

Child Protection Policy of Interfaith Housing Coalition

The goal of Interfaith Housing Coalition (IHC) is to provide a safe and secure environment for the physical and emotional well being of all children participating in IHC programs. IHC will enforce its policies to ensure that all children are safe and well protected while attending scheduled activities. IHC will screen all applicants desiring to work with children in any IHC programs.

Policy includes the following sections:

1. Texas Child Protection Definitions and Laws
2. Selection and Screening Process
3. Maintaining a Safe Environment
4. Supervisory Requirements
5. Reporting and Responding to alleged Child Abuse or Neglect
6. Application to work with children at IHC

1... Texas Child Protection Definitions and Laws

Child abuse or neglect as defined by the Texas Family Code:

... **Child abuse** is defined as acts or omissions which cause or permit:
mental or emotional injury to a child.
physical injury or threat of physical injury to a child.
failure to make reasonable efforts to prevent action by another person that results in physical injury to a child.
sexual contact with a child.
failure to make reasonable efforts to prevent sexual contact with or in the presence of a child.

... **Neglect** includes:
leaving a child in a situation where he/she would be exposed to a risk of harm.
requiring the child to use judgment or take actions beyond his/her level of maturity, physical condition, or mental abilities.
failure to obtain medical care for a child.
failure to provide a child with food, clothing, or shelter necessary to sustain life or health.

Sexual misconduct

Sexual misconduct with a child includes crimes such as indecent exposure, indecency with a child and sexual molestation. It also includes conduct that may not violate a penal statute but is sexually oriented, as in sexual harassment and sexual suggestion. If this conduct is committed by workers at IHC, either employed or volunteer, claims can be made against both IHC and the individual.

Every Person's Duty to report

The Texas Family Code **requires** that any person who learns of, or believes that a child's health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect **must report that belief immediately**. Call the **Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400** or, in the event of imminent danger to the child, call **911**. Reports can also be made on line at **www.txabusehotline.org**; however, a telephone call is the best method. Ask the person you talk to for a **Case Number**.

Following this, notify the Executive Director or a member of the IHC management staff as quickly as possible. They will ask you to put your report and the Abuse Hotline case number in writing for the organization's records.

Definition of "child"

The term "child" includes all individuals under the age of eighteen (18) years.

Liability for failure to report

A person failing to report child abuse commits a Class B misdemeanor punishable by fines of up to \$1000 and/or confinement for up to 180 days. A person who is the victim of child abuse and his or her family may bring a civil claim against IHC, or the person who failed to report the crime, as required by law.

Immunity

A person making a report, or assisting in the investigation of a report of child abuse, is immune from both civil and criminal liability that might be incurred. This means that a person who reports child abuse and is later sued can defend themselves on the basis that their actions were protected by this immunity statute and the reporter will not be liable for damages relating to the reporting.

2.... Selection and Screening Process

The term 'People' addresses both paid IHC employees and any one who volunteers to work with children in an IHC activity.

Classification of workers

There are two categories of workers referencing their levels of responsibility and risk.

Primary workers: Include all IHC employees and those volunteers who are in roles with greater responsibility or risk. All Primary workers must be at least eighteen (18) years of age.

Secondary workers: Persons who interact with children as tutors, teachers, volunteers who see children only in group settings on IHC premises, and those who interact with children in the presence of a primary worker. This category may also include parents who help supervise activities. All workers under the age of eighteen (18) are classified as secondary workers.

Application to work with children

All applicants must complete an 'Application to Work With Children'. If the applicant is under the age of eighteen (18), a parent must give written permission for them to work with our children.

Applications should be submitted to the Children's staff office accompanied by a photocopy of a valid pictured identification that includes date of birth (i.e., Texas driver's license).

IHC will keep all application information confidential. If IHC learns of incorrect or misleading information on an application that might cause potential danger to children, that worker will be relieved of any duties with children.

Confidential interviews

Applicants desiring to work with children will first be interviewed by the appropriate age group staff member. The Child Protection Policy must be fully reviewed during the interview. The staff member then completes the Staff Recommendation portion on the second page of the application submitting it to IHC Volunteer Coordinator to be approved and filed in the applicant's personnel file.

Criminal background check (NATIONAL)

Completing the 'Application to Work With Children' authorizes IHC to conduct criminal background checks and sexual abuse registry checks required for both "all employees" and "those volunteers who work with children". No one will be allowed to work with our children who have been convicted of any crime involving misconduct with a child.

Background checks are kept confidential. The Volunteer Coordinator will supervise the criminal background checking process, notifying the appropriate staff member of the results.

Reference Checks

Reference checks of persons inside and outside IHC who knows the appliance, and preferably who know how the applicant works with children and youth.

3... Maintaining a Safe Environment

Identification of workers

People working with children must submit a valid picture ID that includes their date of birth (i.e. Texas Driver's License) and copies of those photographs must be kept in their personnel file.

Pictured name badges

People working with children are required to wear a current name badge at all times when they are supervising children. Badges are provided by IHC.

Two-adult rule

At no time can an adult be in a room ... or an enclosed area alone with a child.

There must be at least two approved workers in attendance any time children are participating in an IHC activity. At least one of these must be a primary worker. These two adults cannot be related to one another in any way. (i.e., spouse, mother, father, sister, brother)

Some Teens classes may have one adult in attendance as the teacher while the class is in session. In these instances, doors to the classrooms **must** remain open.

Vehicle safety

Persons, who drive vehicles while conducting IHC business or transporting children must maintain a valid Texas driver's license, provide proof of insurance in such amounts as may be required by IHC and comply with all IHC transportation policies.

First aid training

IHC's goal is that paid employees who work with children maintain current certification in basic first aid and basic CPR as required by applicable licensing requirements or regulations. IHC will provide the cost of this training.

Volunteer workers are encouraged to complete training if they frequently accompany children on activities such as camps, retreats, mission trips or other recreational activities that includes risk.

4... Supervisory Requirements

for all people working with children at IHC

IHC will provide adequate supervisory control of people working with children who are participating in IHC programs.

Safety of children

All children's workers share the responsibility to promote the emotional and physical safety of the participants. If an unsafe condition exists, they should immediately take precautions to protect the children. Nothing contained in any other IHC procedure relieves children's workers from this responsibility.

Preschool identification system

IHC maintains a child identification system to be sure that the adults who drop off a child are the same adults who pick the child up. The staff person in charge of the area will supervise the system to identify persons authorized to pick up and take responsibility for children leaving an IHC activity.

Observation of children

IHC activities for children will be scheduled in areas visible from adjoining areas. Visibility should be maintained by leaving blinds open and, wherever possible, the door to the room left open. Exceptions may be made by when noise reduction is necessary for children's naps. Two approved workers must remain in the room at all times.

At no time can an adult meet alone with a child in any room where the door is closed ... or in an area where they cannot be seen.

Awareness of IHC policy

Periodically, IHC will review the Child Protection Policy with all approved workers. This may be done individually or in groups.

Each worker must complete a new 'Application to Work with Children' and criminal background checks will be repeated. Completed applications will be retained in IHC's personnel files.

Children's pickup

If a child younger than twelve (12) is not picked up by their parent or guardian on time, they will be kept by their teachers in the children's area until the parent or guardian is located.

Children twelve years old and older are not permitted to leave the area of a completed IHC activity without supervision unless otherwise requested by the parent or guardian.

Children under the age of thirteen (13) are not allowed to leave IHC property without parental permission, either unattended or in a group.

Release of claims

Prior to any IHC activity away from IHC property, a Release of Claims must be signed by the child's parent or legal guardian. Without the signed form in the possession of IHC, the child will not be allowed to participate in the away activity.

5..Reporting and Responding to alleged Child Abuse or Neglect

Reporting policy

IHC will report any incident of child abuse or neglect involving a child. Do not treat a suspicion as frivolous. Notify an IHC staff member right away if you think something is wrong.

When the Executive Director or management staff has been notified of an accusation, he/she will determine that the proper law enforcement agency has been notified. Law enforcement agents will conduct the investigation. IHC will cooperate fully with law enforcement.

The accused person will be relieved of all duties involving children at IHC immediately until the law enforcement investigation has been completed. If the accused person is an employee they will be suspended until the investigation is completed.

Removal from duty should occur in such a way that an innocent person is not presumed guilty. Removal from duty serves to protect the worker from further allegations. If the allegation is unsubstantiated by a law enforcement agency, the employee can be returned to their prior position.

If abuse is confirmed by law enforcement IHC will dismiss the person from their position.

The Executive Director will keep the victim's family informed of the reporting steps that have been taken. Law enforcement authorities are responsible for further updates to the family as IHC is not allowed to comment on an ongoing criminal investigation.

Reporting obligation

The Texas Family Code **requires** that any person who learns of, or believes that a child's health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect **must report that belief immediately**. Call the **Abuse Hotline** at **1-800-252-5400** or, in the event of imminent danger to the child, call **911**. Reports can also be made on line at **www.txabusehotline.org** However, a telephone call is the best method. Ask the person you talk to for a **Case Number**.

Following this, notify the Executive Director or an IHC management staff member as quickly as possible. They will ask you to put your report and the Abuse Hotline Case Number in writing for IHC's records.

All reports of child abuse are held in confidence. No one may communicate information concerning the event except as necessary to cooperate with the official investigation. The Executive Director may authorize limited disclosure if essential to protect other children from harm. Copies of all documents relating to an event of abuse, including a list of witnesses, will be kept by the Executive Director or their agent. Only the Executive Director or his/her agent is authorized to serve as spokesman for IHC.

Ministerial care

Members of IHC pastoral staff are available to provide pastoral support and to assist parents and children in obtaining appropriate professional counseling and support.

**Please complete both sides of the attached Application.
Separate and submit it to the staff person in whose area you intend to work.**

Application to work with children at Interfaith Housing Coalition

Please complete and return to the staff member in whose area you intend to work.

Application is required for "all employees regardless of whether or not they work with children" and "all volunteers who work with children" at IHC or during any IHC sponsored program. The term "child" will include any person under the age of eighteen (18) years.

Name _____ maiden name _____
please print last first middle

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip Code** _____

Daytime phone _____ **Evening phone** _____

E-mail _____ **Cell phone** _____

Drivers License # _____ **State** _____ **Expiration Date** _____

Date of Birth _____

Are you currently a member of (Name of Church)? (If applicable) Yes ___ No ___

Have you ever been known by another name? _____ Yes ___ No ___
If yes, please explain: _____

Have you ever been arrested for a physical or sexual offense of any nature? Yes ___ No ___

Have you ever been prosecuted for child abuse or molestation? Yes ___ No ___

Are you willing to be photographed for the IHC personnel records? Yes ___ No ___

Will you agree to wear a name badge whenever you are working with children? Yes ___ No ___

Please list the names & locations of churches you've attended in the last five years. (If applicable)

Please list two names of members of your church and two names of individuals outside of church who know you well. (Name/Address/Phone #)

Area of IHC in which you intend to work _____

Applicant's Statement

I have received a copy of the Texas child protection laws and the Child Protection Policy of Interfaith Housing Coalition. I have read and understand this information. I understand my services as an employee or a volunteer working with children at IHC is dependent on my adherence to these policies.

I have read and completed the application personally. My answers are true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I give permission for IHC to maintain my photograph on file and to conduct appropriate criminal and court background checks on me now and at regular intervals. If allowed to work with children I agree to be bound by the bylaws and policies of Interfaith Housing Coalition.

I hereby authorize all persons, schools, organizations and law enforcement agencies to supply IHC with information concerning my character or background in connection with working with children, and I hereby release them from any liability or damages which may occur as a result of their response to this request.

I authorize IHC to supply my records to any organization having a legal right to them. I understand that if allowed to serve, any misrepresentation made by me in this application shall be considered sufficient cause for my removal without advance notice. I support IHC's position regarding child abuse and neglect.

Signature _____ Date _____

Include a photocopy of a valid Texas driver's license or other pictured identification with this application.

please do not write below this line

Staff Recommendation: _____

I have completed an interview and a full review of the Child Protection Policy with this person and recommend them to work with children in the following areas:

_____ area _____ staff member _____ date _____

IHC Approval to work with children:

Criminal background check completed _____

Sexual database investigation complete _____

Approved to work with children by _____ date _____