

RHSA Safeguarding Policy

The Renewal in the Holy Spirit Association (RHSA)

July 2024

I. Introduction

- A. Relationships between adults and youth are a foundation of Christian ministry and are central to the life of the RHSA. This Safeguarding Policy is not meant to undermine the strength and importance of loving personal contact. Rather, we hope to help child and youth workers strengthen Christian renewal in the Holy Spirit and demonstrate their love and compassion for minors through sincere, genuine, and safe relationships.
- B. This Safeguarding Policy document has been adopted by the RHSA to ensure that children, youth, and vulnerable individuals experience relationships in ministry as charitable, with no intention to do harm or allow harm to occur.
- C. The RHSA staff and volunteers who will be working with minors or other vulnerable individuals are asked to carefully consider each standard in this Safeguarding Policy and agree to follow these standards before they begin serving minors or vulnerable individuals. These standards require staff and volunteers working with minors or vulnerable individuals to:
 - 1. Exhibit Christian ethical standards and personal integrity.
 - 2. Conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with policies and procedures for Youth Workers in the Sword of the Spirit.
 - 3. Not take advantage of a pastoral, supervisory and/or authoritative relationship for their own benefit.
 - 4. Not abuse or neglect a minor or other vulnerable individual.
 - 5. Share concerns about suspicious or inappropriate behavior with their supervisor and/or Sector Safeguarding Officer(s) (SO).
 - 6. Adhere to the laws of Lebanon regarding the reporting of suspected abuse of a minor.
 - 7. Accept personal responsibility for the protection of minors and other vulnerable individuals from all forms of abuse.
- D. The RHSA staff and volunteers working with minors are required to read and sign our code of conduct agreement and to abide by the standards stated in the Safeguarding Policy.

II. Purpose

- A. Protecting the emotional, physical, and spiritual development and safety of minors and vulnerable individuals is an overriding priority for our life and mission in the Sword of the Spirit and in the RHSA. Our programs will follow the laws and meet the legal requirements of Lebanon.

To do so, the RHSA has reviewed, adapted, and intentionally applied this document to our own situation.

B. In all these matters, our primary concern is for the well-being of our children and youth and to ensure that justice is done.

III. Scope

A. This document covers people who work with minors in our RHSA activities and programs. It applies to our work with children of families in the RHSA as well as children of non-members who participate in the RHSA programs or events.

B. This document employs different policies and approaches to different ages of minors. Wherever the approach is different for different ages, it will be explicitly stated in the text. (e.g. in their interactions with minors under the age of ... , Youth Workers shall ...).

C. The approach to safeguarding minors during Sword of the Spirit regional youth programs is governed by the Kairos [Safeguarding Policy and Procedures](#). Parents are encouraged to review those policies if their children participate in regional programs.

IV. General Definitions

This document employs the following definitions:

- A. Adults: those aged 18 and above.
- B. Minor/Child/Youth are interchangeable terms used to refer to anyone under the age of 18.
- C. Youth Workers/staff: the people (members and non-members, adults and minors, paid and volunteer) who work with minors in the RHSA programs, services, and outreach.
- D. Mandated reporting: See Lebanese law 422/2002.
- E. Safeguarding/Safe environment training: The training provided by the RHSA that incorporates best practices for the prevention of abuse of minors by staff, volunteers, and others who interact with minors in the RHSA programs.
- F. Youth Program Coordinator or Program Director: The person designated by the RHSA to oversee a children's program or youth ministry.

V. Neglect and Abuse Definitions

The definitions below provide some indicators of abuse. However, this list should neither be seen as an exhaustive list nor as a checklist.

A. **Neglect:** harm or threatened harm to a minor's health or welfare that occurs through:

1. Negligent treatment, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care.

2. Placing a minor's health or welfare at unreasonable risk, or the failure to intervene to eliminate a known risk when the responsible adult is able to do so.
- B. **Abuse:** harm or threatened harm to a minor's health or welfare that occurs through non-accidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, neglect or maltreatment.
- C. **Sexual abuse:** Engaging in sexual contact or sexual activity with a minor.
- D. **Sexual exploitation:** Allowing, permitting, or encouraging a minor to engage in prostitution, or allowing, permitting, encouraging, or engaging in the photographing, filming, or depicting of a minor engaged in a sexual act.

VI. GUIDELINES & Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Policy serves to hold the RHSA Youth Workers accountable to follow specific guidelines and procedures and help ensure that all participants have a shared understanding of safeguarding expectations and procedures.

Youth Workers will be given a copy of the Safeguarding Policy. They are expected to review it thoroughly. Youth Workers must sign the code of conduct agreement stating that they understand and agree to follow its guidelines.

Protection of Minors from Abuse & Neglect

- A. The abuse or neglect of minors is contrary to the teachings of Jesus Christ, to our life together in the Sword of the Spirit, and is prohibited under the laws of man and God. Youth Workers have a moral responsibility to protect minors and other vulnerable individuals in their care from abuse and neglect. To protect the integrity of the programs, Youth Workers should avoid even the appearance of impropriety or of putting a minor at risk of harm.
- B. While performing their duties in the RHSA youth programs, Youth Workers shall refrain from:
 1. Using, possessing, or being intoxicated on alcohol while supervising minors. A small amount of alcohol is permitted in the context of a religious ceremony.
 2. Using, possessing, or being under the influence of illegal drugs.
 3. Smoking in front of minors.
 4. Using foul language in the presence of minors.
 5. Speaking to minors in a way that could be construed by a reasonable observer to be cruel, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.
 6. Hazing or bullying.
 7. Use of corporal punishment.
 8. Being nude in the presence of minors.

9. Possessing/sharing sexually oriented or morally inappropriate materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, computer-generated images, etc...).
10. Engaging in sexually-oriented joking or conversations with minors unless the conversations are part of a legitimate discussion for teenagers regarding human sexuality issues.
 - On such occasions, the lessons/discussions will convey to minors Biblical, historically Christian, and Sword of the Spirit teachings on these topics.
 - If children under the age of 14 have questions that go beyond the aims of the presentation, they should be referred to their parents or legal guardians.
 - For youth over the age of 14, Youth Workers may initiate a discussion about human sexuality as long as it is a normal part of the youth program, or if they have the approval of their supervisor. They may also respond to questions that are initiated by minors but should make sure that the discussion remains appropriate for teenagers.
11. Becoming inappropriately involved, or spending a greater amount of time than necessary and appropriate for the service, alone with any one minor, including via social media and messaging services.
12. Giving secret gifts to a minor.
 - Secret gifts and relationships are never permitted, and Youth Workers should notify their supervisor or Program Director of a minor's attempt to give a secret gift or initiate a secret relationship.
13. Establishing a one-on-one counseling relationship with a minor (see below for examples of acceptable one-on-one mentoring relationships with youths).
 - Minors with significant problems suggesting a need for professional counseling should be referred to their parents or legal guardian.
 - Youth Worker's supervisor should be alerted to significant concerns about a minor.

C. Youth Workers should immediately bring to the attention of the on-site supervisor uncontrollable, dangerous, inappropriate, or seriously disruptive behavior of a minor that requires removal from the activity or program. Parents or legal guardians shall be notified of actions taken.

D. Transportation to and from youth events is the responsibility of the parents. They are to arrange transportation and communicate the arrangements to their children. At least one staff member shall remain after the end of an event until all minors under the age of 12 have been picked up unless the parents are contacted and another arrangement is made. As usual, the three-person rule should be followed.

E. Youth Workers should be aware of their own and other's vulnerability when alone with a minor.

1. In the normal conduct of our programs, a team approach is used to manage activities and other contacts with minors.

2. Normally, we employ a three-person rule: a minimum of three persons together at any given time, whether they are adults or minors, especially for activities held in private settings, such as homes, vehicles, closed classrooms, etc...
- F. Minors working as program staff should not normally teach or provide care for younger minors without adult supervision.
 1. Minor staff of suitable age and maturity may provide unsupervised care for minors provided parents are aware of this arrangement and an adult staff is on call to quickly assist if necessary.
 2. Teen staff may supervise groups of minors without the immediate presence of an adult, as long as the whereabouts of the supervising adults are known and adult assistance is readily available.
- G. Children under age twelve shall not be left unattended.
- H. Teen participants and staff need to have immediate access to adult staff in the event of an emergency.

Physical Contact with Minors

- A. Youth Workers are prohibited from using corporal punishment for behavior management of minors. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, pushing, shaking or other physical violence as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behavior by minors.
 1. On occasion, it may be necessary to physically intervene to prevent a minor from injuring themselves or someone else. Under these circumstances, Youth Workers should use the least amount of force reasonably necessary to de-escalate the risk and restore order.
 2. Corporal punishment is prohibited even if a parent or legal guardian has given permission for it to be used with their child.
 3. Parents serving in a RHSA child or youth program or activity, when dealing with their own children in that setting, shall adhere to the corporal punishment policies outlined above.
 4. This heading does not include normally acceptable physical contact while participating in sports and other outdoor activities during camps and other youth events. This is acceptable and in many cases even encouraged as a healthy part of this type of activity.
 5. This heading does not include necessary physical contact needed to administer emergency first aid in case of urgent medical care.
- B. Appropriate affection from adults is important for a child's development. Appropriate affection between minor participants and Youth Workers is necessary for the success of the RHSA child and youth programs. It constitutes a positive part of the RHSA life and youth ministry. Youth Workers, however, should always be aware that physical contact with minors can be misconstrued and should occur:
 1. Only in public, never in private.
 2. Only when physical contact is appropriate.

3. Only when nonsexual: that is when an outside person exercising reasonable judgment would perceive it as nonsexual.

(Remember the acronym PAN: Public, Appropriate, Non-Sexual)

C. The following forms of affection are considered appropriate for the RHSA child and youth programs:

- Brief hugs
- Kissing on the cheeks
- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Hand-shakes
- High-fives, fist bumps, and hand slapping
- Verbal praise
- Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms
- Arms around shoulders
- Holding hands while walking with small children
- Sitting closely beside small children
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with small children
- Briefly holding hands during prayer in a group setting
- Giving piggyback rides to small children

D. Physical affection can be used by adults to initiate inappropriate contact with minors. To maintain the safest possible environment for minors, the following forms of affection are not to be used in the RHSA child and youth programs:

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces
- Kisses on the mouth
- Touching buttocks, chests or genital areas
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, bathrooms, closets, staff-only areas or other private rooms
- Being in bed with a minor
- Inter-sex Wrestling
- Tickling
- Massage given by minor to adult
- Massage given by adult to minor
- Any form of unwelcome/unwanted affection
- Compliments/Comments that relate to physique or body development

One-on-One Care of Minors

A. As mentioned earlier, in the normal conduct of a RHSA program, Youth Workers should provide care for minors based upon a three-person rule. Adult staff members will also adhere to this rule in their interactions with minor staff members.

B. The following exceptions to the three-person rule may apply:

1. Personal one-on-one mentoring for youth:

- As a minor over the age of 12 nears adulthood, it may be appropriate for him or her to meet regularly with an adult Youth Worker or volunteer of the same gender one-on-one for mentoring. It is expected that such meetings would be less common for youth aged 12 to 15, and more common for youth aged 16 and above.
- Such meetings should take place in a public place, fully visible to others. Public places may include outdoor spaces often frequented by others, or a readily observable room or office with windows that allow visibility into the room and where others are likely to pass by.
- Parents shall be informed of the meeting or meeting pattern (including the frequency) prior to its occurrence.
- The Youth Worker should be able to state to the parents and to his or her supervisor the intended purpose of the meeting, even if it is simply in pursuit of building the relationship.

2. Should a one-on-one interaction be necessary in the normal context of a program or event (e.g. for private correction, or delivery of personal news) interaction between the Youth Worker and the minor participant should be readily observable (preferably by an adult, ideally a supervising adult) and as brief as is reasonably possible.
3. In an emergency context, any one-on-one interaction between the Youth Worker and a minor participant should be as observable as the situation permits (preferably by an adult, ideally a supervising adult) and as brief as is reasonably possible. A supervising adult and a parent or guardian should be notified as soon as possible that a one-on-one interaction with a child has occurred due to an emergency.
4. Providing hygiene services: Should a one-on-one interaction be necessary in the normal context of taking a young child to the restroom and providing the child with hygienic assistance, any interaction between adults and minors should be as observable as the child's need for modesty permits (preferably by an adult, ideally a supervising adult) and as brief as is reasonably possible. Whenever possible, bathroom breaks should be a scheduled part of a program for children aged 4 to 9 and should be taken as a group.

Transportation for Minors

In the normal conduct of the RHSA child and youth programs, the following standards shall be observed when Youth Workers are involved in the transportation of minors:

- A. Youth Workers will not transport minors without the permission of their parents.
1. If a minor, including a minor volunteer/staff member, requires a ride home after an event, the parent or guardian should be encouraged to send a family member or make other arrangements to pick up the child.
2. Under normal circumstances, Youth Workers should only give a ride home to a minor from a sponsored activity or event if a parent or legal guardian has given the Youth Worker permission to give the minor a ride.

3. Youth Workers are not obligated to give a minor a ride home; this is left to their discretion. If they agree to give a minor a ride home, normally and ideally at least three persons should be in the car.
4. For rides where the three-person rule is followed, oral permission from the parents is sufficient. In case a Youth Worker needs to travel in a car alone with a minor (who is not a member of their immediate family), they will need documented permission (text or voice message) from the parent and the minor in this case should be transported directly to their destination.
5. Should safety or other considerations make traveling alone with a minor without their parents' permission unavoidable, the Youth Worker will report this immediately to their supervisor and the minor's parents.

B. It should be made clear to parents and legal guardians where minors will be picked up and dropped off in case it is not obvious (e.g. picked up from the event, dropped off at home).

C. If private cars are used for any RHSA sponsored event involving minors, the drivers should have valid driving licenses and cars must be properly insured. Drivers under the age of 20 should be approved beforehand by the service supervisor.

D. Drivers should be well rested and otherwise able to operate the vehicle in a safe manner.

E. Drivers should not be reckless in their driving when they have minors in the car and abide by local traffic laws. If during the operation of the vehicle the passengers become unruly, the driver should take all necessary precautions including stopping at a safe place and handling the situation. Cars should not have passengers beyond their capacity.

F. Youth Workers should not engage in unnecessary and/or inappropriate physical contact with minors while in vehicles.

G. Minors should be transported directly to their destination. No stops, other than for essentials like food, petrol, restroom breaks, or emergencies, should be made unless approved by the director of the program or event.

Overnight Events with Minors

A. A Youth Worker may not sleep in the same bed, in the same sleeping bag, or alone in a tent/cabin/room with a minor unless the adult is an immediate family member of the minor.

1. Sleeping areas: Participants will not be permitted to be in the sleeping area of any participants of the opposite sex.
2. Sleeping assignments: A participant is to sleep in his/her own bed. Participants are not to sleep together in one bed.

- B. Adults will respect the privacy of minors in situations such as changing clothes and taking showers. An adult should only intrude to the extent that the health and/or safety of the minor participant would reasonably be at imminent risk of danger.
 - 1. To maximize accountability, staff should schedule a time for a group of minors to shower and change together, should arrange it so that the three-person rule is observed, and should see that interactions between adults and minors are observable.
 - 2. Whenever possible, changing and showering facilities or other privacy-related arrangements for adults should be separate from facilities or arrangements for minors.

Confidentiality when Working with Minors

Personal information disclosed by a minor to RHSA Youth Workers should be held in confidence. If the minor discloses something that makes the Youth Worker think the minor may harm him/herself or others, or that any other minor or vulnerable adult is at risk, the Youth Worker has a responsibility to report that information to the supervisor, the safeguarding officer and someone who is responsible for the minor's welfare.

Technology and Social Media

When working with minors it is important to have a clear approach to the use of communication technology and social media both to protect minors and Youth Workers. Following are the principles we will follow in our use of social media:

- A. We will use phones, social media, letters, and any other forms of personal communication in a way which is consistent with this Safeguarding Policy.
- B. Youth Workers should be mindful that such forms of communication, when used one-on-one (e.g. private chat, phone call) with a minor, create a 'private setting' for relating to minors and thus require careful use.
- C. Such one-on-one means of communication shall:
 - 1. Only be used with parental knowledge.
 - 2. Primarily be used for passing on information and for making practical arrangements.
 - 3. Be limited in frequency.
 - 4. Not be used as a primary means of building relationships or for casual/informal relating with minors.
 - 5. Not be used late at night.
- D. Youth Workers shall not post personal photos or videos of minors on publicly accessible internet forums and social media (e.g. Instagram) without the knowledge of their parents. Photos or videos are considered personal when they include less than three people.
 - Personal photo/video sharing is permitted in group chats that are not publicly accessible and in privately accessible online albums (e.g. Google Photos/Google Drive albums that are

not browsable by the public - i.e. they cannot be found by a public search but rather have limited access).

- E. Youth Workers will not take photographs of minors during swimming/water activities or while minors are changing/showering or at any time when minors are not in their normal daily clothes/uniforms.
- F. The frequency and content of communication with a minor, no matter what means are used, should always be appropriate to the role and nature of the relationship.

Supervision of Programs & Events

- A. Parents have a right to observe programs and activities in which minors under their custody are involved, although they will normally do so with the prior approval of the Youth Worker leading the event. Parents who desire to participate in or have continuous contact with their minor's program shall fulfill the requirements of the volunteer application process.
- B. Programs for minors shall be supervised or administered by at least two adults.
- C. Youth Workers under the age of 18 shall work under the direction of an adult supervisor.
- D. RHSA leadership, through the RHSA child and youth programs director/coordinator is responsible to make sure that all RHSA child and youth programs and events have adequate supervision and staff training.

VII. Emergency and Safety Plan

There must be a clear safety plan in place for each RHSA sponsored program or event. Youth Workers should know the emergency procedures to follow specific to that location/event.

Here we are mainly talking about camps and conferences.

If there is a reasonable need to set such guidelines for regular places of meeting, it is the youth leadership responsibility to set such plans and conduct yearly safety drills.

IX. Screening Youth Workers

All Youth Workers must be screened in advance of entering active service. This includes volunteers who are minors working and serving with peers or minors younger than they are. The depth of screening may vary according to the specific service. All Youth Workers should have been members of the RHSA or one of its outreaches for at least one (1) year before entering active service. Youth Workers shall be required to fill a self-disclosure form and the RHSA shall request from two trustworthy adults who are well acquainted with the potential Youth Worker to also fill in a form about potential Youth Worker's suitability to safely work with minors. Before recruiting Youth Workers, the Coordinator in charge of a service shall send the names of those they want to recruit to the respective Sector Safeguarding Officer who shall refer to the database of past cases/concerns raised

and inform the Service Coordinator and Sector Coordinator of any concerns recorded in the database that have to do with the names proposed. The SO is not required to provide details - it is up to their discretion what details to share or not share.

X. Youth Worker Training

- A. Youth Workers must receive annual safe environment training. This training will clearly communicate acceptable ways of relating to minors, inappropriate behavior that will not be tolerated, and the lines of supervision within the program.
- B. In addition to the safe environment training, the RHSA will provide training appropriate for specific children and youth programs. For example, the training needed for volunteers to work in childcare will differ greatly from the training needed to serve at a RHSA sleepaway camp.
- C. RHSA leadership is responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of these training sessions.
- D. Programs may use outside resources to train Youth Workers. Such training opportunities include the Kairos Youth Workers Conference, church training programs, online video tutorials, applicable audio talks from the Sword of the Spirit, etc...

XI. Documentation, Tracking, and Record Keeping

- A. The RHSA will keep the records necessary to document that Youth Workers meet the training, screening, and other criteria established by this Safeguarding Policy.
- B. No one will be allowed to serve in a child or youth program without meeting the requirements established by this Safeguarding Policy.

XII. Information to the Parents

Each year parents/legal guardians will be informed how Youth Workers will relate to their children.

XIII. Communication and Escalation Process

In case of any concerns or allegations, those will be dealt with in accordance with the RHSA [Safeguarding Policy - Reporting of Cases and Escalation](#) Process. Legal Guardians should be informed that they have a right/obligation to report any allegations concerning the minor under their guardianship to the relevant local authorities (police). The service of the Youth Worker under investigation will be temporarily put on hold at least until the end of the initial investigation.