

Reducing the Risk Policy



Assessing Levels of Risk

Since the level of supervision should be tied to the level of risk, it is necessary to have some means to assess risk with respect to specific activities and programs. One assessment approach is to examine the following three risk factors:

- **Isolation:** Risk increases as isolation increases. It is affected by (1) the number of people present, (2) the time of the activity, (3) the location of the activity, and (4) the physical arrangements.
- **Accountability:** Risk increases as the level of accountability decreases. It is affected by (1) the personal character and integrity of the adult volunteer; (2) the number of people present for the activity; and (3) the degree of openness and approval associated with the activity.
- **Power and Control:** Risk increases when there is an imbalance of power, authority, influence, and control between a potential abuser and a potential victim.

POLICY

1. An individual can apply to be a team member 6 months after their first visit.
2. An individual 18 years old and older serving on any ministry team needs to complete a Volunteer/Background Check Application. Individuals under the age of 18 need to complete a Minor Application. At the age of 18 a Volunteer/Background Check Application should be completed.
3. During normal (printed) church events/services (e.g. Sunday and Wednesday nights) no Team Member should be alone with one child or youth. Team Members are required to observe the TWO TEAM MEMBER RULE. This states essentially that an individual adult should never be alone with children or youth without another approved adult worker. If a door to the classroom does not have a window, the door shall remain open at all times. Classroom doors are not to be locked while in use. Exceptions to this rule include:
 - a. Only one approved adult Team Member may be present in the classroom if three (3) or more student are present.
4. Outside of normal (printed) church events/services (other than Sunday and Wednesday nights) no Team Member should be alone with one child or youth. Team Members are required to observe the TWO TEAM MEMBER RULE. This states essentially that an individual adult should never be alone with children or youth without another approved adult Team Member. All events/activities must be submitted to the church office for accountability. The church reserves the right to cancel the event if it feels the environment creates too high of a risk level according to the three risk factors already stated.
5. At least two approved adult Team Members (and preferably two for every six to eight attendees) shall be present at any off campus or overnight youth activity or ministry setting that would be considered a high isolation environment. Exceptions to this rule include:
 - a. **Transporting students:** One (1) approved adult Team Member may transport either two students in grades 10-12 or three (3) students in grades 7-9. Transporting children sixth grade and under, abide by the TWO TEAM MEMBER RULE.
 - b. **Off-Campus Mentoring:** Students in grades 10-12 only (that have been regularly attending North Central for a minimum of six (6) months) may be in the presence of one approved Team Member of the same sex provided the meeting details (who, what, when where) have been approved by the senior pastor, and the student has written permission from the parent or guardian.
 - c. **Retreats/Conventions/Overnights:** Only one approved adult Team Member may be present in a room if all assigned room members are present (providing there are at least three (3) assigned room members). If not all assigned room members are present or the

assigned room members number only two (2) the door must remain open. If only one (1) assigned room member is present or assigned room member number is less than two, an approved Team Member may not enter, with the exception of an emergency. Any unplanned situations that arise where one approved adult Team Member is left alone with a student, the Team Member MUST call the Pastor and the student's parents. This situation must be avoided to the best of everyone's abilities.

6. When using the lavatory the child shall be accompanied by an adult who shall wait outside the door. If the adult Team Member is required to enter the lavatory, the door shall remain open.
7. Every classroom should have 2 approved Team Members assigned - at least one of which is an adult (18 or over).
8. Youth must be 11 years of age to be approved as Team Members. Adults must be 21 years of age or graduated from high school for 2 years to be approved to work with youth. Volunteers who are graduated from high school less than 2 years must work with an adult who is 21 years of age or older.
9. A child should only be released to the person who signed the child into the nursery or to their designated representative.
10. Team Members are not to use corporal punishment. Limited physical restraint may be used to protect a child or other given what is warranted under the circumstance. If disciplinary action is required, the child's parents should be contacted.
11. Supervisory personnel will make random visits to classrooms or church sponsored activities to monitor for compliance.
12. Any suspected incidents of abuse or molestation of a minor shall be treated in the following manner. All Team Members must report known or reasonably suspected cases of physical or sexual abuse, or sexually inappropriate behavior, to their supervisor and/or Pastor immediately.

Notify the supervisor and Pastor immediately:

- a. When the church Team Member policies have been violated.
- b. When suspicious behavior of Team Member is observed, such as:
 - (1) inappropriate touching by a Team Member of a child
 - (2) inappropriate time spent one-on-one
 - (3) inappropriate language is used.
- c. When physical signs or suspicious behavior (symptomatic of sexual abuse) is observed in a child or youth. Physical signs may include: lacerations or bruises, nightmares, unusual fears, irritations —pain or injury to the genital area.
Behavior signs may include:
 - (1) anxiety when approaching the church or nursery area
 - (2) nervous, fearful, or hostile behavior towards adults
 - (3) sexual self-consciousness.Verbal signs may include statements such as:
 - (1) I don't like "a particular church Team Member"
 - (2) "a church Team Member does things to me when we are alone"
 - (3) "I don't like to be alone with "church Team Members"
 - (4) "a church Team Member 'fooled around with me".

13. A national background check will be conducted on all employees and volunteers including two reference checks.
14. No person is permitted to work with minors until he/she has been associated with North Central for at least six months.
15. An updated background check will be conducted every three years.

16. Inactive files will be kept permanently.

When a church Team Member observes a violation of church Team Member policy or suspects a case of potential abuse he/she must report the situation immediately and confidentially to the department supervisor. The supervisor shall immediately begin written documentation of the allegations reported. All reports and action taken must be documented in writing. The supervisor is to report immediately to the pastor. If the pastor or supervisor is suspected, the report but be made to a member of the church board.

Policy Adopted March 10, 2005

Policy Updated December 2012

Policy updated July 2013

Policy Updated December 2013

Policy Updated May 2014

Policy Updated April 2015

Policy Updated April 2016

Policy Updated November 2016

Policy Updated November 2017

Policy Updated March 2018

Policy Updated June 2019