



# Reality Church Ventura

POLICY NAME	CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION & REPORTING		POLICY NO.	001	
DEPARTMENT	FAMILY MINISTRIES	CATEGORY	CHILD SAFETY		
EFFECTIVE DATE	1/1/2022	DATE OF LAST REVISION	2/6/25	VERSION NO.	1

## PURPOSE

Reality Ventura understands the responsibility placed upon the church by both God and parents who trust their children and the vulnerable into the care of our ministry. At Reality Ventura, we take the issue of appropriately reporting suspected or actual incidents of child abuse very seriously. We recognize both the spiritual and legal responsibilities of our ministry and therefore have created and trained our staff and volunteers in the following process. As representatives of Reality Ventura it is vital that how we speak and behave are consistent with the scripture in an Above Reproach manner.

## SCOPE

This policy supersedes any and all prior practices or policies regarding Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting.

## POLICY

This policy serves to establish and ensure consistent practices are followed:

- **DEFINITIONS**

- **California law defines child abuse as any of the following:**
  - A child is physically injured by other than accidental means.
  - A child is subjected to willful cruelty or unjustifiable punishment.

- A child is abused or exploited sexually. A child is neglected by a parent or caretaker who fails to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care or supervision.
  - **Child or children:** all persons under the age of 18 years of age.
  - **Vulnerable Adult:** all person's over the age of 18 who are unable to legally consent, unable to comprehend the nature of certain actions, or susceptible to coercion or abuse. This may include individuals who are mentally or physically disabled and the elderly.
  - **Volunteer:** all persons who have direct contact with or supervision of children for more than 16 hours per month or 32 hours per year.
  - **Employees:** all persons who are employed by the ministry whether they work with children or not, including seasonal, temporary and part-time employees.
  - **Mandated Reporters:** California law states that all administrators and employees of the ministry are mandated reporters. Reality Ventura chooses to classify all volunteers who supervise youth as religious practitioners and are also considered to be mandated reporters.
- **VOLUNTEER APPLICATION**
    - A written application includes:
      - Previous work and volunteer experiences
      - History of criminal activity, including perpetrating child sexual abuse and violence against children.
      - Permission for contacting personal references and performing a criminal background check.
- **TYPES OF BACKGROUND CHECKS**
    - **Livescan:** Live Scan is inkless electronic fingerprinting that is electronically transmitted to the Department of Justice (DOJ) to complete a criminal record check.
    - **Online Background Check:** This check would be California by county-specific, may run DMV or credit checks.

- **Megan's Law Search:** Enacted in 1996, mandates the California Department of Justice (CA DOJ) to notify the public about specified registered sex offenders.
  - **Reference Checks:** These are character references that are selected by the candidate who can vouch for their abilities and character.
- **SCREENING PROCEDURES**
    - **Selection of Workers:** All staff, administrators and volunteers who work with those under the age of 18 participating in our programs and activities will be screened.
    - **Volunteer Screening Procedures:**
      - Prior to consideration, all candidates seeking a volunteer position that involves working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults will complete and return an initial ministry application.
      - The ministry leader, or designee, will carefully review the application, ensuring that the candidate is an appropriate match for the ministry position. The ministry leader also will permanently store all application materials—the application form, reference check, notes from interviews, etc.—in a locked file cabinet or other secure location.
      - If the individual appears to be an appropriate candidate for the ministry position, the ministry leader, or designee, will check at least two references to confirm the information that the candidate provided on the ministry application.
      - A Criminal Background Check Guidelines: Pursuant to Section 11105.3 of the Penal Code, all staff, administrators, and regular volunteers shall undergo a background check to identify and exclude any persons with a history of child abuse or other convictions that have been determined by the FBI that would preclude them from working with youth.
      - The background check results will be permanently maintained on file with the Reality Ventura Custodian of Records.
      - After the ministry leader, or designee, contacts references and interviews the candidate, the candidate will be instructed to go and be Live Scanned.

- When indicated by our screening procedures, volunteer candidates who pose a threat to children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be removed from consideration for any ministry position involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
  - **Staff Screening Procedures**
    - The same procedures required for volunteers also apply to all potential staff, regardless of the ministry position for which they are being considered. Only after a selection and conditional offer of employment has been made may an employer ask or conduct a background check.
    - When indicated by our screening procedures, employment candidates who pose a threat to children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be removed immediately from consideration for employment anywhere within our organization.
- **SUPERVISION**

**Rule of three:** To the greatest extent possible, the presence of two unrelated mandated reporters must be present when ministry activities involve contact with, or supervising children.

  - **Church Services/All Sites**
    - Nursery: Reality Ventura will maintain a minimum of two (2) Mandated Reporters actively moving between 2-4 rooms when children are present. Where possible, Kids Ministry will have 1 Mandated Reporter per room with a second that is rotating through 2-4 rooms.
    - Elementary: Reality Ventura will maintain a minimum of two (2) Mandated Reporters actively moving between 2-4 rooms when children are present. Where possible, Kids Ministry will have one (1) Mandated Reporter per room with a second that is rotating through 2-4 rooms.
    - Students: Reality Ventura will maintain a minimum of two (2) Mandated Reporters actively moving between 2-4 rooms when

*minors are present. Where possible, Youth Ministry will have 1 Mandated Reporter per room with a second that is rotating through 2-4 rooms.*

- **Home Gatherings:**
  - Reality Ventura will provide a minimum of two (2) mandated reporters when students are gathered at someone's home for a ministry-sponsored activity.
  
- **Camp/Missions Trips/Field Trips:**
  - *Reality Ventura will provide a minimum of one (1) mandated reporter in all cabins with a second where possible. Ministry leaders, who are mandated reporters, will rotate through cabin spaces during social cabin times (waking hours when kids/students are actively meeting in cabins).*
  - Reality Ventura will also likely need to meet the requirements of the particular camp, missions organization, or destination.
  
- **Minors and Technology:**
  - All interactions with minors via the internet, social media or other electronic communication channels, staff should model healthy relationships between adults and children.
  - All communications with children should reflect appropriate content and be church or education-related.
  - Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of children apply in the digital world as they do in the physical world.
  - When using photos or videos for ministry purposes, obtain a media release for each person from the parent/guardian for the child and only post images that respect the individuals.

- When possible, request permission from the parent/guardian before connecting to children via electronic communication or social media platforms.
- **Other Activities:**
  - Reality Ventura will provide a minimum of two (2) mandated reporters for all other ministry activities when kids/students are participating (e.g. mission trips, beach trips, etc.).
  - Reality Ventura will provide designated counseling spaces where ministry staff of Reality Ventura may counsel a minor 1:1, but during specific hours and in specific offices at Reality Ventura where they may be observed and held accountable by other ministry staff.
  - Reality Ventura will provide a minimum of two (2) mandated reporters when transporting minors.
- **TRAINING**

An administrator, staff, or regular volunteer of Reality Ventura shall individually complete training in child abuse & neglect identification and training in child abuse & neglect reporting.

This California-specific training will cover types of abuse & neglect, what the law requires of mandated reporters, how to spot evidence of child abuse, examples of different types of abuse, how to report abuse, what happens after a report is filed, and much more.

***Prior to your employment or volunteering at Reality Ventura, this training must be completed.***

- Frequency of Training
  - Reality Ventura will conduct AB-506 Mandated Reporter training every 2 years for its staff and volunteers.
- Outside Training
  - Training on AB-506 and Mandated Reporting may be accepted if a certificate of completion has been presented from a legitimate and

approved source of training accepted by Reality Ventura. Please talk with the Kids Ministry or Youth Ministry Director for more information. *Ex: Teachers employed by another school may have completed mandated reporter training and now want to volunteer at a church or school their family or child attends.*

- **REPORTING**

When a staff member observes or is made aware of a reportable event per California law, or has a reasonable suspicion of abuse, the following process must be followed:

1. Report the discovery immediately to the ministry staff member and Ministry Director. The staff member and the Ministry Director will ensure that a [SCAR form](#) is completed and make a call to Ventura County Children and Family Services immediately and within 24 hours from the time of discovery. A staff member and the Ministry Director will email the completed SCAR form to [HSA-CFS-SCAR@ventura.org](mailto:HSA-CFS-SCAR@ventura.org) as soon as possible and no later than 36 hours following the discovery. A copy of the form should be given to the Custodian of Records.
2. The Student and Family Pastor should be informed and regularly apprised throughout the process of filing the report and following up with the Child Welfare Agency and the family of the minor.
3. If the incident involves a staff member or volunteer of Reality Ventura, the Student and Family Ministry Pastor must immediately be informed and will immediately contact Reality Ventura's insurance company.
4. Throughout the process of ministering to the family and cooperating with the Child Welfare Agency, the Children's Ministry Director and Student and Family Ministry Pastor will be the point persons responsible for ministering to the child, the family and providing the appropriate confidentiality and support on the behalf of the staff of Reality Ventura.
5. Upon the conclusion of the Child Welfare Agency's investigation and law enforcement's directions regarding the next steps for the child and family, Reality Ventura will continue to provide the appropriate ministry care for all persons involved and operate its ministry accordingly. Ministry programming and safety best practices will be evaluated as necessary based upon the outcomes of each incident and investigation.

- **REVIEWING RESULTS**

1. After completion of the Livescan the criminal report will come directly back to Reality Ventura for review to the Custodian of Records for volunteers and staff. When necessary consult with the identified member of the Pastor/Elder team.
2. What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by the Pastor/Elder team based on guidance provided by law enforcement.
3. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event.
4. Pursuant to privacy laws, the result of the background check will not be disclosed to any applicant. However, you may contact the FBI directly for your records [here](#).
5. Should any activity disqualify you from being on staff or serving as a volunteer, staff from Student and Family Ministry will contact you.
6. **Livescan Reporting:** Reality Church Ventura has opted to enroll in continuous reporting with Livescan. This means that after you have completed a Livescan any new criminal activity that takes place will be reported directly to the Custodian of Records with Reality Church Ventura. This is in place to ensure continuous and up-to-date safety for our children.

- **CLEARANCE TO START**

After all background processes have been completed, someone on staff at Reality Ventura will be in contact with you directly to coordinate a start date.

- **Volunteers:** You will undergo the following onboarding process prior to your first date of service:
  - AB-506 Mandated Reporter Training & Certification
  - Children's Ministry or other Ministry onboarding processes
  - Receive any required shirts and ID's for your ministry area

- **Staff:** You will be contacted by your Direct Report to coordinate your first date and to ensure completion of the onboarding paperwork and process.

## RELATED POLICIES

- *List any other policies that may overlay or relate with this one*