

Children's Ministry Policy Handbook



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I. Purpose of Word of Life Christian Center

Our desire is to minister to children of all ages.

1. Providing a safe and happy environment.
2. Meeting the needs of the whole child - emotionally, mentally, physically, socially, and spiritually.
3. Reaching out to children and their families.
4. Promoting understanding and trust between parents and teachers/leaders.
5. Involving the entire church family in meeting the needs of children.
6. Providing a place where they can begin to feel they are a part of the total church community.

II. Policies for Persons Working with Children

All persons who work with children through the ministry of Word of Life Christian Center, paid or volunteer, shall meet the following standards:

1. Teachers will be professing Believers in Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. Volunteer helpers will be members of Word of Life Christian Center for at least six months before working with children. They must also show faithfulness and fruit of a committed Christian life.
2. There will be a minimum of two teachers/helpers per room at all times. At least one of these two teachers/helpers must be 18 or above.
3. Teachers agree to abide by the policies in this handbook.
4. Teachers agree to use curriculum that has been chosen and/or approved by Word of Life Christian Center ministerial staff.
5. Training for teaching will be provided on a regular basis covering safety, first aid, CPR, and use of curriculum, facilities, and resources.
6. Only applicants willing to let the ministry do a background check will be selected.

III. Policies for Safety and Security

1. Teachers are expected to be in their assigned rooms at least fifteen minutes prior to their scheduled class or activity time.
2. Observe the two-worker rule at all times (if possible).
3. Family and or relatives are not allowed to stay in the classroom on a regular basis, unless he or she is the teacher or teacher's aide or authorized personnel.
4. Workers must remain on duty until all children have been picked up by their parent guardian, or authorized person(s) and or dropped by the church bus/van. Any child who has not been picked up within a reasonable amount of time of the scheduled ending of an activity shall be reported to a ministerial staff member.
6. Children will not be allowed to roam unattended or go into rooms alone.
7. Parent or guardian needs to complete the "Parental Consent and Medical Authorization Form" at the time a child starts attending church sponsored programs (other than Sunday morning attendance). Pertinent information regarding child's medical conditions, allergies, and how to contact parents in case of emergency will be shared with the child's teachers. The "Parent Consent and Medical Authorization Form" will be kept on file in the church office during the entire church year and will be carried with workers on any field trips away from the church building.
8. Volunteer teachers/helpers will be encouraged to participate in First Aid and CPR training when the class is offered.
9. First Aid supplies will be kept in the following areas: Word of Life Christian Center kitchen area.
10. All accidents, injuries, and sickness will be reported to the to the Children's Ministry Director.
11. Use of any child's photograph or name on the church website will occur with the written permission of the parent or guardian.
12. Large or overnight events (such as lock-ins or overnight trips)
 - The recommended adult-to-child ratio will be one adult for every four children present.
 - It is also recommended that an appropriate number of males/females are present at such events (ratio being the same as adult/child recommendation).

IV. Policies Regarding Medications or Illness

1. For the protection of all, children showing any signs of illness should not be brought to church or church related activities (i.e. fever in the prior 24 hours, vomiting, diarrhea, sore throat, rashes, eye infection, etc.)
2. Teachers/helpers at church will not administer any medicines (over the counter or prescription) to any child at any time unless they are their own. Children needing medications must be given these medications by their parents at the time needed. Any exception to this rule must be made by Word of Life Christian Center ministerial staff and may be made in situations involving field trips or overnight retreats, for example.
3. Children who become ill while participating in a church activity will be isolated from other children but kept under visual supervision by a volunteer. Parents or guardians will be notified and asked to come and get the child or will be taken home by the church.

V. Blood Spill Procedure

Blood spill may occur any time the skin or membranes are opened, such as a skinned knee, or in a nosebleed. Extreme caution should always be exercised when there is potential contact with blood.

When tending to a blood spill always wear disposable gloves even if it is minor in nature. Gloves will be available in First Aid kits.

Control the bleeding immediately (compress or direct pressure). Get assistance after securing supervision for other children. If the spill occurs inside, clean up as soon as possible with soap and water and bleach-water solutions. If the blood spill occurs outside the building, flush thoroughly with water. Dispose of any paper towels, sponges, cloths, bleach-water solution, etc. (from clean up) in a covered container.

Wash bleach/water container appropriately and allow to air dry.

Remove and discard disposable gloves in covered container. Wash your hands with soap and warm water.

Report incident to the Pastor, or Children's Ministry Director.

VI. Policies Regarding Child Abuse

The disturbing and traumatic rise of physical and sexual abuse of children has claimed the attention of our nation and society. The following policies reflect our commitment to provide protective care of all children and workers who participate in church sponsored activities.

I. WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT?

The following are definitions of abuse:

- A.** Inflicting injury upon a child. Inflicts, causes to be inflicted, or allows to be inflicted upon such child physical injury, by other than accidental means, which causes death, disfigurement, impairment of physical or emotional health, or loss or impairment of any bodily function.

- B.** Placing a child in a situation where they will likely be injured, creates a substantial risk of physical injury to such child by other than accidental means which would be likely to cause death, disfigurement, impairment of physical or emotional health, or loss or impairment of any bodily function.

- C.** Involving or allowing a child to be engaged in sexual activity, committing or allowing to be committed any sex offense against such child, as such sex offenses are defined in the Criminal Code of 1961, as amended, and extending those definitions of sex offenses to include children under 18 years of age.

- D. Torturing a child.**
Commits or allows to be committed an act or acts that cause intense suffering, whether emotional or physical, or inflicts excruciating pain upon such child.

- E. Excessively punishing a child.**
Inflicts excessive corporal (physical) punishment.

- F. State law as it defines neglect (or failure to properly care for a child):**

G. Allowing a child to witness the abuse of someone else, including:

1. Witnessing sexual acts or pornographic materials
2. Sexually inappropriate statements, comments or seductiveness
3. Witnessing any physical abuse of another

H. Emotional abuse, including:

1. Verbal comments, actions or statements that would cause a child to believe their person, emotions, physical form, family, race, background, religious background, or social status is somehow bad, inferior, unacceptable or shameful

2. Witnessing the emotional abuse of others

The important principle is to report your suspicions. FLAG Pastoral Staff or Church Administration can assist any employee, volunteer or facilitator with any questions.

In general, abuse is physical, mental or sexual maltreatment; neglect of the health and welfare; or exposing to any unreasonable risk, a person under 18 years of age (hereinafter termed "child").

1. Anyone who has been convicted of either child sexual or physical abuse should not volunteer service in any church sponsored activity or program for children.
2. Survivors of childhood sexual or physical abuse need the love and acceptance of this church family. Individuals who have such a history should discuss their desire to work with children in confidential counseling with the Pastor, Associate Pastor, or Children's Ministry Director prior to engaging in any volunteer service.
3. All workers should observe the "two teacher" rule and not be alone with children.
4. All workers will immediately report any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate to the Pastor or Children's Ministry Director.
5. The church administration may report the incident to the Child Protective Services (740-389-2317).

6. Specific reporting process

Basic steps to be followed in possible abuse cases:

- All efforts to handle the incident will be well documented immediately.
- The incident will immediately be reported to ministry supervisors and, very likely, the church attorney.
- We will contact the proper civil authorities—they, not our ministry, will handle the investigation.
- We will notify the parents.
- We will take allegations seriously; reach out to the victim and his or her family; and treat the accused with dignity and support.
- If the accused is an employee or volunteer of Word of Life Christian Center, that person will be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished.

7. The following are reporting procedures for volunteer staff

- If a child or student is observed to have signs of physical abuse (bruises caused by hitting, unexplainable injuries, etc.), volunteer staff should call these things to the attention of a pastoral staff member immediately.
- If a child or student verbally accuses a family member or other person of abusing them in some way, the volunteer staff member should ask appropriate questions in an attempt to determine the veracity of the claims and the imminence of danger.
- Whether clearly true or questionable in the estimation of the volunteer staff member, the allegations or observations should be put in writing on the day of the incident, including a verbatim/exact account of the observation and/or accusation. Every detail of the events (including date, time of day, names of persons involved, etc.) should be included in this report. The person making the report should keep one copy, and one copy should be given to the pastoral staff member who oversees that area of ministry. These reports must be kept safe and confidential. The pastoral staff member (or church board of directors) will be responsible for making a determination as to the appropriate actions to be taken as follow-up to these observations/accusations.

8. Defining sexual abuse

A. Touching

Fondling — touching the body on private parts

Inappropriate kissing

Intercourse (consensual or non-consensual)

Oral or anal intercourse

B. Non-touching

Sexual remarks

Showing pornography

Watching any sexual activity

Exhibitionism (sexual behavior/flirtation/showing genitals in public)

9. Detecting sexual abuse

* Most cases of sexual abuse go undetected. There may be no apparent physical signs, or there may be physical signs detected only through medical examination.

- The cases that are reported are generally reported by abused children to their parents, siblings, or other caretakers—often in the form of casual remarks that lead the listener to query further.
- Most children say nothing. They may not realize that what was done to them was wrong. Or they may be too embarrassed or frightened to speak up. They may not want to get the offender in trouble—especially if a friendship has developed between offender and victim.

A. Physical indicators

- Difficulty in walking or sitting
- Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing
- Pain or itching in the genital area
- Bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal or anal area
- Venereal disease, especially in preteens

- Pregnancy

B. Behavioral indicators

- Unwilling to change clothes for physical activity events or participate in physical activity events
- Withdrawal, fantasy or infantile behavior
- Bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual behavior or knowledge
- Poor peer relationships
- Delinquency or running away
- Reports sexual assault by caretaker

These signs can be indicative of other problems and are not exclusively tied to sexual abuse. But the repeated occurrence of an indicator, or the presence of several indicators, warrants further investigation.

10. No physical punishment is to be used in any circumstance when relating to children at church activities.

11. Children who present behavior that endanger others will be dealt with in a manner consistent with our Guidelines for Discipline (page 9). A child may be removed from participating in an activity and his parent informed of his removal for a period of time, if necessary.

VII. Guidelines for Discipline

1. Be firm, but kind and accepting.
2. No physical punishment is to be used under any circumstances.
3. Should a child be removed from the group for disciplinary reasons, he will never be out of sight of the teacher/helper unless left with a church member in the sanctuary.
4. A child may be deprived of snacks for disciplinary reasons.
5. Redirection should be the first corrective action.
6. Help the child use words to talk about feelings.

7. Avoid showing the child "how it feels." Negative responses to negative behavior teach the child to respond negatively and reinforce negative behavior. Remain calm and stay in control of each situation.
8. Model appropriate behavior. Use a calm voice and caring, loving attitude toward each child and his parents.
9. Use positive statements. Tell the child what you want rather than what you do not want. Stress **"do"** instead of **"don't."**
10. Reward acceptable behavior with genuine praise and encouragement.
11. Set reasonable and clear limits. Involve children in helping set limits and making decisions. Use problem solving statements like: "What could we do? What would happen if . . .?"
12. Be aware of each child's tempo. Some children are slower than others and need more time. Avoid causing frustration and disappointment in children and yourself by allowing each child to work at his own pace.
13. Provide opportunities for children to make choices. Give a child a choice only if she has a choice and you are willing to accept her choice.
14. Always get the child's attention before talking...address them by their name. Look at the child's eyes as you talk to him.
15. Use clear statements. Avoid nagging about a problem.
16. Stop actions before they happen. Know your children. Be aware of all situations at all times. Be ready to move to a situation and redirect a child before an inappropriate act occurs.
17. When dealing with negative behavior, ask yourself: "What happened? How did it happen? What caused it?" After careful evaluation, deal with the situation in a positive manner. Be consistent in your actions.

VIII. Children With Special Needs

1. No child shall be denied participation in the children's programs of Word of Life Christian Center for reason of physical or mentally challenging conditions, unless it would put the child in any kind of physical danger.
2. Children who are physically or mentally challenged shall be included in classes to which they have access through use of elevator or other special needs equipment.

3. Parents or guardians of a child with special needs shall be actively involved in making sure that workers know how to maximize the child's participation in the activity. Additional workers may be provided to insure a child's special needs are met.

IX. ON/OFF-CAMPUS SLEEPOVER GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT MINISTRIES

1. The 2 adult rule must be followed (2 adult leaders, who are Child Protection Policy cleared, must be present).
2. Permission slips must be obtained from all the children's parents.
3. Cross-gender sleepovers will not be permitted by Word of Life Christian Center.
4. As long as any children are awake, one of the leaders must also be awake to ensure monitoring of safe behavior.
5. Information form regarding emergencies must be obtained from the parent(s), including numbers and locations where parents and children can be reached.
6. Leaders should check with pastoral staff and use good judgment regarding movies. No R-rated or movies will be permitted. PG-13 movies will have be okayed by the pastor or children's pastor.
7. Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn. No spaghetti straps for girls and shorts must be at least the length to just 2 to 3 inches above the knee. Boys must wear a shirt and shorts must be at least the length to just above the knee.

Some topics to be aware of and discuss include the following:

- The use or nonuse of media devices.
- Internet access and use, especially regarding sensual/sexual content.
- Appropriate and non-appropriate music.