

The Episcopal Diocese of Texas

Safeguarding Training Guide for Youth Helpers

Start Here

Safeguarding training for Youth Helpers provides the information that Youth Helpers need to support adults in creating safe ministry spaces for children and youth. It also helps equip them to care for themselves. The following guide covers the policies that they need to know and follow. Although the guide offers a “script” for your use, you may wish to substitute your own words to convey the same information. Remember that sexual abuse is perpetrated by children and youth, not only by adults, so it is important that Youth Helpers learn to watch out for problematic behaviors, no matter who commits them.

Although it may feel uncomfortable to speak frankly with Youth Helpers about this subject, it’s very important that they understand not only the rules but also what sexual abuse is and how much damage it causes. These materials are designed to be used by youth and children’s ministry leaders (who are Qualified Adults under the Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth) to train Youth Helpers, regardless of whether such leaders are authorized Safeguarding Trainers. Of course, authorized Trainers may conduct the training for Youth Helpers if they are able to communicate effectively with youth. At least two Qualified Adults should be present for the training.

Who Needs this Training?

Section VI.B.2 of the *Policies for the Protection of Children and Youth* (SGC Policies) requires Youth Helpers to be screened and trained in Safeguarding God’s Children. A youth as anyone who is at least 12 but not yet 18 years old, or someone who is 18 years old or older and still in high school (Section I.A.2).

- Youth Helpers under the age of 16 are trained using only Part One of this training guide.
- Youth Helpers ages 16 and over are trained using both Part One and Part Two of this training guide.
- Prior to training, youth must be screened by completing a personal interview, an application, and reference checks. [Sample forms](#)
- Youth Helpers are required to receive this training annually.

Before You Train

1. Review the SGC Policies, this training guide, and if you will be training Youth Helpers who are 16 or older, the *Meet Sam* video, which is posted on Praesidium Academy. You may use your personal [Praesidium Academy](#) account to access the video. If you have questions, contact the Safeguarding Office.

2. Notify aspiring Youth Helpers and their parents of the upcoming training and the nature of its contents, inviting any of them to share with you in advance any concerns they may have about a youth participant having difficulty with the material. Depending on the response, you may wish to offer an individual training to a participant or invite a parent to attend the training with the participant. If one or more participants will be watching Meet Sam, warn participants and parents specifically about the content of the video. If you have questions or concerns, call the Safeguarding Office to discuss the situation.
3. Print copies of the Youth Helper Safety Quiz (page 10 of this guide) for each participant to take individually (or complete the quiz together as a group by projecting the quiz onto a screen).
4. Print the Attendance Sheet (page 9 of this guide).
5. If you will be showing the Praesidium Academy *Meet Sam* video, download the Action Plan that can be found under “Tools.” For each participant who is 16 or older, print a copy of the Action Plan to use for taking notes during the video.

During Training

1. After greeting the participants and thanking them for their willingness to be Youth Helpers, etc., address the fact that they may be aware of stories of actual sexual abuse. Then say, “Those stories are very important, too important to share during a training like this one. If you have a story that you want to share, please come to me after the training so that we can have that conversation.”
2. Watch for signs that any participant is upset or anxious during Part One of the training so that you can check in with the participant after the training to see if they are ok or need to speak with someone.
3. If any participant is over 16, and Part Two of the training is offered, then after the younger youth have left and before showing *Meet Sam*, invite the older youth to take care of themselves during the video. If they find the material upsetting and need to step away for a few minutes, it’s ok. If that happens, have one of the Qualified Adults check on the youth while the training continues and follow up with the youth after the training.

After Training

1. Complete the Attendance Sheet, noting whether each participant completed one or both parts of the training.
2. Give the Attendance Sheet to the Safeguarding Records Administrator (SRA) of your congregation, school, or organization. The Attendance Sheet must be retained as proof of training.
3. If you have received information from a participant that makes you suspect that a Safeguarding policy violation has taken place in your organization or that child abuse or neglect has occurred (even if unrelated to your organization), make a report as set out in [SGC Policies, Section VII.](#)

Part Two (for Ages 16 and Older)

1. Provide participants with a copy of the Action Plan (for taking notes) and view the video, *Meet Sam*.
2. After the video, ask the participants what stood out for them in the video, was anything surprising? etc. Field any questions but discourage the telling of stories of sexual abuse in a group setting unless you are confident that the maturity and trust level within the group are such that the story can be received and responded to appropriately.
3. Stay after the training long enough to give any youth the opportunity to approach you privately.

Outline of Training Session

Part One

- I. Introduction
 - A. Introduce the role they will play
 - B. Define sexual abuse
 - C. Explain how we keep children and youth safe from sexual abuse
- II. Training the Rules (policy review)
 - A. Ten rules to follow
 - B. Reporting
 - C. Youth Helper Safety Quiz

Part Two (for ages 16 and Older)

View *Meet Sam*, Praesidium Academy online video.

<https://www.praesidiumacademy.com/>



Length of Training Session: Part One, 35-45 minutes (minimum); Part Two, 25-30 minutes.

Youth Helper Training Part One

I. Introduction

A. Introduce the role they will play.

When you are asked to be a youth helper, you are being asked to help adults create safe, welcoming places for younger kids to learn about God and what it means to be part of a community where we love one another the way that Jesus taught us to love.

As a youth helper, you will be a leader, and being a leader is different from being a participant. You will have a different set of expectations and obligations. Your primary responsibility is to help in the particular ways assigned to you by the adult leaders. Of course, we want you to have fun while you are helping, but your focus has to be on your responsibilities. One of your responsibilities will be to help keep the kids in the program safe from sexual abuse.

B. Explain sexual abuse

Generally, sexual abuse is when an adult or another child involves a child in sexual activity. When we say “children” or “kids” in this training, we mean anyone who is under 18 and also an 18-year-old who is still in high school. So, we mean both little children and youth. YOU are considered a child under the rules and so are the kids you will be helping to lead in the program.

Sexual activity can involve touching, like touching a child’s private parts, asking a child to touch one’s own private parts, or having sexual intercourse, but it also includes other sexual activity, like making comments about a child’s body, showing one’s private parts to a child, showing nude pictures or videos to a child, telling a child a dirty joke, or showing them a text of a sexual nature.

People who sexually abuse children feel good when they abuse a child, but it is very harmful to the child. It can cause damage that affects the child for the rest of his or her life. Sexual abuse is the opposite of keeping a child safe. We call people who intentionally harm children in this way “predators.”

If you think an adult or another youth has involved you in sexual activity, it’s very important that you tell your parents or another adult that you trust, so that the adults in your life can make sure that the sexual abuse stops, and you are kept safe. As a leader in this program, it’s also important to tell an adult leader if you know or suspect that another child is being harmed in the same way.

If for any reason you become upset because we are talking about sexual abuse, let me or (*the other adult in the room*) know so that we can make sure that you have a safe place to talk about what is making you upset.

C. Explain how we keep children safe from sexual abuse.

The way we keep kids safe at church/VBS, etc. is by having rules about what behavior is okay and what behavior is not okay. Some of these behaviors aren't bad in themselves, like tickling and wrestling, but we don't allow them at church/VBS, etc. because we can't tell if the person doing them means harm or not. We know that predators use behaviors like this to get children used to being touched and make adults think the behavior is okay. Predators work to get kids and adults to trust them and will test the rules to see if anyone stops their behavior. Remember that leaders who care about children's safety will follow the rules so that it's easier to spot adults or youth who are predators.

We also have rules about not being alone with a child and not allowing children to be alone in a room without adult supervision. Sexual abuse most often happens when no one else is around to see or stop it.

It's extremely important that as youth helpers, you follow all of the rules, the same rules that the adults follow to protect children from sexual abuse. It's important because the kids in the program will look up to you, even if some kids are close to you in age. You will set the example for them of how to treat the other children and even the adults in the program. But it's also important that you follow the rules so that the people who DON'T follow the rules will stand out, and kids won't think it doesn't matter if a predator isn't following the rules. They will know to tell a youth helper or an adult if someone is breaking the rules that are meant to keep them safe. Finally, the rules are meant to keep you safe, too, not only from predators but from anyone who may mistakenly think that you mean harm to a child.

II. Training the Rules

A. Ten Rules to Follow

1. The most important rule is that we don't allow sexual activity of any kind at church/VBS, etc.

- Don't do anything with a child that we've described as sexual activity. That includes sexual touching, saying sexual things, or sharing sexual pictures, videos, or texts.
- If you see an adult touching a child's private parts or showing a child inappropriate pictures, videos, or texts or his or her own private parts, or if you hear an adult saying sexual things to a child, tell an adult in the program immediately. All sexual activity between an adult and a child is harmful and must be stopped. It is sexual abuse.
- If you see sexual activity of any kind between children, it's also important that you tell an adult immediately, even though not all sexual activity between children is harmful. Children are naturally curious about their bodies and sexuality. Sometimes young children play games that include sexual activity, like showing their private parts to each other. When the children are the same age and size, that sort of sexual activity is usually age-

appropriate curiosity, but sometimes it isn't. Fortunately, you don't need to know the difference. Your job as helpers and leaders is to tell an adult so that the sexual activity can be stopped in an appropriate way, without frightening the children or making them feel ashamed.

2. **We don't allow some forms of touching that predators use to get children used to being touched, even if the same behavior may be okay in other situations.**
 - No tickling, wrestling, piggybacks, backrubs, or bear hugs by any adult or youth helper or between children where one child is substantially older and bigger than the other.
 - Don't put children in your lap if they are older than three years old, and only put a child under three years old if the child has asked to sit in your lap. Even if the child is related to you, it's important to model safe behavior in this environment.
 - If you see this kind of touching by an adult, youth helper, or older/bigger child, tell a (different) adult immediately.
3. **Don't touch a child who doesn't like being touched, unless it's necessary to keep the child safe** (like holding a young child's hand when crossing the street). In a minute, we'll talk about ways to touch children that are appropriate, but even that sort of touching isn't okay if the child doesn't want it. Your job is to help the kids in the program feel safe. Touching a child who doesn't like being touched does not make that child feel safe.

How would you recognize if a child is uncomfortable? (Use role play to help youth helpers understand if someone is uncomfortable without using words.)

4. **Don't encourage a child to keep secrets from his or her parents or to break any rules, either the rules of the program or of the child's parents.** A predator may get a child to break rules so that the predator can convince a child that if the child tells on the predator, the child will also be in trouble. An example is if the predator gets a child to drink a beer or look at nude pictures even though the child knows it's against the rules. Secrets are different from a surprise, like a special art project the child will give to the parents at the end of the program. Asking a child to keep secrets is another way that predators get control over their victims.
5. **Don't play favorites with a child or give special presents to a child.** Predators do these things to make the child think they are in a special relationship. A child will then be unwilling to get the predator in trouble by telling an adult about the predator's sexual activity.
6. **Don't be alone with a child, especially in the bathroom or behind a closed door.** The adult leaders will know that it's not permitted to send a youth helper alone with a child to the bathroom, so if an adult leader asks you to do this, it's okay to remind the leader that it's against the rules. Never take a child to the bathroom without first telling an adult.

If you are in the bathroom with a very young child who needs help, be sure to leave the stall door open (if there is a stall) or the bathroom door open, if there isn't a stall. A very young child may also need help changing clothes, like changing into a swimming suit for a water activity. It's okay to help a young child in this way if it is part of your job and if other adult leaders and youth helpers are present.

7. **Don't bully a child or allow one child to bully another, especially an older or larger child to a younger or smaller one.** Bullying sometimes goes hand in hand with sexual abuse.
8. **Don't take pictures of the children in the program or share or post any pictures of children in the program.** Parents must give permission for their children to be photographed. You don't know which children are not allowed to be photographed. Most especially, never take or post pictures of children who are undressed or partially undressed.
9. **DO be affectionate to the children in the program.** Unless a child doesn't want to be touched, it's a good thing to touch them on the arms or shoulders, give them a brief hug around the shoulder, give them high fives, or hold their hands during games or prayers. It's also important that you speak in ways that are friendly and respectful so that the children feel safe and loved.
10. **DO give your full attention to the children and to the particular job you have been given.** Remember that your job includes keeping the children safe. If, instead of paying attention to the children, you pay attention to your friends or your cell phone, you may miss seeing or hearing something very important that may harm a child.

B. Reporting

Report what you see. (List the names of adults available for reporting.)

If you see sexual abuse or any of these rules being broken, tell an adult leader in the program. If you aren't sure about what you have seen or heard, it's always better to tell and let the adult decide. Of course, if it's an adult who is breaking the rule, be sure to tell a different adult.

It's also important that you not talk about what you have seen with the other children in the program or gossip about it with your friends. If, however, you hear from another child or youth that a rule has been broken, you must tell an adult what you have heard, even if it's a friend who has broken the rule. **Remember that your job is to help keep the children in the program safe.**

C. Youth Helper Safety Quiz

The quiz is intended to test the participants comprehension in a nonjudgmental way. As the trainer, you can decide whether to do this worksheet as a group or pass it out. If you choose the latter, be sure to go over the right answers together in a way that elicits responses from each participant. Be sure to encourage the youth to ask questions.

Part Two (for Ages 16 and Older)

Provide participants with a copy of the [Action Plan](#) (for taking notes) and view *Meet Sam*.

<https://www.praesidiumacademy.com/>



After the Training

Give the Attendance Sheet to the Safeguarding Records Administrator (SRA) of your congregation, school, or organization. This will be retained as proof of training.

Youth Helper Training
Attendance Sheet

Trainer's Name* _____ Date _____

Trainer's Title _____

Church/School/Organization _____

Participant Name	Date of Birth	Part One (check box)	Part Two 16 and older (check box)

Training Notes:

*Trainer may be a youth ministry leader certified in Safeguarding God's Children.

Youth Helper Safety Quiz

1. **Your primary job as a youth helper is**
 - a. To have fun with kids your own age
 - b. To catch up on social media
 - c. To help keep the kids in the program safe.

2. **What is sexual abuse?** Circle all the correct answers.
 - a. Touching a child's private parts or asking a child to touch one's own private parts.
 - b. Telling sexual jokes to a child.
 - c. Giving a child a quick hug around the shoulders.
 - d. Any sexual activity between an adult and a child or between a youth and a young child.
 - e. Allowing a two-year-old to crawl into your lap.

3. **When you see two young children "playing doctor" and giggling about touching private parts, what should you do?**
 - a. Giggle and get your friends to come and see what's so cute.
 - b. Take a picture to post on Snapchat.
 - c. Invite the children back into the planned activity and then tell an adult what you saw.
 - d. Yell at the children to frighten them into never doing that again.

4. **Which of the following are important rules to follow?** Circle all the correct answers.
 - a. Never be alone with a child.
 - b. Never touch a child's hands or shoulders.
 - c. Hug a child, even when the child keeps pulling away.
 - d. Never show a child pictures or a video of naked people.
 - e. Never take, share, or post pictures of children in the program.
 - f. Don't take a child to the bathroom alone.
 - g. Don't bully a child or let a child bully another child, especially one who is younger or smaller.

5. **Why don't we allow you to tickle, wrestle with, or give piggyback rides to children in the program?**
 - a. Those behaviors are sexual abuse.
 - b. Predators sometimes use those behaviors to get children used to being touched.
 - c. If you're not careful, you may hurt a child unintentionally.

- 6. If you see something between an adult and a child that may be sexual activity, but you aren't sure, what should you do?**
- a. Nothing.
 - b. Ask the adult who is with the child if the behavior is okay.
 - c. Immediately tell a different adult what you saw.
- 7. If you see one of the youth helpers alone with a child, away from the activities of the program, what should you do?**
- a. Nothing, because only adults need to follow the rules to keep children safe from sexual abuse.
 - b. Nothing, because only adults sexually abuse children.
 - c. Remind the youth helper and the child that they need to rejoin the group, and then tell an adult what you saw.
- 8. One of the adult leaders or the parent of a child in the program is touching you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable. What should you do? Circle all the right answers.**
- a. Nothing, because you're a youth helper and the rules are only meant to protect the children in the program.
 - b. Nothing, because you may hurt the adult's feelings if you say anything.
 - c. Nothing, because you should just wait to see if they do it again.
 - d. Tell them to stop and tell an adult that you trust.
 - e. Get away as soon as you can and tell an adult that you trust.
 - f. Keep it a secret from your parents.
- 9. Why do we have these safety rules? Circle all the right answers.**
- a. They make it easier to spot people who intend harm to children.
 - b. We want to make sure that you don't have any fun as a youth helper.
 - c. We want our church/VBS, etc. to be places where children and youth are safe and feel loved.
 - d. Touching children is always a bad thing.
 - e. Most people are bad and wish to hurt children.
 - f. Sexual abuse is very harmful to children.
- 10. Why is it important that you know and follow these safety rules? Circle all the right answers.**
- a. You are a role model for the younger youth and children in the program.
 - b. You may see or hear something important that an adult doesn't.
 - c. The rules keep you safe as well as the children in the program.