

# **CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY**

REVISED NOVEMBER 7, 2023



## Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to provide a safe and secure environment for children, youth and adult volunteers involved in the various children's and youth ministries and events at Grace Bible Church. This will set the stage for us to accomplish our mission to help children and youth come to know, love and follow Jesus.

This policy will be followed by the adults who are involved in the Children's and Youth Ministries of Grace Bible Church. **While this policy will usually refer to children and children's ministry, both children and youth ministries are included.**

## Children's and Youth Ministry Workers Screening Process

Children's and Youth workers must complete the following steps before they begin to serve in ministry at GBC.

1. Read the Children's and Youth Ministry Policy and sign the Compliance Agreement Form, which will then be kept on file at the church office.
2. Agree to allow GBC to conduct a criminal background check.
3. Complete and submit a GBC Children's and Youth Ministries Adult Application Form.
4. Attend a Children and Youth Ministries Orientation Class.
5. Have a conversation with an appropriate ministry leader to discuss possible ministry opportunities.

## Class Room

1. Classrooms and teaching areas should be visible and accessible. Each door of a classroom should have a window. If there is no window, the door should be left open. Sight lines through each window should remain unobstructed at all times.
2. Wellness Policy: Children should not be brought into class with any of the following symptoms and/or illness: fever within the last 24 hours, questionable rashes, coughing, diarrhea, impetigo, active chicken pox, measles, mumps, or conjunctivitis (pinkeye). Any child on antibiotics should have been on the medication for at least 48 hours before coming to a children's activity.
3. Children's Ministry Workers will not administer any medication.
4. Youth Ministry Workers are expected to arrange for an appropriate substitute when they are absent.
5. Ministry leaders will periodically observe the nursery and classrooms to ensure safety.
6. Children's Ministry Workers are expected report any serious incident or injury to the appropriate ministry leader by filling out an incident/accident form. It is important to complete the form within the first few hours to insure details are accurately recalled. (See Attached)

## Nursery

1. A child/parent identification system will be utilized for the nursery.
2. One female adult Children's Ministry Worker will always be present in the nursery.
3. All Children's Ministry Workers in the nursery must be 18 years old or older.
4. High school and junior high students are allowed to volunteer in the nursery as helpers when approved by their respective ministry leaders.



## **Worker and Children Interaction**

1. Touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. The following guidelines are to be promoted for pure, genuine, and positive displays of God's love:
  - a. Hugs: One-arm side hugs or hand-to-arm hugs are positive contacts. Avoid initiating full contact, body-to-body hugs, or kisses.
  - b. Lap Sitting: Appropriate sitting on laps may occur with children five years old and younger. Discourage lap sitting with school-age children. Rather, encourage them to sit next to you.
  - c. Casual Touch: Gentle contacts during activities may be on children's heads, shoulders, arms and hands.
2. One-on-one appointments with students of the opposite sex are discouraged. If necessary, meetings with members of the opposite sex should be held in a public place with separate transportation used. Meetings should only be in public places.
3. Open Door Policy: At no time should anyone working with children have a one-on-one meeting behind windowless, closed doors. For everyone's protection, keep the door at least partially open, if there is no window.

## **Discipline**

1. Should a child's behavior need correction, the following procedures are recommended:
  - a. Speak to a child who is being disruptive, re-directing them to proper activity using a gentle reminder such as "please walk".
  - b. If a child continues to be disobedient the Children's Ministry Worker should firmly but kindly correct the child's behavior and warn them that if they continue to disobey their parent will be contacted
  - c. If the child continues to be disruptive then the Children's Ministry Worker should contact the parent or an appropriate ministry leader who can contact the parent.
2. At no time will any form of physical discipline be used on a child.

## **Bathroom**

1. No Children's Ministry Workers will be alone with a child in a bathroom.
2. When age appropriate supervision is required it is recommended that two Children's Ministry Workers accompany children to the bathroom.
3. If only one Children's Ministry Worker is available then the worker will stand at the doorway of the bathroom, in view of the hall, until the child is finished.
4. No male Children's Ministry Workers will take female children to the bathroom.

## **Group Activities**

1. A minimum of two approved Children's Ministry Workers is required for any off campus group activities.
2. Proper written consent forms are required for each child/teen participating in off-campus group activities. Medical release forms may be required depending on the activity and location.
3. When an activity requires travel, all drivers must be at least 25 years old and must have a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance. The number of persons per car should not exceed the number of seatbelts.



4. Driving: When a Children's Ministry Worker is driving students home, they should not be alone with a student unless they have parental permission. Whenever possible a Children's Ministry Worker will not transport a student of the opposite sex alone.
5. When the activity is local, it is recommended that parents arrange their own transportation to and from the activity site. At least two Children's Ministry Workers must stay until the last child is picked up.

### **Overnight Policy**

1. All overnight events must be accompanied by at least two approved Children's Ministry Workers.
2. All overnight events should be pre-approved by the appropriate ministry leader.
3. There will not be overnight events for children younger than 3<sup>rd</sup> grade unless it is specifically a parent/child outing.

### **REPORTS OF ABUSE OR SUSPECTED ABUSE**

If you become aware of abuse, you need to report it to the Senior Pastor or one of the Deacons. Reports may be direct complaints from parents, children, or other persons within the church, or persons outside the church.

In the event a child alleges abuse or a parent or Youth Ministry Workers suspects abuse by a Youth Ministry Worker or non-adult Youth Ministry Worker or by another child, the Pastor and Deacon Board will initiate an immediate review of the circumstances, including an interview of workers, non-adult workers, and children present at the time of the allegation, to determine whether such allegation should be reported in accordance with Illinois law.