



# Policy & Procedure Manual

Guidelines for Working with Children in Preschool through Grade Six

Approved by Lord of Life Council on October 9, 2018



Children's Ministry at Lord of Life Lutheran Church

## WELCOME TO CHILDREN'S MINISTRY!

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Dear Children's Ministry Volunteer,

Welcome to the team! I am excited to have you on board and want to thank you for your commitment to serve the children and families at Lord of Life. As we partner with parents in connecting kids to Jesus, you are making a difference that can last a lifetime. My hope is that you will also be blessed in the process. The Lord of Life staff is committed to praying for you and we are all available as a resource. If you ever have any questions or concerns, please let me know.

Blessings,

Katie Phillips

*Director of Children's Ministry*



## CHILDREN'S MINISTRY GOALS

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### *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 birth 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.



## LOL CHILDREN'S VOLUNTEER QUALIFICATIONS

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### *Be an active Member of Lord of Life*

Leaders must be active participants of LOL for at least 6 months prior to working with children. If they have not been active with LOL for more than 6 months, an interview on an individual basis must be performed by a staff member to determine reliability of working with children.

### *Transportation*

If the volunteer is driving children for a children's event, the driver must:

1. Have a valid driver's license
2. Be at least 21 years old
3. Have proof of car insurance
4. Not be under the influence of any chemical substance that impairs driving – including alcohol, illegal drugs or over-the-counter drugs, etc.
5. No cell phone use in the car by driver
6. Have passed a background check and completed safe sanctuary training

### *Provide a Safe Environment*

One of LOL KIDS' top priorities is to develop and support a caring and safe volunteer team. Every volunteer and staff member working with youth is required to undergo a background check and personal interview prior to serving.

### *Volunteering at Lord of Life*

Being a children's volunteer is a privilege at Lord of Life. Prospective volunteers will meet with Staff or Pastors to be involved within the program. Dismissal or suspension of a volunteer will be done at the discretion of Staff and Pastors.



## VOLUNTEER EXPECTATIONS

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### *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.

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
- 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.
- 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

### *Communication*

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.

## *Preparation/Punctuation*

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.

## *Background Check/Intolerable Interactions*

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. Background checks will be performed on team members every two years, or as deemed necessary. Only qualified members of Lord of Life staff will have access to the criminal background check reports. 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 serving 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
- Other incidents judged by the discretion of staff and Pastors

If a member of our congregation or outside volunteer is charged with any of the above (but before conviction), that person will be required to step aside in their role as a children's volunteer until the court case has been resolved. Reinstatement of a volunteer after the court case resolution will occur at the discretion of staff and pastors.

Failure to report the following incidences are violations of this Policy and will not be tolerated or accepted. Any knowledge of the following acts, either subjective or objective, are to be immediately reported to a Lord of Life staff member after the safety of the minor child or youth has been assured:

- Any direct observations or evidence of sexual activity in the presence of or in association with a minor
- Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct towards a minor
- Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any person and a minor
- Infliction of physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a minor
- Physical neglect of a minor, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of Lord of Life Church
- Mental or emotional injury to a minor
- The presence or possession of obscene or pornographic material at any function of Lord of Life Church
- The presence, possession, or being under the influence of any illegal or illicit drugs
- The consumption of or being under the influence of illegal or illicit drugs or alcohol while serving in a function for minors at Lord of Life Church

### *Conduct with Children*

Leaders will refrain from any actions or use of language that is harmful. This could include:

- Physical actions, such as pushing, grabbing, or unwanted physical conduct
- Use of profanity
- Criticizing, gossiping, public ridicule, demeaning facial gestures
- Inappropriate sexual conduct
- Any suggestive or sexual contact with children is strictly prohibited.
- Any romantic relationship between adult and children is strictly prohibited.



## *Confidentiality*

Confidentiality is expected of all volunteers. What is shared in a group setting should stay within that group setting. What is shared in private to a leader, staff member, or volunteer should be between them. A volunteer may ask a staff member for advice on how to deal with a situation, but they should never talk about something private with other children. But there are a few exceptions to this rule:

- If a child discusses a desire to self-harm, including cutting, suicidal thoughts and actions, etc.
- If a child discusses a desire to harm others.
- If a child discusses that someone has harmed him/her or he/she is a victim of abuse, physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, etc.
- If a child knows someone else who has expressed these things to them.
- If a child discusses a leader, volunteer, or staff member who is in violation of the above code of conduct.

If a child confides in you any of these points, share them with the Children's Faith Formation Director as quickly as possible. In many of the above cases we would need to report the information to government agencies and involve the child's parents as quickly as possible. If the abuser in question is the child leader, report it immediately to a Pastor at LOL.

If a child asks a leader to listen to them but not tell anyone else, an appropriate response is "I can't promise that I will not tell appropriate people what you discuss with me if it involves causing harm to yourself or other people. I can promise I will listen and support you with this issue in whatever way I can with God's help. Do you understand? If so, then what do you need to tell me?"

## *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 and must be completed every two years. Children's Ministry training is highly encouraged for those who teach Sunday school or regularly participate in Children's Ministry programs.



## Safety and Security

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### *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 without expressed written consent.

### *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.

### *Photography and Social Media*

Lord of Life operates with an "opt-out" photo policy. Unless a family formally notifies a staff member that they wish to opt out, we can use pictures of their child in our social media and advertising. Volunteers and staff will work together to ensure that children who have opted out of our photo policy will not be featured on social media or advertising and will use discretion to respect the rights of these children.

When utilizing Social Media follow these guidelines:

- Names of children should not be posted in social media statuses or pictures.
- Social media postings should not disclose sensitive or confidential information unless the person that the information concerns has given written consent to share such information. This may include medical information or other personal matters.
- For the sake of their own privacy and the well-being of the children participants, church leaders and adult volunteers should not add or invite children to any groups, events, pages, etc. that are not solely dedicated to activities directly related to Lord of Life children's ministries.
- While it is fine to accept child followers on your personal social media pages, do not seek out and "request" child followers, unless running the official child branded social media profiles.
- If you do have child followers on your social media sites, remember that what you display is a reflection of your ministry, Lord of Life's ministry, and how you engage with the world. Post or comment with discretion and with the knowledge that children will be watching.
- Pictures of unrelated children cannot be posted on your personal social media account without permission of the unrelated child's parent or legal guardian.
- When communicating in our Children's Ministry Program, volunteers will communicate only with parents. Volunteers will not need to contact a child directly via phone, text or social media.
- Pictures should not be taken in bathrooms and sleeping areas.



## *Child Supervision*

Lord of Life follows the “two unrelated 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 from the beginning of an event until the last child is picked up. 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.

This allowance of one adult supervising a group of children at a children’s event will only be allowed when the church is full and active (i.e. Sunday mornings) or in a public space (i.e. meeting at Starbucks), this is not allowed when the church is inactive (i.e. Sunday nights) or in a private space (i.e. your personal home). If the children’s event only has one staff member or volunteer available and is held in a space where the church is inactive or private, the children’s event will be canceled. Under no circumstance should an adult be alone with a child.

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, unless accompanied by a parent or guardian.

**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. If a child needs assistance, it must be done in full view of a second adult.

**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.

### *Transportation*

It is Lord of Life's policy that only adults who have met the requirements listed under the volunteer requirements section, can drive children to/from a Lord of Life event.

The car is not an exception to the "no adult should be alone with a child" rule. Under the unlikely event that a parent asks a staff member or volunteer to drive a child home after a children's function, we can comply since the parent has consented to this activity. In this scenario the staff member or volunteer should text or call the children's director or one of the Pastors to share what is happening. Immediately after drop off, the staff member or volunteer will follow up with the children's director or one of the pastors to let them know the child is no longer in their care. This scenario is only allowable under extreme situations and should not be the norm for our programming. If a parent asks for a "drop off" more than once per year, the children's director will work with the family to come up with a better system.

### *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.

### *Appropriate Activities*

If there is any doubt about the appropriateness of an activity, questions and concerns should be brought before the Director of Children's Faith Formation or a Pastor.

Spend time preparing and praying over any activity or lesson.

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

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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 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

## Communication Channels

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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

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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

