

TerraNova Church Child Protection Policy

General Purpose Statement

TerraNova Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children who participate in our programs and activities. In compliance with Assembly Bill 506 regarding Child Protection policies for Youth Service Organizations in California Business & Professions Code section 18975, our goal is to protect the children of TerraNova Church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from the potential of false accusations by implementing the practices below.

Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the terms “child” or “children” include all persons under the age of eighteen (18) years. The term “worker” includes both paid and unpaid persons who work with children. The term “volunteer” means anyone involved in church related activities involving minors, in overnight activities involving minors, in counseling minors, or one-on-one mentoring of minors.

Selection of Workers

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a) Six Month Rule - No person will be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with minors until she/he has been involved with TerraNova Church for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

b) Written Application - All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by TerraNova. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous TerraNova Church affiliation, reference and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application forms will be maintained in confidence on file at the offices of TerraNova Church.

c) Personal Interview - Upon completion of the application, a one-on-one interview may be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

d) Reference Checks - Before an applicant is permitted to work alone with children, at least two of the applicants' references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at the offices of TerraNova Church.

e) Criminal Background Check – A national criminal background check is required for all employees working with minors (regardless of the position) and “volunteers” as defined above. This initial background check is completed prior to working with children. An additional full fingerprint background check will be completed for employees and volunteers working with children a total of 16 hours in one month or 32 hours or more per year.

Before a background check is run, prospective workers will be asked to sign an authorization form allowing the church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children at TerraNova Church.

f) Training – All employees and volunteers working with children will participate in Mandated Reporter Training, in accordance with California law.

TerraNova Church's pastoral leadership team, operating on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances, will determine a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission may 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.

The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at the offices of TerraNova Church.

Two-Mandated Reporter Rule

TerraNova Church ensures the presence of at least two mandated reporters whenever volunteers at the organization are in contact with or supervising children. Furthermore, it is our goal that two mandated reporters will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth activities may have only one mandated reporter in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom remain open and there should be no fewer than two students with each leader. A mandated reporter provides regular check-ins during the program hours in all classes, regardless of the number of children or volunteers. Minors are not to be alone with one mandated reporter on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a known counseling situation.

TerraNova Church's Reporting Procedures Regarding Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) that endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child that is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- Emotional abuse – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.
- Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- Neglect – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Childcare workers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at TerraNova Church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to a member of the Next Gen pastoral team, scott.s@ourterranova.com or angela.b@ourterranova.com for further action, including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.