



MINISTRYSAFE

CAMP POLICIES: PREVENTING ABUSE AND NEGLECT



MINISTRYSAFE

Dear Adult Leader,

Welcome to SOS!

At SOS, we take our responsibility to care for campers very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate an excellent camp experience for all those who spend time at SOS.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for SOS staff members and volunteers designed to prevent sexual abuse, physical abuse and neglect of campers. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for campers as well as protecting campers, you, and the mission of SOS. The following procedures have been adopted and will be strictly enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form as well as complete the adult self-screening form provided at the end of this manual.

Sincerely,

SOS Administration

SOS Camp Policies: Preventing Abuse and Neglect

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Overview of the SOS Safety System

Because we care for and desire to protect campers, SOS requires all adult leaders to complete **4 SAFETY STEPS**:

STEP ONE: Review Policies & Procedures

Adult leaders are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement, indicating that he or she has read and understood the material, and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

STEP TWO: Adult Self-Screening Form

All adult leaders are required to complete the Adult Self-Screening Form provided in this manual, and turn it into the SOS Program Director upon arrival at camp.

STEP THREE: Criminal Background Check

SOS requires that all adult leaders undergo a criminal background check. The Youth Leader or Church must have this background check on file for all adult leaders, and must be able to produce the background check within 24 hours if asked by the SOS administration.

If the Church does not already have a background check system in place, the adult leader will be required to complete MinistrySafe sexual abuse awareness training online at www.MinistrySafe.com.

STEP FOUR: Sexual Abuse Awareness During Camp

SOS policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive or neglectful behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a supervisor or a member of the SOS Safety Committee.

Camper Safety Policy

ABUSE TOLERANCE

SOS has a **zero tolerance for abuse**. It is the responsibility of every SOS adult leader to act in the best interest of campers at all times.

In the event any adult leader observes any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is the personal responsibility of each such volunteer to immediately report their observations to the SOS administration.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

SOS is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to the SOS Safety Committee and the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agency.

SOS intends to create and foster a culture of communication, reporting safety concerns or policy violations. Because sexual abusers ‘groom’ children for abuse, it is possible a volunteer may witness behavior intended to ‘groom’ a child for sexual abuse. Adult leaders are asked to report possible ‘grooming’ behaviors, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to a member of the SOS Safety Committee.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY

In order to maintain a safe environment for campers, SOS adult leaders must be aware of each individual's responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation that is a violation of these policies. All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to an SOS Camp Administrator or a member of the SOS Safety Committee.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act, or any act considered to be harmful to a child, will be immediately suspended from participation at SOS. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act will be removed from future participation as a volunteer in all activities and programming that involve campers at SOS.

Failure to report a prohibited act to one of the individuals identified above is a violation of this policy and grounds for dismissal of a volunteer.

REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

All adult leaders at SOS are required to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, or any inappropriate behavior, to an SOS Camp Administrator or a member of the SOS Safety Committee.

Tennessee state law requires that any person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect must make a report to an appropriate law enforcement agency. An adult leader *may* report to an SOS Camp Administrator or a member of the SOS Safety Committee allowing one of these individuals to make the appropriate report to law enforcement agencies.

All volunteers are required to verbally report an incident to an SOS Administrator as soon as possible after the incident. After receiving a report from a volunteer, the administrator will speak with the person or volunteer to whom the camper spoke in order to get detailed information about the entire conversation.

If appropriate, an SOS Administrator or a member of the SOS Safety Committee will inform the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (877-237-0004)

SOS Safety Committee

SAFETY COMMITTEE

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children, SOS will appoint and maintain a Safety Committee, which will meet once each month during camp season. At the end of the camping season, the SOS Safety Committee will meet to discuss what, if any, changes are necessary to SOS's policies or programming to ensure camper safety.

MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Safety Committee is to enable SOS to carry out appropriate camp activities while safeguarding campers against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

COMPOSITION

The Safety Committee will be comprised of the following members:

1. SOS Executive Director
2. SOS Camp Director
3. SOS Program Director

MEETINGS

The Safety Committee will meet on a monthly basis during camp season to discuss risk management practices and updates. The Safety Committee may also meet, when necessary, to address a circumstance or respond to the report of any incident or allegation. At the end of the camping season, the SOS Safety Committee will meet to discuss what, if any, changes are necessary to SOS's policies or programming to ensure camper safety.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Safety Committee will be charged with the following duties:

1. Applying existing SOS policies and procedures related to camper safety and risk management issues.
2. Monitoring all SOS programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
3. Making recommendations regarding safety issues to the SOS Administration.

Camp Culture – Staff Members & Volunteers

MODESTY

While serving at SOS, we ask that you limit your freedom in terms of your dress. We ask that all adult leaders not only abide by the SOS dress code below but also enforce the dress code among the campers. The purpose of this dress code is to promote safety at the worksites as well as modesty.

- No sandals or open-toed shoes on the work site; tennis shoes or boots only
- No spaghetti straps, tank tops or cut off t-shirts for guys or girls at any time
- **No shorts will be allowed at the worksites.** We ask that all participants wear long pants.
- In the evenings we ask that girls wear shorts that are longer than the student's fingertips. Please advise your students to bring only appropriate length shorts. We expect all of our staff and participants to dress modestly.

RULES

The following rules are to be followed at all times:

- **No Verbal Abuse**
- **Never touch a child in an aggressive manner**
- **Absolutely No Profanity**
- **No Displays of Public Nudity at Any Time**
- **No Mooning, De-Pantsing, Wedgies or Swirlies**
- **No Descriptive Stories Regarding Drinking or Sexual Behaviors**
- **No Urinating in public at Any Time By Anyone**
- **No Sleeping or Napping With Campers for Any Reason**
- **Never Compare a Camper's Body With Another Camper or Staff/Volunteer**
- **No Racial Put-Downs or Racial Jokes**
- **No Ear or Body Piercing or Tattooing of Any Camper**
- **No Tickling Campers**
- **No Wrestling**

APPROPRIATE PHYSICAL TOUCH

All staff members and volunteers should exercise good judgment when expressing one's self through physical touch. Appropriate physical touch may include the following:

1. An arm around the shoulder (side hug)
2. Short, congratulatory or greeting hugs
3. A brief, assuring pat on the head or shoulder, but NOT to those kids who feel that such touch is offensive to have their heads patted or hair fluffed.
4. A few NEVERS:
 - a. We don't touch kids in anger or disgust.
 - b. We don't touch kids in any sexually connotative manner.
 - c. No staff member will ever (day or night) be on or in a child's bed.
 - d. Never touch a child's private parts (to remove ticks or for any other reason).
 - e. Never tickle a child; this can be misconstrued as sexual contact.
 - f. Never ignore a camper's request not to be touched.
 - g. Never express or require physical affection or touching in any form from a child who shows or expresses discomfort with physical touch.

If a question ever arises, consult an SOS Administrator.

Any infraction of the above policy involving even the slightest form of sexual connotation will result in immediate dismissal from the camp.

Camp Culture – Campers

BULLYING

Verbal, physical or emotional bullying will not be tolerated. The majority of camper-on-camper verbal, physical and emotional harassment occurs at night when the lights are out and you are in bed. In order to avoid this we ask that you maintain a presence in the camper dorm area at all times until everyone is asleep.

It should be made clear from the beginning of camp that verbal, physical or emotional harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. At the first sign of verbal or other attacks, act decisively. There is no “harmless putdown” when dealing with kids.

- a. First instance comes with a warning to the camper and a general reminder to the group that this kind of interaction is inappropriate. Make sure not to embarrass or chastise them.
- b. Second instance requires that you pull the offending camper(s) from the group and discuss the inappropriateness of bullying behavior. Set some clear parameters and behavioral goals for them to achieve. However, let them know that the next step is a visit to the SOS Camp Administrator. Notify the SOS Camp Administrator of ANY signs of bullying or verbal abuse.
- c. Make sure that any camper who is the brunt of bullying attacks is handling the situation well. Have a private dialogue with him or her to assess the situation. **DO NOT SINGLE CAMPERS OUT IN FRONT OF THE GROUP!** Be discreet and protect their dignity.
- d. Third instance results in a trip to the SOS Camp Administrator and a phone call to the parents.

RESPECTING CAMPER PRIVACY

Make sure campers understand the importance of respecting each other’s privacy. A camper’s bed is his/her home and the camper’s suitcase is off-limits to anyone but the camper. In addition, shower time is a very private time. During showers, only those who are taking showers should be in the bathroom or shower stall.

DISCIPLINE

It is the policy of SOS that adult leaders are prohibited from using physical discipline in any way for behavior management of campers. **No form of physical discipline is acceptable.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by campers. If a camper is unruly or fails to comply with verbal warnings or instructions from an adult leader, the SOS Camp Administrator will contact the camper’s parent. If the behavior persists, the camper’s parent will be contacted to pick up the camper. In the event of a fight or physical altercation, an adult leader will verbally redirect campers involved, trying to avoid physical intervention. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to an SOS Camp Administrator.

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Verbal interactions between staff members or adult leaders and campers should be positive and uplifting. SOS employees and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging and constructive.

To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to campers in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, employees and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing or using profanity in the presence of campers.

Supervision of Campers

ADULT LEADER TO CAMPER RATIO

SOS is committed to providing adequate supervision in all camp activities and programs. Accordingly, there must be one adult leader for every seven students plus one SOS staff member at each worksite at all times. Adult leaders are also responsible for providing supervision of the campers at the SOS building.

OFF-LIMIT AREAS

All adult leaders will be responsible for ensuring that their campers are not in areas deemed off-limits.

MONITORING HIGH-RISK AREAS

The purpose of this section is to become aware of *high risk* areas at camp, and methods to effectively lower that risk. Any areas on camp property where campers are not directly supervised is a high risk area. In these areas, campers can more easily bully and abuse (verbally, physically, and even sexually) each other. It is the responsibility of all adult leaders to be aware of the potential for bullying and abuse, and to monitor camp locations where campers can be alone.

High-Risk Areas include:

- all bathrooms on camp property
- night activities
- changing areas (during day and night)

UNOBSERVED ONE-ON-ONE INTERACTION WITH CAMPERS

No camper will ever be left unattended or unsupervised during camp ministry programming or activities. SOS staff members and adult leaders are prohibited from being alone with an individual camper in any room or building. In the event a staff member or adult leader finds himself/herself alone with a single camper, that staff member or adult will take the camper to a room occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: If a camper desires conversation or counsel with a staff member or adult after regular programming has concluded, the staff member or adult should relocate the discussion to a place where other staff members are present, or which is easily observed.)

Any two campers together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area.

APPROPRIATE ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH CAMPERS

SOS recognizes that meeting the emotional needs of campers may occasionally require adult leaders to meet with them on an individual basis. Adult leaders should observe the following guidelines when interacting with campers.

Adults should conduct one-to-one meetings with an individual camper at a time when others are present and where interactions can be easily observed, unless prior approval is obtained from the SOS Administrator.

In the event a closed-door meeting must occur, the adult must inform another adult and ensure the door remains unlocked.

Rules for Camper Safety

PHYSICAL CONTACT

SOS is committed to protecting campers in its care. To this end, SOS has implemented a 'physical contact policy' which promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our camp programs. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all adult leaders at SOS:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between adult leaders and campers are important for camper's development and are generally suitable in the camp setting.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to an SOS Camp Administrator or a member of the SOS Safety Committee.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the camper, never based upon the emotional needs of the adult.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other campers, staff members or volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or interpreted as such when physical contact is open to observation.
5. Adult leaders are responsible for protecting campers under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by other adults and campers.
6. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by any staff member, adult leaders, or camper must be reported immediately to an SOS Administrator or a member of the SOS Safety Committee.

TRANSPORTATION

The following guidelines should be strictly observed when adults are transporting campers:

1. Campers should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops in a non-public place should be avoided. Adult leaders should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one camper in transport. The presence of at least two people is encouraged.
2. Adults should avoid physical contact with campers while in vehicles.
3. The use of cell phones while driving is prohibited, unless in an emergency. In other non-emergency circumstances, adults are to stop the vehicle before using a cell phone.
4. Absolutely no texting is allowed by the driver of a moving vehicle.

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

Adult leaders will strictly observe the following rules:

1. At least one adult leader is required to be in the dorms with campers at all times. Notwithstanding the appearance that all campers are sleeping, the adult leader will not leave the dorm.
2. Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn to bed.
3. During bed checks, adult leaders should never physically touch a camper.
4. Campers will not share a bed, bunk or sleeping bag with another camper or adult. Each adult and camper will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances a “one-person-to-onebag or blanket” rule will be observed.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS

Adult leaders are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with campers and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any camper in the program. If it is necessary to address issues related to purity, dating, sex and human sexuality, clear such discussions with an SOS Administrator.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS

Adult leaders at SOS are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials or images (magazines, cards, phone pics, videos, etc.) at SOS or in the presence of campers.

NUDITY

Adult leaders at SOS should never be nude in the presence of campers in their care. Clothing must be worn to and from the showers. No nudity or walking around in a towel is allowed.

TOBACCO

SOS requires adult leaders to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products while on SOS property, and while in the presence of campers. SOS is a tobacco-free facility.

INTOXICANTS

Adult leaders are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drug while in the SOS facility, while traveling with campers, or while working with or supervising campers.

CAMP CURFEW

For rest purposes, the SOS curfew is 10:30 pm. All adult leaders are expected to cooperate in the lights out process, making sure that all campers are in their beds at this time. At least one adult leader must remain in each pod after lights out.

VISITORS DURING CAMP SESSION

Friends and family are a great source of encouragement. However, it is difficult to give them the time they need when you are discharging your responsibilities as an adult leader. Visiting friends and family will not be permitted at camp unless permission is provided by the SOS Administrator.

Camp Policies Overview: Preventing Abuse and Neglect

All Adults participating in SOS should read and sign this form

Dear AL,

At SOS, we take our responsibility to care for youth very seriously. This applies to all minors we interact with: campers, volunteers, and youth in the communities we serve. This form summarizes our procedures and guidelines for SOS staff members and volunteers and is designed to prevent sexual abuse, physical abuse and neglect of youth. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for all as well as protecting youth, you and the mission of SOS. These policies have been adopted and will be strictly enforced. If you would like a full copy of our policies manual, please contact kelly@sosmemphis.org.

SOS has a zero tolerance policy for abuse. It is the responsibility of every SOS adult leader to act in the best interest of youth at all times. In the event any adult leader observes an inappropriate behaviors or suspected abuse, it is the personal responsibility of each such volunteer to immediately report their observations to the SOS administration. Any report of such behaviors or suspicious of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported in accordance with SOS policy and state law, to the SOS administration, Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agency.

General Policies:

- Adult Leaders are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with youth and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating, or sexual activities with any youth.
- Adult leaders are prohibited from possessing sexually oriented materials, tobacco, intoxicants.
- SOS staff members and adult leaders are prohibited from being alone with an individual youth in any room or space. If you find yourself in this situation, move to a room occupied by others or to a location easily observed by others.
- Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are prohibited. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the youth, never based upon the emotional needs of the adult. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by any staff member, adult leader, or youth must be reported immediately.

Dorm policies:

- At least one adult leader is required to be in the dorms with youth at all times.
- Adult leaders at SOS should never be nude in the presence of youth in their care. Clothing must be worn to and from the showers.
- The SOS curfew is at 10:30 pm. All adult leaders are expected to cooperate in the lights out process, making sure that all youth are in their beds at this time. At least one adult leader must remain in each pod after lights out.

By signing this form, I understand the importance of the matters set forth above. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at SOS. I will not harm or abuse the minors in my care. I acknowledge that I am bound to report any inappropriate behavior that I witness to SOS staff.

Adult Leader's name

Dates attending SOS: _____

Adult Leader's Signature

Church: _____