

Policy Manual

The number one goal in Children's Ministries is to provide a safe and loving environment for children to grow in God's love. Therefore it is important for the volunteers and staff to abide by the following policies and procedures for accountability and the protection of the children they serve.

Children's Ministries Theme

The theme of Children's Ministries is to "Grow in God's LOVE." The LOVE acronym gives workers and children a focus for teaching and learning. Volunteers are encouraged to use these words to redirect behavior:

Learn from God's Word and from those who follow Him.

Obey those who are over you and what the Word of God instructs.

SerVe others like Jesus did by being a helper and putting others first.

CarE for the people and things around you.

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Policies and Procedures

STOP Method: Ensures safe and effective ministry to children and families:

Screening – Adults 18 years or older who would like to volunteer must be approved by completing the application form and the background check form.

Training – Volunteers are provided training to do their job well and follow the policies and procedures.

Operations – Staff modify and adjust the daily schedule to be sure that the policies and procedures are being followed.

Policies – As needs change the Children’s Ministries Team will review and change the policies and procedures as appropriate.

Wandering Policy: During worship services, children are not allowed to wander around the church campus. If you see a child who is not in an appropriate place, please approach him/her or contact a staff member. The child will be brought to his/her parent/guardian.

If an adult is wandering around the building, please ask if you can help him/her find his/her way. Otherwise, for security purposes, we do not permit individuals to wander throughout the Children’s Ministries programming areas.

Two-Deep Leadership Policy: Two approved volunteers must be present whenever possible. There are a few exceptions to this policy:

- If you are in a classroom alone for a short time - Keep the door open.
- If you need to leave the room to care for a child’s needs - Inform your fellow workers.
- If you plan to have small group sessions - Tell your Ministry Director.

Nametag Policy: All Staff, Volunteers and Students must check-in and wear their nametag at all times. Adults without name tags are not allowed inside the classrooms and should remain in the hallway.

Check-in and out Policy: Infant through second-grade aged children need to be checked-in and out of programming by an adult. The third through sixth-grade children are trusted to check themselves in and have a plan of where to meet their parents at the end of programming. Children will be turned away if one of the three following factors exists:

- Current child to worker ratio does not allow more children.
- A child or unauthorized sibling tries to check in a child.
- The child is sick. (Refer to “Children’s Health and Wellness Policy”)

Children’s Health and Wellness Policy: A child may not participate in Children’s Ministries programming if he/she exhibits any of the following symptoms:

- Temperature of 100°F or more
- Runny nose (cloudy or colored mucus)
- Common childhood diseases
- Questionable rash
- Open sores
- Pink eye
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting

If a child is being treated with antibiotics, he/she must be on medication at least 24 hours before check-in.

Check-in Procedure

- Complete the Registration or Visitor Form.
- View the programming schedule.
- Check-in to receive a nametag for each child.
- Sign up for a pager, if needed (Pager calling system located in the Nursery).
- Keep the security badge to check-out your children.

Check-out Procedure

- The volunteer will stand in the doorway to greet families.
- The volunteer will match the code on the child's name tag with the parent security badge. If it matches, the child may be released to the adult.

Lost Security Badge Procedure If the person picking up the child does not have the security badge, walk them through the following steps:

- Locate the child's registration form.
- Check the pick-up person's ID.
 - If they have no ID, find the Ministry Director
- Compare the ID to the information on the form **AND** the list of people permitted to pick up the child.
 - If the person is listed on the form (as parent or permitted to pick up), you may release the child to the pick-up person.
 - If the person is not listed on the form, contact the parent or guardian listed to determine if the child can go with this person, then fill out the lost security badge information form.
- If you have any questions about this procedure ask your Ministry Director.

Keep Track of Children Policy: Volunteers will keep track of their children by using the class roster and doing a head count before they leave the room and when they return.

Diaper Changing Policy: When changing a diaper follow the Diapering Procedure posted next to the changing table.

- Preferably adult women should change the diapers.
- Use diapers and wipes from the child's bag. (The church has extra if needed).
- Be sure a child is fresh for their parents when they pick them up.
- Remind the children who are potty training to go.

Food Policy: Food served to children during programming must be accompanied by the ingredients list. When children bring food, it must be store bought and be accompanied by an ingredients list. If an approved Children's Ministries volunteer brings food, it can be made at home but must include an ingredients list.

Serving Procedure:

- Determine if any children have food allergies.
 - The food allergy and its severity is named on the registration forms.
 - Please keep this information confidential.
 - Read the ingredients list for allergens.
 - If possible, provide an allergen-free snack to those with allergies or encourage parents to do so.
- Have all children and volunteers wash up with soap and warm water.
- Clean the serving table.
- Serve the snack on a plate, napkin or in a cup.
- For younger children, serve water in labeled cups.
- Have children clean up after themselves.

Clean-Up Policy: At the end of programming, work as a team to clean up the room so it is ready for the next group to use the space.

Bathroom Policy: Children should be sent to the bathroom in pairs and monitored by an adult from the hallway.

Missing-Child Policy: Notify the Ministry Director immediately if a child is missing and return to your classroom. If the child *returns* to the classroom, inform the Ministry Director right away.

Discipline Policy: Children who are disrupting learning may be given a time-out within the classroom.

- Tell the child to return to the group when he/she is ready to learn.
- If the child chooses not to return to the group and continues to disrupt learning--Get help from the Ministry Director.
- The Ministry Director will work out a plan with the child's parents.

Off-Site Activity Policy: Ask permission from your Ministry Director to have an off-site activity with children who you oversee in your ministry role.

- A permission slip is not needed if the parents transport their child.
- Require parents to drive their children to the off-site location and to pick them up.
 - Do not drive a child in your car.
- Two-Deep Leadership is required.

Overnight Event Policy:

All overnight events must be pre-approved through the church office schedule and by the Associate Pastor of Youth & Families.

Who may attend?

- Children must be in third grade or older.
- Each child must have a registration form including parent permission and medical information.

Leadership:

- Two approved female volunteers are required for the girls' group.
- Two approved male volunteers are required for the boys' group.
- While traveling, a full set of registration forms must be in each vehicle.
- There should be one volunteer for every eight students.

Sleeping Arrangements:

- Boys and girls will sleep in separate rooms.
- Volunteers will sleep in a separate spot away from the children.
- Children and adults will change and bathe in privacy.

Medical Emergency Policy: In the event of a medical emergency volunteers should call the 911 emergency line.

Emergency Procedure:

- A volunteer should remain with the injured child.
- The remainder of the class should be removed from the emergency scene.
- The church landline telephone requires you to dial 9 first and then 9-1-1.
- Follow the directions of the dispatcher.
- Send a runner to notify the Ministry Director.
- The paramedics need to be met outside and led to the emergency.

First Aid Policy: Volunteers should give basic first aid to children, but if there are questions about the severity of the injury, the on-call nurse should be paged to evaluate.

First Aid Notes:

- First Aid kits are hung in the hallways with a supply of "Ouch Report" forms.
- Wear disposable gloves when giving First Aid.
- Volunteers may **not** administer medications of any kind.
- The on-call nurse carries pager #20 (The calling system is in the Nursery. Wait for the nurse to report to the nursery and lead him/her to the injured child.)
- Spills of bodily fluids must be cleaned up by the custodian.
 - Remove the children from the area or move to a different room.
 - Block off the area with chairs to keep others away from the spill.
 - Call the custodian to clean and disinfect the area.
 - An "Ouch Report" form will be completed and given to the parents at check-out time.

Contagious or Harmful Condition Policy: If a family knows that their child has exposed others to a contagious or harmful condition at church, they need to inform the Ministry Director.

- The parents and volunteers will be informed of where and when the exposure took place.
- The personal information of the reporting family and sick child will be kept confidential.

Fire Alarm and Evacuation Policy: If a fire alarm sounds, volunteers will lead their students calmly out of the building at the nearest exit.

Fire Alarm and Evacuation Procedure:

- Bring class rosters and red evacuation backpacks.
- Meet in front of the Walker Methodist Hazel Ridge building.
- Stand in single file lines with your class.
- Hold up your class sign and seat them when everyone is accounted for.
- If a child is missing inform your Ministry Director.
- Stay with your class at all times.
- Wait for the “All Clear” from your Ministry Director to return to the building.
- If re-entry is not possible, parents will come to you.
- K-2 Teachers will follow the standard check-out procedure.
- 3-6 grade students will be checked-out to their parents. (The class roster contains the names of the parents).

Tornado Warning Policy: When the tornado siren sounds, volunteers will guide their students to shelter in the Lower Level Hallways and Fellowship Hall.

Tornado Warning Procedure:

- Volunteers will take a head count and keep their class together.
- Volunteers should bring their class roster and evacuation backpack.
- Children should kneel facing the wall.
- Heads should be placed on the floor at the base of the wall.
- Hands should cover the back of the neck.
- All doors should be closed.

The Ministry Director will give an “all clear” when the tornado threat has passed.

Child Abuse Prevention

What is Child Abuse? Any mistreatment or neglect of a child that results in harm or injury. There are four kinds of abuse:

- **Physical:** Purposely injuring a child by hitting, biting, shaking, kicking, burning, throwing objects, etc.
- **Emotional:** Consistent and/or extreme crushing of a child's spirit with verbal attacks, threats, or humiliation.
- **Sexual:** Any sexual activity with a child (a minor), not limited to intercourse or oral activity; but including touching, caressing, groping, etc. – forced, coerced or consensual; abuser to child or child to abuser; whether in the home, by a caregiver, or by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, adolescent, or another child. (Sexual comments, joking, innuendo, references made to a child's body that are sexual in nature or in regard to his/her sexual orientation, sexual motions or body language, and sexual advances directed toward a child may not be considered sexual abuse, per se, but would be considered sexual harassment or intent to commit sexual abuse - circumstances just as serious, potentially harmful, wholly inappropriate, and unlawful.)
- **Neglect:** Willingly failing to provide for a child's emotional or physical needs: failing to offer guidance and supervision.

Signs and Symptoms of Abuse

The following are some signs and symptoms that in combination with one another may indicate abuse and that a family may need assistance:

- repeated incidents of injury
- behavior problems
- inconsistent stories
- child's fear of a particular person: parent, teacher, coach etc.

Here are three detailed lists of signs and symptoms of abuse that may be helpful in identifying a child who is being abused or spotting an adult who may be an abuser:

- **Physical:** Unexplained bruises, welts, broken bones cuts or scrapes, burns, missing hair, injuries or redness around the genitals, injuries at different stages of healing, injury or medical condition that hasn't been properly treated, bodily complaints related to stress - stomach aches, headaches, vomiting without cause, suicidal gestures or self mutilation, substance abuse or eating disorders, poor grooming and dirty appearance, clothing in poor condition and not suited to the weather.
- **Child's Behavior:** Aggressive or withdrawn behavior - especially as a shift in personality, unusual fears (of certain people, going home, etc.) craving for attention, running away, fatigue without physical cause, and/or depression, lack of concentration, school problems - misbehavior, hunger, begging for food, stealing, frequent tardiness or

absence from school, unusual knowledge of sex, explicit language, inappropriate behavior with peers, knowledge beyond developmental age, regression to earlier behaviors such as thumb sucking, bed wetting, etc.; afraid to be alone with certain people or “clingy” with other people, pseudo-mature behavior.

- **Adult’s Behavior:** Harsh punishment of child in public, refer to the child as “difficult,” “different,” or “bad;” seem unconcerned about the child, give conflicting stories about injuries, become defensive when asked about the child’s health, presence of family stressors - loss of job, financial difficulties, marital problems, family history of violence or substance abuse, parents who were physically or sexually abused as children, families in which children or women are seen as possessions; male authoritarian and rigid households; also strongly religious homes in combination with these factors.

The Grooming Process: In the majority of all known cases of child sexual abuse, the perpetrator was known and trusted by the child and his/her parents/guardians. In many of the cases, the victim was *groomed* by his/her abuser before the act(s) occurred. The grooming process most often involves the abuser developing a personal relationship with a child who may have a need for emotional, spiritual, or academic support - a mentoring relationship of some kind. Trusting parents/guardians see only the benefit of the relationship for their child and do not question the abuser’s special interest in, gifts and favors given to, exchanges of physical touch and affection, maintaining secrecy and confidentiality, unusually frequent communication and connectedness, and significant time spent alone with the child in both public and private settings.

Grooming can take the form of subtle or overt sexual comments, joking, innuendo, references made to a child’s body that are sexual in nature or in regard to his/her sexual orientation, sexual motions or body language, and sexual advances directed toward the child that eventually weakens his/her defenses and prepare him/her to be violated. It can also take the form of flattery, deception, manipulation, indoctrination, intimidation, and coercion.

Appropriate Touch & Affection Guidelines: Physical touch and affection is important to a child’s physical and emotional development. However, there is an obvious danger with inappropriate touch or affection that is intentional or inadvertent in ministry to children. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. Be aware of differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, individual personalities, and special needs before initiating touch or affection. The following guidelines are to be promoted for pure, genuine and positive displays of God’s love:

- ALL physical touch and affection must (with rare exception) be in the presence of other workers. The contact should occur in reference/response to the needs of the child and not the needs of the worker.

- Reasonable, wise, and brief touch should be practiced, and except for during diapering and toileting, touch in any place that a one-piece swimsuit would cover should be avoided.
- Worker-initiated touch may include a pat on the head or shoulder, high five, handshake. *Safe touch areas: elbows, hands, and shoulders.*
- Rubbing children's backs at nap time is appropriate when necessary. Avoid caressing which could be interpreted as sexual in nature.
- To little ones (Infants–3s), hugging and comfort may be given liberally but appropriately, though kissing should be avoided, never initiated by a worker, and never on the lips.
- Hugs, especially with older girls, should occur from the side if at all possible.
- Men, especially, should kneel on one knee to administer hugs to little ones.
- Children must not be hit, shaken, pinched, etc. even in playful jest or teasing.
- Workers should avoid having kids sit on their laps. When it is deemed necessary, kids should be sitting on legs, not straddled over the adult's leg or private areas.
- When approached by a child physically, do not reject the child, but guide his/her affection to an appropriate contact. Hugs are easily shifted, as are misplaced hands. When a child touches an adult in an inappropriate way unintentionally, no reference to it should be made to the child, simply redirect his/her hand or body. If the inappropriate touch is deemed intentional, simply correct with the same tone as any other correction and then move on without drawing attention to it. If it or a similar incident occurs again, inform your ministry supervisor.

Reporting Abuse: Minnesota law requires that *“a person who knows or has reason to believe a child is being neglected or physically or sexually abused shall make an oral report immediately by phone to be followed by a report in writing”* Minnesota Statutes Section 626.556, Subdivisions 3-9.

- If a child reports alleged abuse to you, you are responsible to inform a staff pastor and report the suspected maltreatment to Ramsey County.
- Assistance will be provided to help you call the Ramsey County Child Protection Agency and complete the *Ramsey County Suspected Maltreatment of a Child Form*.
- Pending the outcome of an investigation (internal and/or by local authorities), all information pertaining to the alleged incident should be kept confidential out of respect for both the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator.
- Any such matter that is brought to the attention of the church leadership will be taken seriously, and the specific protocol as outlined in the *First Free Policy Manual* according to the MN state statute.