

# Prohibited Conduct & Social Media Policy

## **Physical, Mental and Sexual Abuse / Sexual Molestation or Misconduct**

South Ridge does not permit actual or threatened acts of physical or mental abuse, sexual abuse, sexual molestation or sexual misconduct (“prohibited conduct”) to occur at any activity sponsored by or related to South Ridge Community Church. In order to make this “zero—tolerance” policy clear to all employees, volunteers and staff members, we have adopted mandatory procedures that employees, volunteers, family members, board members, individuals and victims must follow when they reasonably suspect, learn of or witness prohibited conduct.

Abuse or molestation means each, every and all actual, threatened or alleged acts of physical or mental abuse, sexual abuse, sexual molestation or sexual misconduct performed by one person or by two or more persons acting together.

## **Anti Bullying/Harassment**

SRCC considers bullying unacceptable and will not tolerate it under any circumstances. This policy shall apply to all employees and volunteers. Any volunteer found in violation of this policy will be disciplined, up to and including suspension from serving.

SRCC defines bullying as persistent, malicious, unwelcome, severe, and pervasive mistreatment that harms, intimidates, offends, degrades or humiliates another person, whether verbal, physical or otherwise.

SRCC promotes a healthy culture where all persons are able to serve in an environment free of bullying behavior. The availability of this complaint procedure does not preclude individuals who believe they are being subjected to bullying conduct from promptly advising the offender that his or her behavior is unwelcome and requesting that such behavior immediately stop.

SRCC will protect a volunteer who reports bullying conduct from retaliation or reprisal.

SRCC considers the following types of behavior to constitute bullying. Please note, this list is not meant to be exhaustive and is only offered by way of example:

- Verbal conduct such as epithets, derogatory jokes or comments, slurs or unwanted sexual advances, invitations or comments;
- Visual conduct such as derogatory and/or sexually-oriented posters, photography, cartoons, drawings or gestures;
- Physical conduct such as assault, unwanted touching, blocking normal movement or interfering with work;
- Threats and demands to submit to sexual requests as a condition of continued employment, or to avoid some other loss, and offers of benefits in return for sexual favors; and
- Retaliation for having reported or threatening to report harassment.

## **Complaint Procedures**

Early reporting and intervention have proven to be the most effective method of resolving actual or perceived incidents of discrimination, sexual harassment or bullying. Therefore, while no fixed reporting period has been established, SRCC strongly urges the prompt reporting of complaints or concerns so that rapid and constructive action can be taken. SRCC will make every effort to stop alleged discrimination, harassment and bullying before it becomes severe or pervasive, but can only do so with the cooperation of its volunteers.

SRCC encourages all volunteers to report any concern or instance of conduct they believe violates the above policies, verbally or in writing, to the business office, lead pastor or a member of the elder board before the conduct becomes severe or pervasive. Any reports of this type will be treated seriously, investigated promptly and impartially.

SRCC further encourages all volunteers to formally report any concerns of assault, battery, or other bullying behavior of a criminal nature to the local Police Department.

Appropriate investigation and disciplinary action will be taken with due regard for the privacy of everyone involved; however, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Any volunteer found to have harassed or discriminated against others will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including suspension from serving with SRCC.

## **Retaliation Prohibited**

SRCC prohibits retaliation against anyone, including an employee, volunteer, board member, student or individual, who in good faith reports prohibited conduct. Retaliation against a participant in the investigation is also prohibited. Anyone who retaliates against someone who has made a good faith allegation of prohibited conduct or intentionally provides false information to that effect will be subject to discipline, up to and including suspension from serving.

## **Social Media**

South Ridge Community Church generally views creating or contributing to personal websites, blogs, social networks, message boards, virtual worlds, and other kinds of social media positively. We recognize the desire of many of our volunteers to participate in online community and encourage this form of networking and idea exchange.

As a volunteer of South Ridge Community Church, you may be seen by our members, attendees, and outside parties as a representative of our organization. That means that while you may view your online presence as a personal project, many readers will associate you and the view you express with South Ridge.

SRCC expects volunteers to maintain a witness in their statements, comments, pictures, posts, and more. The use of racial or ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or active participation in such conversation are not acceptable. Additionally, avoid writings or images that may cause harm or be detrimental in any way to the name of Jesus, South Ridge Community Church, or any other person or entity, as determined by South Ridge's leadership.

# Abuse, Harassment, and Bullying Prevention and Reporting Policy

## South Ridge Community Church

August 2023

South Ridge Community Church has **zero tolerance** for abuse and will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of any person. Any mistreatment or abuse by an employee or volunteer will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer service and cooperation with law enforcement.

South Ridge Community Church has **zero tolerance** for abuse, mistreatment, or sexual activity among individuals within the organization. This organization is committed to providing all individuals with a safe environment and will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one participant by another participant. Conduct by individuals that rises to the level of abuse, mistreatment, or sexual activity will result in intervention or disciplinary action, up to and including, dismissal from the program.

In addition, South Ridge Community Church will not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, the organization will take the necessary steps to eliminate such behavior.

### **Appropriate and Inappropriate Physical Contact**

South Ridge Community Church's physical contact policy promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting participants, employees, and volunteers. Our organization encourages appropriate physical contact with participants and prohibits inappropriate displays of physical contact. Any inappropriate physical contact by employees or volunteers towards participants in the organization's programs will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

South Ridge Community Church's policies for appropriate and inappropriate physical interactions include but are not limited to:

Appropriate.Physical.Interactions; Contact initiated by the participant such as: side hugs; shoulder-to-shoulder or "temple" hugs; pats on the shoulder or back; handshakes; high-fives and hand slapping; pats on the head when culturally appropriate; touching hands, shoulders, and arms; arms around shoulders; holding hands (with young children in escorting situations).

Inappropriate.Physical.Interactions; full-frontal hugs; kisses; showing affection in isolated areas or while one-on-one; lap sitting; wrestling; piggyback rides; tickling; allowing a participant to cling to an employee's or volunteer's leg; allowing participants, older than kindergarten, to sit on an employee or volunteer's lap; any type of massage; any form of affection that is unwanted by the participant or the employee or volunteer; touching bottom, chest, or genital areas that is outside authorized and documented personal care assistance.

### **Appropriate and Inappropriate Verbal Interactions**

Employees and volunteers are prohibited from speaking to participants in a way that is, or could be construed by any observer, as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.

Employees and volunteers must not initiate sexually oriented conversations with participants. Employees and volunteers are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities with participants.

Our organization's policies for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions include but are not limited to:

Appropriate.Verbal.Interactions; positive reinforcement; appropriate jokes; encouragement; praise; strength-based conversations; pastoral counseling.

Inappropriate.Verbal.Interactions; name-calling; discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving participants in the personal problems or issues of employees and volunteers; secrets; cursing; off-color or sexual jokes; shaming, belittling; oversharing personal history; derogatory remarks; harsh language that may frighten, threaten, or humiliate participants; derogatory remarks about the participant or his/her family; compliments relating to physique or body development.

### **One-on-One Interactions**

One-on-one interactions may occur as part of South Ridge's programming under authorized circumstances. The purpose of this policy is to ensure the organization clearly communicates expectations for employees and volunteers and gives examples of appropriate behavior when one-on-one interactions may occur. In those situations where one-on-one interactions are authorized, employees and volunteers should observe the following guidelines to limit the risk of abuse or false allegations of abuse:

- Meet in a public place where you are in full view of others.
- Avoid physical affection during one-on-one interactions. If unavoidable, ensure physical and verbal interactions align with this organization's established policies and are limited to the task at hand.
- If meeting in a room or office, leave the door open or move to an area that can be easily observed by others passing by.
- Inform other employees and volunteers that you are alone with another individual and encourage them to randomly drop in or pass by the interaction.
- To the extent possible, ensure one-on-one interactions occurring behind closed doors are scheduled in advance or are communicated with the supervisor.
- Ensure one-on-one interactions are documented, especially if behind closed doors. Keep documentation of these meetings (such as in shared calendar, case notes, etc.).
- Document and immediately report any unusual incidents, including disclosures of abuse or maltreatment, behavior problems and how they were handled, injuries, or any interactions that might be misinterpreted.

### **Interactions between Employees, Volunteers, and Participants Outside the Organization**

Research shows many cases of organizational abuse occur off-site and outside of regularly scheduled activities. Allowing contact outside of regularly scheduled activities may put employees, volunteers, participants, and our organization at increased risk. This document offers various options for managing the risk of abuse and false accusations arising from contact outside the organization's regularly scheduled programming.

Examples of contact outside of regularly scheduled program activities:

- Babysitting arrangements.
- Tutoring.
- Private lessons/coaching.
- Mentorship.
- Social interactions between employee's or volunteer's children and children served by the organization:
  - Playdates and birthday parties.
  - Sleepovers.
  - Overnight trips and vacations.
  - Rides to/from organization or extracurricular activities and events.
- Attending public events in a shared community (like graduation, sports events, ceremonies).
- Continued contact with participant after a participant's participation in a program has ended.

South Ridge Community Church strongly encourages employees and volunteers to refrain from outside contact with participants with which they do not have a preexisting familial or social relationship.

### **Guidelines for Supervising and Monitoring Bathroom Use**

Bathrooms are high risk locations for sexual activity between participants, and adult offenders can use the privacy afforded in bathrooms to abuse a participant. Consequently, bathrooms require close monitoring, and these practices must be carefully managed.

When supervising bathroom use, adult employees and volunteers should first quickly scan the bathroom before allowing participants to enter to ensure the bathroom is vacant.

For Group Bathroom Breaks:

- Employees and volunteers should take groups of two or more participants to the bathroom – following the “rule of three” or more.
- If the bathroom only has one stall, only one participant should enter the bathroom while the others wait outside with the employee or volunteer.
- If there are multiple stalls, only send in as many participants as there are stalls available for use.
- Minimize participants of different ages using the bathroom at the same time.
- Employees and volunteers should stand outside the bathroom door but remain within earshot.

For single use restrooms:

- Require participants to ask permission to use the bathroom. Employees and volunteers should not suggest participants use the bathroom.
- Employees and volunteers should frequently check bathrooms for occupants or hazards.
- Employees and volunteers are prohibited from using the bathroom at the same time as participants.
- When necessary to assist young participants in the stalls, employees and/or volunteers should keep the door to the stall open.
- Participants who require assistance with personal care activities should have this noted within their file and include the level of assistance necessary.
- Employees and volunteers who are authorized to aid with personal care activities need specific training on appropriate diapering and toileting procedures.

### **Reporting of Red-Flag or Inappropriate Behaviors and/or Policy Violations**

South Ridge Community Church has **zero tolerance** for abuse. It is imperative that every employee or volunteer actively participates in the protection of participants. In the event that employees or volunteers observe red-flag or inappropriate behaviors and/or policy violations by other employees or volunteers, it is their professional and personal responsibility to immediately report their observations in accordance with the organization's reporting procedures.

The following are examples of red-flag or inappropriate behaviors that all employees and volunteers are required to report:

- Any violation of the organization's abuse prevention policies.
- Seeking unauthorized private time or one-on-one time with participants.
- Seeing or visiting with a participant outside of scheduled programming.
- Buying gifts for individual participants.
- Sending unauthorized electronic communications through text messaging, social media, online gaming, etc. in violation of the organization's electronic communication policy.
- Making suggestive comments to participants.
- Showing favoritism towards a participant or type of participant.
- Participants disclosing that an employee or volunteer makes them feel uncomfortable.

All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with participants will be taken seriously. Our procedures will be carefully followed to ensure that the rights of all those involved are protected.

If employees or volunteers witness suspicious or inappropriate behaviors or policy violations from another employee or volunteer, the individual is instructed to do the following:

- Interrupt the behavior.
- Report the behavior to a supervisor, director, or other authority.
- If you are not comfortable making the report directly, make it anonymously.
- If the report is about a supervisor or administrator, contact the next level of management.
- Complete an internal report but do not investigate.
- Keep reporting until the appropriate action is taken.

### **Procedures for Employee and Volunteer Response to Allegations or Incidents of Abuse**

As required by mandated reporting laws, employees and volunteers must report any suspected abuse or neglect of a participant—whether on or off organization property or whether perpetrated by employees, volunteers, or others—to state authorities. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. A person who mistakenly reports suspected abuse is immune from civil or criminal liability if the report was made in good faith and without malice.

In addition to reporting to state authorities, employees and volunteers are required to report any suspected or known abuse of participant perpetrated by employees or volunteers directly to leadership so that immediate and proper steps may be taken to ensure the safety of alleged victims and others who may be at risk. Reports of suspected or known abuse may be made confidentially to the following:

1. Immediate supervisor
2. Pastors or Executive Director
3. Elders

Additional guidelines for employee and volunteer response to incidents or allegations of abuse:

- If you witness abuse, safely interrupt the behavior immediately.
- If abuse is disclosed to you, assure the individual disclosing that he or she was correct to tell you.
- Protect the alleged victim from intimidation, retribution, or further abuse to the extent possible.
- Immediately report the allegation or incident to the proper organization authorities (based on mandatory reporting requirements) and the designated authority.
- Be sure to document the incident, disclosure, or any circumstances causing your suspicion of abuse according to incident reporting and documentation requirements. State only the facts.
- It is not your job to investigate the incident, but it is your job to report the incident to your supervisor or the designated organization authority in a timely manner.
- Check back to make sure appropriate steps were taken. If not, report again to your supervisor or the designated organization authority.