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Manual

Policy & Procedure

Guidelines for Working with Children in Preschool through Grade Six

WELCOME TO CHILDREN’S MINISTRY!

Dear Children’s Ministry Team Members,

Welcome aboard! We are thrilled to have you on the Children’s Ministry team! I would like to thank you for giving your time to serve God by serving the families of Lord of Life. As we partner with parents in connecting kids to Jesus, you are making an eternal difference. What’s more, you will be blessed in the process. The Lord of Life staff is committed to praying for you weekly that as you serve, your relationships with God and others will flourish, and that all God has planned for you will come about with ease and grace. Enjoy the journey!

Peace be with you,

Jennifer Rowe *Director of Children’s Ministry*

CHILDREN’S MINISTRY GOALS

*Provide a Child-Friendly Environment*

As members of the Children’s Ministry team, everything we do is done with the purpose of reaching the hearts of children with Jesus’ message. From special events to weekly services, our goal is to present the Word in an exciting and age-appropriate manner. We are committed to providing developmentally-appropriate environments and experiences for children aged three years through grade six. Our teaching methods, activities, and gatherings reflect the importance God places on children.

*Provide Relevant Teaching*

We believe God’s message stays the same, but the way it is expressed and carried out can vary. The Children’s Ministry team desires to stay current with music, games, topics, and trends that are morally appropriate and culturally relevant to children. Our intention is to create a fun and exciting atmosphere where children can learn, grow, and apply God’s Word in everyday life.

*Provide Varied Experiences*

As part of the Children’s Ministry team, you will strive to make learning and worship exciting, accessible, and relevant by incorporating a variety of teaching tools and methods such as music, drama, puppetry, videos, props, and games.

*Provide a Safe Environment*

A top priority of the Children’s Ministry team is to develop and support a caring environment for children. Therefore, every volunteer and staff member working with children is required to undergo a background check and complete a training course prior to serving. All of us are committed to following the policy and procedures outlined here and in the Safe Sanctuary policy manual to ensure a welcoming and safe setting for children’s activities.

TEAM MEMBER EXPECTATIONS

*Basic Requirements*

The Children’s Ministry team includes a wide variety of people, but we all have a couple of things in common: We are all at least 16 years of age and we all find joy and value in working with children.

*Setting a Positive Example*

Children’s Ministry team members are church leaders and role models who set a good example through appropriate behavior and language use is critical to our ability to nurture faith and share God’s love. Children’s Ministry Team members will:

* Use positive, encouraging language that reflects a caring and loving attitude
* Be professional, friendly, responsive, and accessible toward children and their families
* Be an active participant in Lord of Life’s congregational life
* Refrain from using foul, offensive, derisive, or sexualized language while in the presence of children
* Refrain from gossiping or engaging in conversations involving adult-only behavior while in the presence of children
* Refrain from using tobacco products, alcohol, recreational drugs, and over-the-counter medications that can impair judgment while in the presence of children
* Refrain from engaging in romantic or sexualized behavior with another adult (spouse or otherwise) while in the presence of children
* Refrain from using negative reinforcement to control behavior such as grabbing, spanking, pinching, shaking, yelling, belittling, or name-calling
* Refrain from engaging in any abusive behavior that violates Lord of Life’s Safe Sanctuary policy

*Communicating Difficulties*

Honest and timely communication is a cornerstone of a successful team experience. If you are experiencing any sort of difficulty such as the behavior of a specific child or group of children, equipment or materials, other team members, or anything else that impacts your experience as a member of the Children’s Ministry team, please bring it to the attention of the Director of Children’s Ministry or other Lord of Life staff member. It is important to not let difficult situations fester and grow worse by not addressing them or by discussing those with people who cannot help resolve them.

*Please note that procedures for recognizing and reporting suspected abuse is discussed in the Safe Sanctuary manual and training.*

*Being Absent*

Life is busy and messy and sometimes it is difficult to fulfill our volunteering or work commitments. Please make the Children’s Ministry Director aware of planned and unplanned absences by calling, texting, or emailing as soon as possible so coverage can be arranged.

*Being Prepared and Punctual*

Group or event leaders and helpers should plan on arriving 15 minutes before the start of any scheduled event or Sunday program. You will feel more relaxed and your time will go more smoothly if you are ready and waiting when the children begin to arrive.

Most Children’s Ministry events and programs do not require much outside preparation on the part of the volunteers unless you are part of the preparation team. For Sunday school leaders, it is important to familiarize yourself with the week’s Bible story and lesson plan.

*Dressing Appropriately*

Children’s Ministry events can be very active and sometimes a little messy. Your clothing should be casual, comfortable, and modest. You should maintain a professional yet practical image.

*Obtaining a Background Check*

Criminal background checks will be performed on anyone over 18 years of age seeking to serve on the Children’s Ministry team or work with children on a regular basis. Semi-annual background checks may be performed on team members or as deemed necessary. Only qualified members of Lord of Life staff will have access to the criminal background check report. Recommendations will be given by this individual(s) to the Director of Children’s Ministry regarding each person seeking to serve.

Any prospective team member who has prior incidents of abuse, neglect, endangerment, or misconduct will not be allowed to serve in any capacity where he/she would have contact with minors. Whether disclosed voluntarily or by result of the criminal background check, the following will automatically disqualify a person from participating in any activities or program that would give him/her access to minors:

* Criminal homicide
* Aggravated assault
* Sexual abuse
* Sexual assault (rape)
* Aggravated sexual assault
* Injury to a child
* Incest
* Indecency with a child
* Inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance of a child
* Possession or promotion of child pornography
* The sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a minor
* Employment harmful to children
* Abandonment or endangerment of a child
* Kidnapping or unlawful restraint
* Public lewdness or indecent exposure
* Enticing a child

*Completing Training*

We provide two main training opportunities for volunteers and staff who work with children: Safe Sanctuary training, which focuses on maintaining an environment free of abuses of sex, violence, and harassment, and Children’s Ministry training, which focuses on equipping leaders with the tools and techniques they need to make their time with the kids effective and enjoyable. Other meetings might be called periodically to discuss matters pertinent to specific situations or events.

Safe Sanctuary training is mandatory for all staff and volunteers who work with and around children. Children’s Ministry training is highly encouraged for those who teach Sunday school or regularly participate in Children’s Ministry programs.

Safety and Security

*Child Check In/Out*

All children’s events will have a check-in and out procedure. The check-in/out system tells us who is in attendance, who is authorized to pick up a child, whether a child has any medical alerts, and gives emergency contact information. The check-in/out form also functions as an important legal document whereby responsibility for a child is signed over to the church during check in, and returned to the parent/guardian at check out.

Each child must be individually checked-in by a parent or adult guardian before participating in an event. Each field of the check-in form must be completed by the checking-in parent or guardian.

Each child must be individually checked-out by the parent or adult guardian specified on the check-in sheet.

Sometimes, parents or guardians will need to make arrangements for their child to be picked up by another adult. Children may be released to a non-parent, guardian, or someone not designated on the check-in sheet **ONLY** if the pick-up arrangements have been communicated to the event leader or Children’s Ministry Director prior to pick-up time.

Children will not be released to siblings, friends, or family members under age 16. Children may not be released from a meeting, event, or program without the accompaniment of a parent or guardian.

*Well-Child Rooms*

All Children’s Ministry facilities are “well child” facilities. Sick or potentially sick children cannot be accepted into the facility.

Symptoms for non-admission include:

* **Fever over 100.4 F within the last 24 hours**
* **Vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours**
* **Skin rashes (impetigo, chicken pox, measles, etc.)**
* **Runny nose with yellow or green discharge**
* **Coughing associated with a cold or respiratory infection**
* **Conjunctivitis (pink eye)**
* **Parasites (ringworm, lice, mites, etc.)**
* **Any symptom that could possibly be contagious**

If a child becomes sick (vomiting, diarrhea, fever, severe headache, sudden rash, etc.) remove the child from the group, make the child as comfortable as possible, and contact the Director of Children’s Ministry or other Lord of Life staff member/committee leader on duty. If possible, contact the parents, describe the situation, and ask that the child be picked up immediately. Complete an incident report and return it to the Director of Children’s Ministry.

While Children’s Ministry team members will pray for the healing of a child, we are not allowed to dispense any type of medication to any child.

*Cell Phones*

Children’s Ministry team members may carry a cell phone at any time; however, to reduce distractions the cell phone audio should be put on a very low or mute setting. While working with or supervising children, refrain from using your cell phone unless you have an urgent situation or you are using it in relation to an activity in progress, such as accessing information on the Internet.

*Child Supervision*

Lord of Life follows the “two adult” rule, meaning no adult shall be left alone with a child. Every attempt shall be made to provide at least two adults or teens aged 16 or older for each group of children during any class, event, or activity. However, if limited resources allow for only one adult or teen to supervise a group of children, the following precautions shall be taken:

* Doors to rooms shall be kept open or left ajar so that the interior of the room is visible from the hall.
* Under no circumstances shall one adult or teen be left alone with one child for any length of time.

At a minimum, the Children’s Ministry will abide by the adult/child ratios as defined in the Texas State day care licensing regulations:

* For children ages 3 years: 1/15
* For children ages 4 years: 1/18
* For children ages 5 years: 1/22
* For children ages 6 -13 years: 1/26

In counseling sessions with minors, parental permission must be obtained prior to a Lord of Life staff member or volunteer meeting privately with a minor. Approved one-on-one counseling will be held in a room with internal windows and/or an open door. Prior permission may be granted by the parents to cover a particular time period (i.e. school year) for their child to receive counseling from a Lord of Life staff member.

*Restroom Policy*

Children attending a Children’s Ministry program, event, or activity should be able to use the restroom independently. Unless specific arrangements have been made with the Director of Children’s Ministry, only fully toilet-trained children will be permitted to participate in Children’s Ministry functions.

**Three and Four Year Olds**: Children aged three and four years old must be accompanied by a group or activity leader when using a restroom unless the restroom adjoins the classroom or function room. Three and four year olds may not travel to the restroom alone. Be mindful of how long a child is in the restroom and check-in with him/her after two or three minutes.

**Kindergarten through Sixth Grade**: Children in kindergarten through sixth grade should be able to leave the group or classroom in order to use the rest room independently. Be mindful of how long a child is gone and check on the child if he/she does not return to the room within five minutes. Do not allow children to use the restrooms in pairs or groups, unless accompanied by an adult or teen leader.

*Playground Policy*

Children ages three years through grade four may use the playground under the active supervision of a Children’s Ministry leader and following the adult/child ratios. To ensure the safety of each child, leaders should actively supervise the children by walking around and ensuring that children are using the equipment in a safe manner. After play, the playground must be tidied with all equipment put away and trash picked up.

Be mindful of the fact that the playground door locks automatically when closed. Be sure to prop open the door to prevent being locked out of the building.

*Movies and Media*

Children’s Ministry team members may use movies and other media as part of program activities. Lord of Life maintains copyright licensures allowing us to view most commercial movies. All movies and media presented to children should be age-appropriate. Rate-G movies may be shown without prior parental permission; however, parent permission must be given to show movies rated PG. PG-13 and R rated movies are not allowed. As other forms of media, such as music videos, are not rated, Children’s Ministry leaders should strive to make sure media content is age-appropriate and adheres to the values and beliefs of Lord of Life church.

Incident and Emergency Procedures

If a medical emergency arises, send an assistant to notify the Director of Children’s Ministry or other Lord of Life staff member, remove the child from the group, and make him/her as comfortable as possible. If a life-threatening emergency arises, have someone call 911. Administer first-aid as you are able (first-aid kits are located in each Kids of the Kingdome classroom and in the Lord of Life kitchen).

 Below is a list of possible emergencies and actions that may be taken while waiting for help to arrive:

* Profuse Bleeding – Apply pressure to the wound until bleeding stops
* Choking – If the child is not moving air, perform the Heimlich maneuver
* Seizure – Protect the child from injury by removing all objects from around the child that he/she may bump into or knock over. Do not restrain or put any object in the child’s mouth.
* Broken bones – Support the affected limb/area and keep stable
* Fainting – Lay child flat with legs elevated approximately six inches
* Unconscious Child – Lay child flat. Check for breathing and pulse. Administer AR/CPR if necessary and you know how, or find someone who does.

In all instances, complete an Incident Report and return it to the Director of Children’s Ministry.

*Incident Report*

If an incident such as an injury (real or near) or sickness occurs in your group, let the Director of Children’s Ministry or other Lord of Life staff member or committee leader on duty know. Complete an Incident Report and have parents sign and date it upon pick-up. Be sure to note the parent’s contact information so that follow-up may occur. Return the incident report to the Director of Children’s Ministry. A copy of the incident report may be given to the parent. Be sure to give the parent all information about what happened and any Lord of Life contact information requested.

*Severe Weather*

If severe weather such as hail, tornado, high winds, hurricane, rising waters, heavy rain, or lightning occurs:

* Move children indoors and into the center of the room, away from windows and doors
* Keep children calm by maintaining order and a calm, reassuring demeanor.
* If necessary, sing songs or play games to divert children’s attention away from the danger

*Fire Evacuation*

When a fire or smoke emergency arises, volunteers should begin the appropriate intervention procedures:

* Maintain control and a calm, reassuring demeanor
* Remove children from immediate danger
* Call 911, if necessary
* Contain fire by using a fire extinguisher and closing doors, if necessary
* Account for each child in your group (count/ roll call)
* If fire alarm is sounding, follow the evacuation route that is posted in your classroom or move the children to the nearest building exit
* Use staircase, not the elevator
* Keep children in a group at least 100 feet away from the building
* Perform frequent head-counts while waiting for danger to pass
* Keep children calm and direct their attention away from danger by singing songs or playing games

Resources

*Sunday School Cabinets*

Each classroom has a cabinet reserved for Sunday school materials. Because all of the classrooms on the Lord of Life campus are used by multiple groups during the week, Sunday school materials should always be put away in the Sunday school cabinets after use. Please keep the cabinets tidy.

*Craft Closet*

Additional craft supplies, materials, and resources can be found in the craft closet located in the Lord of Life staff offices area. These supplies are available for use during any Children’s Ministry program. The craft closet is accessible during regular office hours.

*Media Carts*

Lord of Life has several media carts that house a computer, projector, and audio amplifier. The carts and screen are available for use on a first come, first served basis. Children’s Ministry leaders are welcomed and encouraged to use the media carts with their groups or during other events. Lord of Life also has two TV/DVD carts available for use. Contact the Director of Children’s Ministry or the Lord of Life front office to reserve a cart, projection screen, or TV/DVD cart.

Communication Channels

Open and honest communication is a cornerstone of successful ministry. As a member of the Children’s Ministry Team, you are encouraged to communicate your ideas and concerns to any member of the Lord of Life staff. If you have an idea for an event or a way to improve on an existing program, please share it with us. Likewise, if you are experiencing a problem with another team member, a particular child, or an element of one of the kid’s programs you are encouraged to communicate your concern with the Director of Children’s Ministry.

*Email*

The Children’s Ministry team uses email as our primary means of communication. Sunday school leaders will receive weekly emails containing information about upcoming events, lessons, schedules, and program information. Team members are encouraged to use email for communications that are not personal in nature, such as looking for a substitute for a particular Sunday. Because so much information is communicated via email, one’s personal email address is generally made available to other members of a particular team or group. Personal email addresses will not be given out to non-team members, Lord of Life staff, or congregation members without explicit permission.

*Website*

Children’s Ministry team members and the general public will find general information about Lord of Life sponsored events and program for children on the Children’s Ministry webpage <http://www.lordoflifeonline.org/index1e.htm>.

*Phone and Face-to-Face*

Urgent or personal information is best communicated face-to-face or via phone. Because urgent information, such as an unplanned absence, is frequently communicated via phone, the personal phone numbers of Sunday school or other specific team members will be made available to other team members. Phone numbers will not be given out to non-team members, Lord of Life staff, or congregation members without explicit permission.

Receipt & Acknowledgement Policy and Procedure Manual

Please read the following statement, sign and date on the lines provided, and return to the Director of Children’s Ministry.

*I have read and understand the policies and other information contained in the Children’s Ministry Policy and Procedure Manual. I agree, as a condition of my employment or volunteering with Lord of Life, to comply with these policies and procedures as well as any new or revised policies or procedures.*

 Signature Date

 Printed name