

## Camp Meeting Visitor Approval Guidelines

At times, pastors may be asked to approve a visitor who wishes to stay on the campground during one of our three camp meetings in the United States, though they do not regularly attend an Apostolic Faith Church. Since these individuals usually are not well known to us, it is critically important that we exercise caution in this regard. Our church attendees who stay on the campground have entrusted their security and safety into our care. While visitors are invited to attend our services, certain steps should be taken before we grant permission for a non-church member to stay on the campground.

We ask that prospective visitors be asked to do the following:

- **Fill in a *Visitor Information Form*.** This form asks for personal references, authorizes a background check, requires commitment to a code of conduct, and contains a release of liability. If you wish, you may explain to the prospective visitor(s) that our insurance company suggests this step. By making our commitment to safety clear, we send the signal that inappropriate applicants should “opt out” of their request to attend our convention.
- **Follow up by checking the references.**
  - Ascertain that the information the individual provided is correct.
  - Find out how long they have known the individual and in what context.
  - Ask if they would have any hesitation authorizing this person to stay at a church camp where children and other vulnerable individuals are in close proximity.
- **Institute a criminal background check** if the two steps listed above reveal any red flags or potential risks. (Contact John Musgrave or Bob Downey at the headquarters office regarding how this should be done.)
- **Schedule a personal interview.** This should occur prior to granting permission to attend the camp meeting, if possible. If not possible, you should ask initial questions by phone, and then arrange to meet with the person immediately upon arrival at the camp meeting, and complete the interview then at that point.

The underlying goal of this process is to ensure that those who attend our camp meetings come for the right spiritual reasons. The sad truth is that sexual predators often seek out churches because of the typically “trusting” environment that exists there. By establishing a “gatekeeper” approval process, we can communicate to prospective visitors that the safety and protection of vulnerable individuals (especially children) is a priority with us. We should be up front about the fact that our organization takes the abuse of children very seriously, and all allegations of abuse will be immediately taken to the proper authorities. We should not hesitate to communicate the fact that our church has adopted policies and procedures specifically designed to safeguard children.