

Dream Garden Safe Sanctuary Policy

Dream Garden believes that all persons are significant to the growth of God's kingdom and should have opportunity to worship, learn, and serve in various capacities to ensure personal growth and growth of others. We seek to provide an environment that is physically, emotionally and spiritually safe for all persons who enter our doors, especially children and youth. We seek to provide a safe environment in which opportunities for abuse are minimized through proper enlistment and supervision of those persons working with them.

Our goal to be a "Safe Sanctuary" where we can work hand-in-hand growing our children and youth in their faith and a life devoted to Christ.

The institution named above, is called to welcome and nurture children. Our goal is to maintain a safe, secure, loving place where children may grow and where those who care for them may administer to their needs in responsible ways. As caring Christians, we are committed to protect and serve as advocates for children and youth, participating in the life of our program and church.

The policy and procedures set forth below will apply to all people who provide supervision or have custody of children or who have opportunity to have contact with children in our program, church facilities or program sponsored activities.

Protection Policy

Five-year Rule - All persons working with minors must be at least five years older than the age group they are leading/supervising

Two Adult Rule – Two non-related adult workers will be present with children and youth during church-related activities whenever possible except in emergency situations. An adult supervisor acting as a "floater" will make unannounced visits frequently when the two-adult rule is not feasible. In a room where there is a husband and wife team, they will be considered as one worker for purposes of this policy.

Minimum Age Rule – Persons who are in a paid or volunteer supervisory position must be at least eighteen (18) years old.

Minors – Volunteers under the age of eighteen (18) will be allowed to volunteer in children's ministry in a support function, but not in a supervisory role. Minors who volunteer must complete a separate application form that will be submitted for approval by the children's minister. Parents or guardians must sign the application stating that the parent or guardian knows of no reason that the minor should not be allowed to work with other minors.

Windows/Doors – Reasonable efforts will be made to keep doors unlocked and/or windows unobstructed where children are in view during church-related activities. Workers will avoid being alone with a child without being visible to those in the immediate area.

Local Activities – Compliance with this Safe Sanctuary is required of all employees and volunteers during any program/church-related activity.

Reporting Procedures

In addition to mandated and permissive reporting to DHR and local law enforcement, incidents of child abuse and/or neglect should first be reported to the Executive Director and the Board of Directors.

§26-14-3, Code of Alabama (1975), requires that certain persons, including but not limited to, day care workers or employees, members of the clergy, or any other person called upon to render aid or medical assistance to any child, report known or suspected child abuse or neglect.

In addition to the requirements set forth in §26-14-3, Code of Alabama, (1975), §26-14-4, Code of Alabama (1975), permits any person to make a report of known or suspected child abuse or neglect if such person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is or has been abused or neglected.

Responses to Allegation

All allegations of child abuse will be taken seriously. Appropriate action for reporting an allegation will be taken immediately in accordance with reporting laws of the State of Alabama, insurance policies and the advice of legal counsel.

The official spokesperson for Dream Garden will be the Executive Director or her appointee. No other staff members will speak to the media in an official capacity.

Dream Garden staff will be responsible for written documentation regarding any and all efforts in response to allegation. All documentation will be dated and have a signature.

Dream Garden staff will not deny, minimize, or blame any individual involved in allegations and will minister to all involved parties, as well as cooperate with authorities.

All care shall be taken to ensure confidentiality of all parties involved. Disclosure of information in relation to allegations is prohibited, except as required for reporting purposes.

Any suspected allegations will first be reported to the Executive Director or her appointee and then maybe reported to the Dream Garden Board of Directors.

RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES

Dream Garden believes that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and resolve disputes with each other in private or in a Christian manner (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8). Therefore, we seek to resolve issues in a fair manner while preserving or restoring relationships fractured by a dispute.

SCREENING AND SUPERVISION PROCEDURES AND POLICIES

Screening Procedures for Paid and Volunteer Staff Working with Children

All persons who intend to work with children and youth at Dream Garden must be properly screened and all screening documents are to be kept on file in a secure location.

SCREENING PROCESS

Employees

- Complete an application form
- Complete a consent to release confidential information
- Complete an interview by appropriate staff members
- Minimum of three references checked and verified
- Complete national background check
- Drug and/or alcohol screening as deemed necessary and/or on demand

All records, forms and reports will become a part of the employee's confidential personnel file. These files are kept by the Administrator and are available to the Executive Director and the employee's immediate supervisor and members of the Board of Directors.

Volunteers

- Complete a confidential application form and Volunteer Covenant
- Complete a consent to release confidential information
- National Background check
- Spiritual Gift Form

All records, forms and reports will become a part of Dream Garden's confidential Safe Sanctuary filing system. The files will be maintained by the administrator or by a designated person at the administrators' discretion.