to be defined.
R6	Wording revisions for clarity and consistency	Aug. 15, 2013	Changes to Section 2 (all points), Section 3.1 and 3.2 per advisement from Anne Chihade
R7	Revision to section 4 & 6	Aug. 15, 2013	Change wording re reporting to the parish council president to stipulate "if the priest is not available". Per advisement from G.Mamary

# St. Elias Antiochian Orthodox Church

## 1. Purpose:

St. Elias Orthodox Church (“Church”) engages numerous volunteers to assist with Church Sponsored Youth Activities. It is the purpose of this policy to set forth (1) guidelines for appropriate conduct between Youth Volunteers and Children participating in Church Sponsored Youth Activities, (2) guidelines for appropriate conduct between Youth Volunteers and Children outside of Church Sponsored Youth Activities, and (3) additional obligations of individuals serving as Youth Volunteers. Further, the Church sets forth this policy to ensure that Children are properly supervised and protected while participating in Church Sponsored Youth Activities and interacting with Youth Volunteers.

## 2. Definitions:

The following definitions shall apply to the defined terms used throughout this policy:

- 2.1. **Background Screening**—is defined as Prior to assignment, volunteers who regularly supervise youth activities (e.g., youth advisors, Sunday School teachers, regular chaperones) shall be subject to a background screening of any past convictions of a criminal or sexual nature and civil claims regarding sexual misconduct or child abuse/neglect/abandonment. A driving record screening may be obtained for volunteers who regularly drive on church business or events. Background screenings will not be required of volunteers who occasionally assist with children/youth (e.g., parent volunteers for particular event), but who do not regularly supervise youth activities, as long as such volunteers are under the direct and constant supervision of youth advisors, Sunday School teacher or regular chaperones who have been subject to background screening. Background screening reports shall be kept strictly confidential as per St. Elias background check policy as defined in the By-laws:

### **Section 6. Procedures and policy to ensure the confidentiality of the results of criminal background and credit bureau checks.**

When a criminal background or credit bureau check is required, the list of individuals will be submitted to the inspection service agency or governmental authority by the parish priest. Only the parish priest is authorized to submit inspection requests and only the parish priest is authorized to receive and read inspection reports.

If, in the sole judgment of the parish priest, the results of a criminal background or credit bureau check disqualify a parishioner from service or would call for an accountability committee, the parish priest will use the utmost of discretion in contacting the parishioner to inform the parishioner of his decision.

In all circumstances and events, the results of a criminal background or credit bureau check will not be shared with any other parishioner without the consent of the parishioner who is the subject of the report.

- 2.2. **Child/Children or Youth**—is defined as any person under the age of 18 who participates in a Church Sponsored Youth Activity.
- 2.3. **Church Sponsored Youth Activity**—is defined as any activity organized by the Church or organized by a Youth Volunteer on the Church’s behalf whether on or off the Church campus intended for participation by Children/Youth.
- 2.4. **Open Door Policy**—is defined as clergy and adult youth leaders always have the right to visit and observe a class or program at any time unannounced. Classroom doors should never be locked with children inside. Where feasible, put glass in doors so someone can see in the classroom at all times or keep the doors open.
- 2.5. **Overnight Church Sponsored Activities** – is defined as any activity initiated by an official Church organization in which children are at the Church for an activity that will begin and end on Church premises in which children spend the night away from home, and may involve children being taken off Church premises during the course of the activity. This activity shall not include any activity privately organized by Church members off the Church premises and shall not include time spent by children traveling or car-pooling to or from a Church sponsored activity, but shall only include the time spent during the course of the activity.
- 2.6. **Sexual Misconduct**—is defined as any form of sexually inappropriate behavior or contact, whether criminal or not, by employees or representatives or volunteers of the Church, whether paid or unpaid, and without regard to particular titles of positions. Without limitation, sexual misconduct encompasses:
- 2.6.1. Sexual abuse, sexual molestation, or sexual offense against any person, including but not limited to, any sexual involvement or sexual contact with a person who is below 21 years of age or who is legally incompetent; or
- 2.6.2. Sexual exploitation or harassment, including but not limited to, the development of or the attempt to develop a sexual relationship between a volunteer and a person with whom he/she has a pastoral relationship, whether or not there is apparent consent from the individual. Examples of actions that could be considered sexual exploitation or harassment:
- Touching any part of a person's body that would be covered by a modest swimsuit or the clothing that covers those parts; or
  - Stroking the thigh or bare shoulder; or
  - Hugging and/or rubbing the back of a person in a way that goes beyond a pastoral or professional relationship; or
  - Jokes, remarks, conversation or writing with sexually suggestive content; or
  - Display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures: or
  - Attempts to develop personal contact/friendship beyond a pastoral or professional relationship.
- 2.7. **Youth Volunteer**—is defined as an individual over the age of 21, who has been a member of the Church for at least one (1) calendar year and/or has been approved by the Parish Priest to serve as a volunteer for Church Sponsored Youth Activities, and who has been subject to a Background Screening. For the purposes of this Policy, the Parish Priest is a Youth Volunteer.

### 3. Policy and Procedures:

- 3.1. The Church strictly prohibits interaction with Children by anyone with a criminal or civil record of a sexual offense against a child or anyone who has admitted committing prior sexual abuse or anyone known to have a paraphiliac diagnosis or tendency ( e.g. pedophilia, exhibitionism, voyeurism, computer sex crimes). All lay leaders who regularly supervise activities for children and youth will be subject to background screenings with police, previous employers and personal references.
- 3.2. No individual shall be permitted to serve as a Youth Volunteer without approval from the Parish Priest following a Background Screening. All Youth Volunteers are subject to a background screening not less than once every year. The Parish Council shall be responsible for informing a Youth Volunteer that a Background Screening may be conducted and ensuring that Background Screens are conducted in accordance with this policy.
- 3.3. Older teenagers (19-20 years old) are not permitted to participate in Youth Activities as a volunteer unless a Youth Volunteer is present at all times.
- 3.4. The Open Door Policy defined in Section 2 shall apply at all times during any Church Sponsored Youth Activity.
- 3.5. All Youth Volunteers are required to sign a current version of this policy each year and the signed copy shall be kept by the parish priest. A volunteer will not be permitted to serve as a Youth Volunteer prior to signing a copy of this policy.
- 3.6. Use of Videos during Youth Activities: Use caution about any movies or videotapes which might raise concerns. Offer to show them to parents first (even if parents do not take up your offer). Videos should be age appropriate, keeping in mind the rating. "R-rated" movies are never to be shown to children below the age of 17 without parental and clergy permission. All material dealing with sexual themes should be reviewed by clergy before it is seen by children/youth.
- 3.7. Never show youth any material which displays nudity or could by any standard be called obscene or pornographic. If such material is brought by youth or anyone, confiscate it at once and consult with clergy/supervisor/trusted adult.

#### 3.8. Sunday School

- 3.8.1. A person designated by the Sunday School Director [**hall monitor**] shall be in the hallways of the Sunday School building at all times while Sunday School activities are in session.
- 3.8.2. Except in an emergency situation, a child should not leave his or her assigned Sunday School classroom unsupervised while Sunday School activities are in session, unless the child is accompanied by a classmate or the **hall monitor** has been alerted that the child is exiting the room and the reason that the child is in the hallway. The **hall monitor** shall be responsible for supervising the child while the child is outside of his or her assigned classroom.

3.8.3. In accordance with the Open Door Policy, doors to classrooms shall remain unlocked and unobstructed while Sunday School activities are being conducted.

3.8.4. No Sunday School activity shall be conducted in a classroom with just one student and one teacher. In cases where there is only one child present for a particular class, the teacher and student shall join another Sunday School class that is developmentally appropriate for the student.

3.9. Overnight Church Sponsored Youth Activities (Travel off church premises):

3.9.1. If children/youth are to be taken off church premises at any time, or are meeting off-premises, at least two adults (more if the size of the group requires), preferably a male and a female, should accompany them.

3.9.2. Permission slips with details are required for all trips off church premises, whether during or outside of regular church school hours.

3.9.3. When a church program or activity calls for someone to drive children/youth anywhere, be sure to have on file a form which records important information about the vehicle operator and the vehicle to be used. Fill out the form and obtain a copy of the driver's license, the Proof of Insurance and the vehicle registration.

3.9.4. Adult advisors and/or clergy must approve overnight stays in advance.

3.9.5. Make parents/guardians and children/youth aware of the ground rules which will govern all such overnight events and whenever possible have them sign an agreement to abide by those rules in advance of the event itself. Be clear about specifying the consequences of any infraction.

3.9.6. For overnights, whether on church property or elsewhere, be sure that separate sleeping areas are provided for boys and girls and that privacy is assured for use of bathroom facilities and for changing clothes. When staying in a hotel or camp, the rooms for the boys should not be connecting to the rooms for the girls. Where possible, the boys' rooms should be at the opposite end of the hotel hallway or on a separate floor, or in a separate area of the camp.

3.10. Supervision of Children During Church Sponsored Youth Activities

3.10.1. *[section needs to be drafted to address the Child to Youth Volunteer ratio needed/desired for activities, when same-sex Youth Volunteer is needed, etc. This type of information is discussed throughout the current policy]*

**3.11.** Attendance of Church Sponsored Youth Activities under the influence of an intoxicating substance, including alcohol or other drugs and the consumption of alcohol and other intoxicating substances during Church Sponsored Youth Activities is strictly prohibited.

3.12. Pick up after Church Sponsored Youth Activities

3.12.1. If children/youth are to be picked up by someone other than a parent or known babysitter or dropped off somewhere other than their home, the parent(s) or guardian should indicate that person's name and phone number. Children/youth will be released to properly identified and authorized adults only.

3.12.2. An adult leader should stay with children/youth at the conclusion of an activity until every child/youth has been picked up. Never leave a child/youth alone waiting for a ride home.

3.13. Youth Volunteer Interaction with Children Outside of Youth Activities—While the Church seeks to encourage Youth Volunteers to serve as mentors to Children, it is imperative that Youth Volunteers exercise careful discretion when interacting with Children outside of Church Sponsored Activities. The Church recommends that Youth Volunteers consider using the following guidelines for interacting with Children outside of Church Sponsored Youth Activities:

3.13.1. At least two adults will be present during all child/youth activities. The situation of a single teacher is exempted when there is more than 1 child in the classroom and another adult is monitoring the hallways. To avoid a situation of single teacher with 1 child, the teacher will escort the child to another classroom where there are other children and teachers present.

3.13.2. If a child/youth needs to undress (for example, to get into a costume or for first aid), call another adult to accompany you. (This is another good reason for adult teachers to work in teams). Be sure that separate dressing areas are provided for boys and girls and that privacy is assured.

3.13.3. Send two children together to the bathroom. Where possible, one child should not go to the bathroom alone.

3.13.4. Even playfully, even if a child or youth asks, do not touch any part of the body that would be covered by a modest swimsuit, nor on the clothing which covers those parts.

3.13.5. Never meet a child/youth in secret or in an unplanned way (e.g., meeting them at the end of a school day) without discussing the meeting with parents and/or appropriate supervising people. Also, do not become involved in secret "meetings" with a child/youth by computer instant messaging, e-mail or in a chat room.

3.13.6. It is unwise to be alone (and out of sight of anyone else) with a child/youth. If that seems necessary, ask another adult to stand by or, file a short memo with the church school coordinator (or other person designated) noting that the private conference took

place. Should a question ever arise, a dated memo would be more useful than your memory of the incident. Of course, such memo would not betray the privacy of the conversation itself.

- 3.13.7. If you have an encounter with a child/youth where you think there might be a possibility of misunderstanding or misinterpreting your behavior, discuss the encounter with the church school director or clergy. Document with a dated memo. Where possible, discuss the matter with the child's parent or guardian.
- 3.13.8. Use caution about any movies or videotapes which might raise concerns. Offer to show them to parents first (even if parents do not take up your offer). Videos should be age appropriate, keeping in mind the rating. "R-rated" movies are never to be shown to children below the age of 17 without parental and clergy permission. All material dealing with sexual themes should be reviewed by clergy before it is seen by children/youth.
- 3.13.9. Never show youth any material which displays nudity or could by any standard be called obscene or pornographic. If such material is brought by youth or anyone, confiscate it at once and consult with clergy/supervisor/trusted adult.
- 3.13.10. Alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, or tobacco products are never permitted to be brought to or consumed during any church-related activity for children/youth.
- 3.13.11. If a child/youth comes to any church program and appears intoxicated (from either drugs or alcohol), contact parents immediately and consult with the clergy or other authority as to further action.
- 3.13.12. With very few exceptions, a Child's parents or other legal guardian should be aware of all activities between a Youth Volunteer and the Child.
- 3.13.13. Any communication, including but not limited to phone, text, email, Facebook, Twitter, or other forms of electronic and non-electronic communication between a Child and a Youth Volunteer should be in good taste and consistent with the Youth Volunteer's Orthodox Christian faith and role as a Youth Volunteer.

## **4. Reporting Violations of this Policy:**

Anyone who knows of or suspects sexual misconduct shall immediately report the incident or suspicion to a priest or the chairman of the Parish Council if the priest is not available.

Suspicion is cause enough to report. The confidentiality of the victim and the person who reports will be maintained, in conformity with applicable laws.

## 5. Compliance:

Compliance with this Policy, including the need for periodic updates of employment and background records, shall be reviewed annually as a part of the annual internal audit of the church, or by another committee appointed by the Parish Council.

## 6. Acknowledgment and Signature:

Acknowledgement Statement:

“I acknowledge that I have received, understand and agree to follow the St. Elias Policy and Procedure for Adults Working with Children. I understand that if I am concerned that the behavior of any adult serving as a Youth Volunteer is inconsistent with this policy, including but not limited to Sexual Misconduct as defined herein, I am obligated to report the conduct to the Parish Priest or Parish Council Chairman if the priest is not available. I understand that nothing in this policy prevents me from directly reporting any incident of Sexual Misconduct or other improper conduct by a Youth Volunteer to legal authorities.”

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Name of Volunteer (Please print)

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Signature of Volunteer

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Date

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Signature of Witness

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Date

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Title of Witness