

Reformation Church Policies & Procedures for Children's Ministries

Purpose: Reformation Children Ministry exists to assist and reinforce a parent's work of raising their children in fear and love for God.

Strategy:

1. To offer age graded Bible study and ministry opportunities to expose our children to the gospel of Christ.
2. To equip parents and assist them in leading family worship and teaching their children the truth of Scripture.
3. To offer opportunities for outreach to identify and locate prospective families.

Because we love children and desire to protect them, our church requires all staff members and volunteers working with children or students (and other vulnerable populations) to complete SAFETY STEPS before ministry work or volunteer placements begin.

Screening Process: Staff members and volunteers are required to complete our Screening Process

1. Volunteer Application: complete a face-to-face interview; provide references to be checked; a volunteer must attend this church for six months before being eligible to serve in positions providing access to children, students or vulnerable populations.
2. Policies & Procedures Staff members and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material, and agrees to comply with policy requirements.
3. Criminal Background Check Our church requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in children's or student activities or programming undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of background check may be required.

ABUSE TOLERANCE

Our church has a zero tolerance for abuse in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff and volunteer at this church to act in the best interest of all children in every program.

In the event that staff or volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is their responsibility to immediately report their observations to their immediate supervisor, the Pastor or an Elder.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

Our church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to our leadership and the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agency.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

Our staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all our policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from Children's Ministry's positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Pastor.

REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY

In order to maintain a safe environment for our children, our staff members and volunteers must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation that is a violation of these policies. All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected behavior should be directed to an immediate supervisor in the ministry area, or Pastor.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in Children's Ministries. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act should be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children, students or vulnerable populations at our church. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from our church. Failure to report a prohibited act to the designated person is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination of employment of a staff member or employee. Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act may be restricted from participation in any activities involving children, students or vulnerable populations at our church.

REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Staff members and volunteers at our church are required to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, or any inappropriate behavior of a colleague or co-worker, to the immediate supervisor of the area, or Pastor and any agency as required by Alabama law.

RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE

Our Pastor and Elders will take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs.

BUILDING SAFETY AT

The Children's Director will be responsible for ensuring that the Children's Building/Area is monitored during classes or programming. This will include unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers and children in children's classrooms.

No child will ever be left unattended during children's ministry programming or classes. Children's Ministries staff members or volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in any room or building. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds he/she alone with children after departure of other adults, that staff member or volunteer will take the child to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others.

(Example: if a child is the last in a class to be picked up by a parent, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present.)

After every programming event, Children's Ministries staff members and volunteers must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

WORKER TO CHILD RATIOS

This church is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Children's Ministries programs. A minimum of two unrelated adults are required at all times using the following ratios:

Program	Unrelated Workers	Children
Children Nursery	2	8
Preschool, 2 and 3 years old	2	12
Preschool, 4 and 5 years old	2	18
Elementary	2	20

If a worker is 'out of ratio' it is his/her responsibility to immediately notify the program supervisor or the Pastor. Supervisors will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately bring worker to children ratios into compliance with this policy.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

It is the policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children. No form of physical discipline is acceptable. This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children.

Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. In employing this procedure, staff members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines:

- 1) Verbally redirect the child before physically intervening. With younger children some physical redirection may be necessary (for example, removing a toy from the hands of a child that is hitting another).
- 2) If the behavior does not cease, remove or direct the child away from the group to a corner of the room where the group is meeting (avoid being alone with the child).
- 3) Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the time-out, and provide the child with clear explanation of your expectations. (“Jamie, you didn’t stop hitting Chris when I asked you to, so you need to sit quietly in the blue chair for three minutes.”) In addition, be verbally reassuring, as being removed from the group will likely upset the child. Do not physically hold the child in time-out.
- 4) Provide the child with a chair to sit in or a “spot” to sit on until their time-out is complete.
- 5) Follow the rule of thumb that a time-out is ineffective if it lasts longer than one minute for every year of the child’s life (3 years old, 3 minutes).
- 6) Monitor the child through the entire time-out without giving your undivided attention. For longer time-outs give intermittent praise to reassure the child and keep them on task. (“Jamie, you’re doing a great job of sitting quietly – just 2 more minutes.”)
- 7) Praise the child once he or she has completed the time-out and tell them that their reward is being able to rejoin the group. Remind them that repeating their initial behavior will result in further time-out. Follow this with praise.

Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents, the Children’s Director, and the pastor.

Therefore you must have contact information for each child at all times.

BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINE

Nursery children

Because nursery children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies:

Diapering

- 1) Best practices of childcare suggest that only female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.
- 2) Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.
- 3) Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
- 4) Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in nursery will be recorded on the sign in sheet ("Seth Adams has a medicine in the bag for rash.")
- 5) Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
- 6) Children should be changed on changing stations only.

Toilet training

- 1) No child will be forced to toilet train.
- 2) Best practices of childcare suggests that only female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children of either sex.
- 3) When children are taken into bathrooms the door will be left partially open.
- 4) Young children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
- 5) Parents should be consulted on each child's progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with volunteers or staff members. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery will be recorded on the information sheet ("Georgia can use the toilet, but she needs to be reminded – ask her if she needs to go.").
- 6) Children should be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.
- 7) "Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing.

School age children

School age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. (However, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities.)

Staff members and volunteers should never take a lone child to the restroom.

If a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another worker to accompany him/her. If another worker is not available to accompany, he/she should go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. If the child requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall.

Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer.

INTOXICANTS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in any of our church facilities, while traveling with children, or while working with or supervising children.

MEDICATION

Medication may be given to a child by a staff member or volunteer with a doctor's prescription and parental request noted on sign in sheet. The medication must be in the original packaging, including over the counter medication. The only exceptions to this policy are diaper ointment/medication and insect bite cream, after a parent information sheet is signed by a parent or guardian.

NUDITY

Staff members and volunteers in our Children's Ministries should never be nude in the presence of children in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes during a pool party, weekend or overnight retreat, etc.), staff member/volunteer will submit a plan for approval to his/her supervisor concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Staff members and volunteers should never conduct one-to-one, unobserved meetings or interaction with children while participating in our Children's Ministry program. Another adult who has completed the application and screening process should always be present.

TRANSPORTATION

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children:

- 1) Children should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Best practices of ministry recommend two adults in every car. Never will there be a child alone with an adult in a vehicle.
- 2) Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
- 3) No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving church vans, or vehicles owned or rented, unless in an emergency.

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents who leave a child in the care of our staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Children's Ministry programs. Therefore, you must have contact information for each child at all times.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents are encouraged to visit any and all services and programs in which their child is involved at our church. Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their children's programs will be required to complete our volunteer application and screening process.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

Our church is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, our church has implemented a 'physical contact policy' which promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our Children's Ministries while protecting children. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in Children's Ministries programs:

- 1) Side hugs, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children are important for children's development, and are generally suitable in the church setting.
- 2) Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to an immediate supervisor, the Children's Director or the Pastor.
- 3) Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
- 4) Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children or children's staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
- 5) Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in Children's Ministries must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
- 6) Do not force physical contact, touch or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.
- 7) Children's staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
- 8) Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by a staff member or volunteer must be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor, the Children's Director or the Pastor.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children, and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any child in the program. However, it is expected that from time to time the children's ministry discussions and lessons may address age appropriate issues related to human sexuality. These lessons will convey to the children the church's view on these topics.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS

Staff members and volunteers of our Children's Ministry are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children.

SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS

It is anticipated that certain Children Ministry activities may occasionally require that overnight sleeping arrangements be made for children and staff/volunteers (i.e. lock-ins, mission trips, etc.). In the event an activity requires sleeping arrangements, staff members and volunteers will strictly observe the following rules:

- 1) The 2-adult nonrelated rule must be followed. The 2 adult leaders present must have previously completed our church's application and screening process.
- 2) Overnight sleeping arrangements must be submitted in writing to and approved by the Church Pastor prior to the activity, and have signed approval by parents. It is recommended that this information be included in the permission slip for the event and signed by the parent.
- 3) As long as any children are awake, one of the leaders must also be awake and monitoring children to ensure safe behavior.
- 4) Leaders should check with parents and use good judgment regarding movies. No PG13 or R-rated movies are permitted.
- 5) Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn.
- 6) In the event of a sleepover on campus that involves both boys and girls, boys and girls must sleep in separate rooms, properly supervised by children leaders of the same gender.
- 7) Staff and volunteers will monitor sleeping children by periodically conducting visual bed checks to ensure that sleeping children remain in designated sleeping places. During bed checks, staff and volunteers should never physically touch a child.
- 8) In the event that overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each staff, volunteer, and child will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances a "one-person-to-one bag or blanket" rule will be observed.

TOBACCO USE

Our church requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in church facilities, while in the presence of children or their parents, or during any activities or programs. Our church is a tobacco-free facility.

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. Our staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children. To this end, staff members and volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

At any time that a child has been entrusted to our Children's Ministry staff members or volunteers, our church incurs responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.

Children's Ministries staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians at the close of services or activities.

It is presumed a person who drops off a child or student has authority to pick up the child.

In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact their immediate supervisor or the Children's Director before releasing the child.

SUPERVISION

Staff members and volunteers in Children's Ministries are expected to provide adequate supervision for children in their care while working in church programs.

Policies and Procedures Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement

I have received and read a copy the Children’s Ministry Policies and Procedures and understand the importance of the material in the manual. I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving or working in this ministry.

I understand the manual may be modified, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated by this church. Any changes will be made public.

I understand I may choose to end my employment or voluntary service at any time (If possible, I will provide two weeks’ notice).

I acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between me and this church.

I understand it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which may be created and distributed as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I acknowledge receipt of the policies and procedures manual.

_____ Volunteer’s name (please print)

_____ Volunteer’s signature

Date: _____