

# Policy to Protect Children and Youth

## **Mission Statement of the Organization**

South Carolina Home Educators Association is a Christian organization dedicated to promoting home education and is organized to provide service and support to home educators and support groups within South Carolina.

## **Background of Policy**

On January 15, 2005, SCHEA adopted the following policies and procedures to help keep our activities safe for our children and youth. Fortunately, this is not initiated in response to problems within SCHEA, but is done as a proactive measure. Other agencies in our society have taken similar steps with good results. Among them are scouting agencies, the YMCA and the YWCA. Many of today's parents are accustomed to these considerations in their volunteer activities with children and youth. The experience of other groups and churches that have adopted similar policies is positive. Unfortunately many organizations have not been motivated to take this action until after a problem has occurred. We, of South Carolina Home Educators Association, are motivated because we understand the gift from God that our children represent and we greatly respect the sacrificial investment that home schooling parents have in the lives of their children. Therefore, we want to do everything in our power to ensure the safety and well being of the young people entrusted to us for SCHEA activities.

## **Table of Contents**

- A. Two-Adult Rule
- B. Screening of Lay and Professional Workers ("Leaders")
- C. History of Sexual Misconduct
- D. Individual Consultation
- E. Respect of Privacy
- F. Appropriate Attire
- G. No Secret Activities
- H. Gift-Giving
- I. Picking Up and Dropping Off Children
- J. Discipline of Children
- K. No Sexual Behavior
- L. Reporting of Violation of These Rules
- M. Mandatory Reporting of Abuse

The following policies shall be followed by all people who work with minor children for South Carolina Home Educators Association.

### **A. Two-Adult Rule**

There should always be two (2) adult (21 years of age or older) supervisors present when caring for minor children under the auspices of South Carolina Home Educators Association. Such events might include, but are not limited to, children's and teens' programs at the annual state convention.

### **B. Screening of Leaders**

Adults who lead children's and teens' programs must go through a screening procedure overseen by the SCHEA Board which reserves the right to verify information regarding background and history of activities with minors, as well as the right to do a check on legal history pertaining to work with children. No one who has a criminal sexual or physical abuse history will knowingly be allowed to work with children for SCHEA activities. Leaders shall be informed of this Policy to Protect Children and Youth and shall be required to sign that they will

follow the guidelines in this Policy when working with children and youth in SCHEA's activities.

### **C. History of Sexual Misconduct**

Any adult who has been convicted of sexual misconduct or abuse may not participate in any capacity of SCHEA programs involving children or youth.

### **D. Individual Consultation**

In situations that require personal conferences (i.e. discussion of behavior), this should be conducted with at least one other approved leader present in the area (not necessarily involved in the discussion) or within sight of the group. As a rule, such counseling should be as public as possible, without sacrificing effectiveness. At no time shall minors be separated from the group of children alone with one adult in a secluded area.

Unplanned individual contact on outings should be done in view of another adult or minor. An example might be a child telling an adult leader why he/she is upset over something. Planned individual contact should occur only in public places and with the prior consent of the minor and parent or guardian. An example might be a conversation of high school coursework or future career between a teen and adult leader.

### **E. Respect of Privacy**

Adult leaders shall respect the privacy of minors in situations such as use of rest rooms, and intrude only insofar as health and safety require. They also shall protect their own privacy in similar situations.

### **F. Appropriate Attire**

Proper clothing for activities is required. If children arrive for SCHEA activities in clothing deemed inappropriate by both adult leaders, these children will be asked to return to their parents for a change into more modest clothing. "Appropriate attire" shall be clearly defined on the registration forms for children's and teens' programs, and leaders shall adhere to the stated definition given on this form when discerning appropriateness of clothing.

### **G. No Secret Activities**

There are no "secret" activities or groups recognized by South Carolina Home Educators Association. All aspects of all SCHEA children's programs are open to observation by parents. Confidentiality or secrecy is not a privilege of adult leaders while involved in SCHEA activities with minors.

### **H. Gift-Giving**

Adult leaders shall not give personal gifts or money to individual children or youth without first notifying the parents. Exceptions to this policy are prizes, given publicly to individuals for class/event contests, or gifts given to entire classes or to all event participants.

### **I. Picking Up and Dropping Off**

During events, it is the responsibility of the parents to designate one pick-up/drop-off person for their minor children (under age 12), to ensure safe transference of children between responsible adults. This helps prevent the possibility of someone else taking the young child. Any deviation from the original plan must have the prior consent of both the parent and the adult leader. When the program is not in session, children are to remain with their parents.

During events, teens may arrive and leave SCHEA events on their own, without parental escort, if parents sign a release form with this understanding. It is understood by this signing that teens are expected to rejoin their parents during time not covered by events and not be wandering unsupervised during this off-time. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure such supervision during the time when teens are not in the program.

### **J. Discipline**

SCHEA recognizes that parents are the God-given authority of their children, and therefore, will include parents in any matters involving discipline of their children during SCHEA events. Corporal punishment is never permitted by adult leaders (who are not the parents of the child) at a SCHEA event. SCHEA reserves the right to remove a child who habitually refuses to obey authority of event leaders by taking that child to his parents, and to

refuse to re-admit that child to further children's activities during that event should the child's behavior remain unacceptable. If said removal from the program becomes necessary, the parent(s) agrees that no refund of fees will be made. Physical hazing and initiations have no place, are prohibited, and may not be included as part of any SCHEA activity.

#### **K. No Sexual Behavior**

As should be obvious, no sexual behavior is permitted with minors at SCHEA events. Other behaviors which are abusive, but do not involve physical contact, are also prohibited. Examples are sexual comments, crude jokes, the showing of sexual material, and the exposure of sexual parts of the minor's body and/or the adult's body.

#### **L. Reporting of Violation of This Policy**

Persons covered by this policy are required to notify a member of the SCHEA Board of Directors about any violations of this Policy, and are encouraged to do so in a timely manner such that appropriate action can be taken quickly. Suspicions of child abuse occurring during an event shall be reported likewise to a member of the SCHEA Board and to the local authorities. The alleged perpetrator should be removed and supervised until the proper authorities arrive on the scene.

#### **M. Mandatory Reporting of Abuse**

According to South Carolina State Statutes, Section 20-7-510, mandatory reporters of child sexual abuse include medical personnel, members of the clergy, teachers and other school officials, licensed counselors, and others. However, anyone who believes that abuse has occurred can report such abuse to proper authorities, i.e. Department of Social Services and/or law enforcement. Concern for the alleged victim, good judgment, belief on your part that abuse has occurred, and honest communication with authorities are the standards surrounding the reporting of an alleged case of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse.\* While authorities are being summoned, stay calm and stay with the alleged victim. Any person who reports an incident in good faith is immune from either civil or criminal liability. All reports are treated with confidentiality by the authorities.

\* There are four types of abuse. Physical abuse is the deliberate physical injuring of a child by an adult. Sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in any sexual act or situation for the gratification or benefit of an adult. Emotional abuse is maltreatment which causes low self-esteem in a child or undue fear or anxiety, or other damage to a child's well-being caused by such acts as angry fault finding, humiliating and belittling a child for mistakes or failures, and deliberate inattention to a child's emotional needs. Neglect is not providing necessary food, clothing, shelter, health care, psychological nurturing, education or supervision for a child.

**Variance from these guidelines can only be permitted when written consent is given by South Carolina Home Educators Association for deviation from a specific guideline for an identified reason.**

The SCHEA Board member in charge of the children's program is responsible for informing adult leaders of this Policy and for obtaining signed agreement from all adults working with children's programs.

*Information for this Policy was adapted from various sources, including personal research, church insurance policies and Long Lake Church, NW Synod of Wisconsin Resource Center, Birchwood, WI ([http://www.synodresourcecenter.org/admin/personnel/background\\_checks/0001/abuse.html](http://www.synodresourcecenter.org/admin/personnel/background_checks/0001/abuse.html)). This version was compiled/written by Tandy L. Collier, 2005.*

**Adult Registration**  
**South Carolina Home Educators Association**  
**Child and Teen Programs**

Thank you for your interest in working with the young people of South Carolina Home Educators Association. Your willingness to volunteer your time and gifts enables us to offer children's and teen programs for our events, and such programs greatly encourage participation by homeschooling parents. Thus, your work is a valuable part of our event, and we greatly appreciate your contribution.

This form will help us to get to know you better so that together we will be able to give our young people the best possible experience at our event, and, we pray, in their future lives with Christ. SCHEA has adopted its Policy to Protect Children and Youth in order to protect children from potential abuse, as well as to protect our adult leaders from potential liability. We hope and pray that God will lead and guide us in our ministry together. Thank you for your participation.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Employment: \_\_\_\_\_

Health/accident insurance and policy: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency contact:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list all present or previous work, either paid or volunteer, involving youth. Identify the institution and type of work.

Do you have any medical related training (CPR, lifeguard, first aid, EMT, etc.)?

Please list any gifts, training, education, interests, or hobbies that relate to your interest in youth ministry. Include any you feel you could share with young people. (e.g., fishing, rock-collecting, wildlife identification, leadership, community service, writing)

Are you a member of SCHEA? If so, through what group are you a member (or did you join as an individual)?

Please describe briefly any homeschool group involvement over the past few years that involved youth.

Do you belong to any organizations or groups within the community? If so, what are they?

Is there any circumstance in your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the supervision, care, or guidance of youth? If yes, please explain.

Have you ever been accused of sexual misconduct or abuse? - If yes, please explain.

Have you ever been convicted of a felony or pled no contest (*nolo contendere*)?

Yes      No

Have you lived in South Carolina for at least twelve (12) months prior to the date of this application?

Yes      No

Do you use controlled substances?              Yes      No

In general, what age of youth do you prefer working with? \_\_\_\_\_

Are there any physical handicaps or conditions that would limit your activities in working with youth? If yes, please explain.

Please provide the names, addresses and phone numbers of three references who are not related to you. These references should be able to describe you in a way that is relevant to your involvement in child and youth ministry in your area.

1.

2.

3.

All the information I have provided in the process of applying to work with the children and/or youth at SCHEA events is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I voluntarily and knowingly authorize any person named herein as a contact to give to the board of South Carolina Home Educators Association, any information they may have regarding my character and fitness for working with children and youth. I voluntarily and knowingly fully release and discharge all such contacts from liability for any evaluation provided of me. I consent to have a police check of my legal history.

I have read and understood the information contained in the South Carolina Home Educators Association Policy to Protect Children and Youth in SCHEA Activities and will comply with the procedures and policies laid out in said policy.

Signature:

Date:

Reviewing SCHEA Board Member:

Signature:

Date:

Position:

*Information for this Policy was adapted from various sources, including personal research, church insurance policies and Long Lake Church, NW Synod of Wisconsin Resource Center, Birchwood, WI ([http://www.synodresourcecenter.org/admin/personnel/background\\_checks/0001/abuse.html](http://www.synodresourcecenter.org/admin/personnel/background_checks/0001/abuse.html)). This version was compiled/written by Tandy L. Collier, 2005.*