

Frequently Asked Questions

Where can I get a copy of the full child protection policy Safe Space Strategy?

Copies of the Safe Space Strategy are available at the church office or online at shades.org/cp.

Why has the policy been updated? Has something happened at Shades?

No, nothing has happened at Shades to prompt changes to the child protection policy. There has not been an occurrence of abuse to a minor under our care reported at Shades for at least the past 24+ years. The previous policy was implemented in 2003 and needed to be reviewed in light of changes in facilities and technology, and to include best practices in preventing abuse.

Who created the updated policy and process?

In February 2019, a Child Protection Team was formed at Shades after a series of articles were published in the Houston Chronicle revealing cases of abuse within several other Southern Baptist Churches. The team is comprised of ministers from Preschool, Children, and Student ministries, as well as directors from Human Resources, Contingency Operations, and Administration. This group was tasked with reviewing our policies and procedures related to the adult supervision of minors, and with developing a comprehensive plan for abuse prevention and care for those who have been abused. They evaluated common best practices, attended workshops and conferences, and spent hundreds of man-hours prayerfully deliberating the best next steps for us here at Shades.

Who approved the updated policy and process?

The Child Protection Team unanimously recommended the updated policy and volunteer process to the Executive Pastor. The Senior Pastor endorsed the policy. The Deacon Body and Finance Committee reviewed and approved all aspects.

I completed documents several years ago that address Child Protection. Are those directives still in place?

The new policy dated January 1, 2020 requires that all volunteers complete the newly implemented application process for serving with minors.

Who qualifies as an *adult who volunteers where minors are present*?

Anyone who serves in a reoccurring or event volunteer position where minors are present. Examples of this are Sunday School leaders, Worship Care volunteers, DGroup leaders, MIT leaders, Student & Kids Choir leaders, tech and First Impression Team members who volunteer in areas where minors are present, mission team leaders/chaperones, camp and trip chaperones, VBS volunteers, etc.

Who qualifies as a *minor*?

A minor is anyone under the age of 18 or any person over the age of 18 who remains under the legal care and guardianship of an adult.

Are minors who volunteer with minors required to complete this process?

Currently, minors are not required to complete the Child Protection process. The Child Protection Team is still working on volunteer protocol for minors.

How much time is this process going to take?

Altogether, volunteers will give just over 2 hours to the process during the time of completion. Only three of the five process steps require time from volunteers. The Adult Volunteer Application should take a maximum of 15 minutes if the applicant has all of the information required with them at the time of completion. The awareness training consists of 9 videos that together total 1 hour and 20 minutes. Videos do not have to be viewed in one sitting. The 25-question online quiz required after the completion of the training videos should take a maximum 10 minutes. The Personal Follow-up Meeting should require a maximum of 20 minutes.

Is the Abuse Awareness Training available in other languages besides English?

Yes, Abuse Awareness Training is available in English and Spanish, and with the following subtitles: French, Portuguese, Korean, Mandarin Chinese, Russian, and Thai. Contact the Executive Pastor's office (205-822-1670) to request training in Spanish or with subtitles.

How do I know if I "passed"?

Once your application has been processed, references checked, and personal follow-up meeting completed, a Shades minister will contact you.

What if I don't have a computer or need assistance?

Please let us know and we'll be glad to help. Call 205-822-1670 to get connected with someone who can assist you.

What safeguards are in place to protect the personal information shared as part of the application process?

As with other private information shared with Shades for tax, financial, or personal matters, confidentiality and security are paramount. All paper files are kept in locked and secure cabinets. Information shared electronically will be accessible only to individuals with high-level authorization. All Shades staff operate under a policy of non-disclosure of confidential information as outlined in the employee handbook.

What is the renewal process for volunteer where minors are present?

Volunteers must renew their background check every three years, participate in additional training every 5 years, and complete an abbreviated application every 5 years.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

Contact the Executive Pastor's office with any questions or concerns by emailing cp@shades.org or by calling 205-822-1670.