

THREE RIVERS COMMUNITY CHURCH

CHILDREN'S and YOUTH MINISTRY WORKER GUIDELINES

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

We realize that for workers and parents to be effective teachers to the children, they need to have adequate time to be taught themselves. *Therefore, "assignments" will be made on a rotating basis.* Our end goal is to have workers miss no more than one Sunday per month in the corporate worship service. Please, however, realize that workers may need to be called upon more often. To ensure the highest degree of safety possible for our children, ALL caregivers of infants, toddlers, children, and teens will undergo a background check for criminal behavior, the background check may be conducted as often as once a year or more. *There will be absolutely no exceptions to this.*

All workers must be members or regular attenders of TRCC. All workers must have a Children and Youth Worker Application on file.

Workers must observe the "two-adult rule," whereby a worker will avoid one-on-one situations with children (other than their own) whenever reasonably possible. Classroom doors are to remain unlocked when an adult must be alone with a group of children.

We will strive to provide a reasonable workers-to-children ratio. Please understand, however, that since we are solely relying on voluntary worker participation, the ratio may fluctuate according to the number of volunteers at any given time.

Workers also may be asked to attend training or planning sessions on occasion.

Workers, please also make yourselves familiar with the "Children's Ministry General Guidelines".

SESSION PREPARATION AND COMPLETION

Please be aware of your assigned day to work in the nursery or with children's activities. Please make all efforts to fulfill this responsibility. However, we all have unexpected life events that may prohibit us from coming to church. If an unexpected situation arises and you are not able to fulfill your responsibility, you are expected to refer to the Nursery Worker Directory to find a replacement. *It is the workers responsibility to find his or her own replacement.* If you have exhausted your resources and arrangements cannot be made for a replacement please contact Tanya Hicks, TRCC Children's Ministry Director.

On your scheduled day, please arrive no later than 10:00 a.m. in order to help ensure the room is set up properly and be present to welcome the children. Please also plan on staying a little later than usual to help clean up and tear down the nursery and/or children's room.

At the end of each session please help fellow workers make sure that:

- All soiled diapers and trash are disposed of in the outside dumpster.
- All toys, cleaning supplies, and nursery equipment are cleaned and put away in their appropriate container
- The classroom is returned to its exact condition prior to our use (i.e., tables and chairs arranged accordingly, cleaned, trash removed, etc.)
- The lights are turned off

In order to decrease the amount of time that may be needed for volunteers to stay after church for “break-down,” feel free to pick up a little toward the end of the session. However, we do not want to portray the impression that the children are no longer welcome by having everything put away. Please keep an eye on the toys and equipment and let the Children’s Ministry Director know when a certain supply is running low or a toy needs repair.

RECEPTION AND DISMISSAL OF CHILDREN

Please make all effort to be in the nursery on your scheduled day with ample time to welcome the children.

It may be easiest to “assign” one worker per session to be in charge of reception and dismissal procedures. Other workers can then focus on the children.

When parents drop off their children please do the following:

- Choose a parent/child sticker and allow the parent to fill out the required information on the sticker
- Place the completed sticker on the child’s back.
- Label diaper bags and sippy cups and any other personal items of children with the identification stickers.

When the parents come to pick up the children please do the following:

- Ask for the matching sticker. Retrieve the child and the child’s diaper bags, sippy cups, and other belongings.
- Please **DO NOT** give a child to someone who does not have the matching sticker.
- After all children have been retrieved, please continue picking up the room.

PROMOTING HEALTH AND HYGIENE

For your protection and in order to practice sound sanitation habits, please follow good health and hygiene procedures. You may wear the disposable gloves provided each time you change a diaper or assist with toileting. Please use a different pair of gloves with each child. (Do not feel obligated to use gloves when diapering or assisting your own child). When diapering, place the used gloves in the bag with the soiled diaper to be thrown away. When toileting, throw the gloves in the restroom garbage cans (do *not* flush them down the toilet).

To keep the spread of germs to a minimum, please change diapers only at the diaper changing station. If the diaper changing pad gets soiled, please clean thoroughly with Clorox wipes or a cleaning solution. Wipe down toys periodically with Clorox wipes or a cleaning solution, as well.

ILLNESS PROCEDURE

Parents have been asked not to bring a sick child into the nursery or children's program. We simply request that they remain with their parents. A nursery or children's room is an environment where an illness can be spread to everyone within the span of the hour. *If a child is brought to the nursery or children's program and is visibly ill, please review this policy with the parents and ask them nicely to keep the children with them.* If needed, emphasize that this is for the protection of the other children and workers, to work to ensure a speedy recovery for the ill child, and because ill children are most comfortable with their parents. If you have any problems, retrieve the Children's Ministry Director.

If a child seems to become sick while in the nursery or children's program or displays symptoms of an illness:

- Separate the child from the other children
- Try to make the child as comfortable as possible
- Summon the parents to come for the child or take the child to the parent
- Separate the toys played with by that child. Clean them after her or she leaves.

INJURY PROCEDURE

Prevention is our best defense against injuries. Please keep all diapering supplies and cleaning supplies out of the reach of the children as much as possible. Also, please keep other equipment and supplies such as pens, scissors, etc. out of the reach of the children, unless of course they are being used by the children in a supervised activity.

Please note that a First Aid Kit will be kept in the nursery to be used as needed

If an injury does occur, please follow standard first aid procedures to care for the child. To protect yourself and others, please use disposable gloves when administering aid where blood or other bodily fluids are involved.

If any injury occurs, please complete an Injury Report Form. The forms are kept on file in the nursery. Please complete the form. When the parent comes to retrieve the child, verbally report what happened and how the child was treated. Show the Injury Report Form to the parent and have the parent read and sign it. Keep the form on file. *If a severe injury occurs, summon the parents and Children's Ministry Director immediately and emergency personnel if needed.*

DISCIPLINE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

We believe that while at church gatherings, caregivers should not neglect to undergird the Christian discipline that parents are trying to instill. Discipline is more than mere punishment for bad behavior. The foundation and root of discipline is actually *instruction*. Thus, we will aim to instruct the children in our care of Godly virtues and character traits.

We will aim to instruct the children in obedience to their Lord first, parents second, and their caregivers third. We will seek to help children understand that obedience to parents and caregivers is also obedience to the Lord.

We will seek to instill in the children respect for their Lord by displaying respect for others and for property.

Please consistently communicate that the following behavior is expected:

Our set of four basic rules:

1. Be kind and respect others.
2. Listen and follow directions.
3. Speak in a manner that is pleasing to God.
4. Be careful with church/school property.

Consequences:

Step 1: First Warning – If the child does not obey the four basic rules, we will talk to the child and remind him/her of the rules.

Step 2: Second Warning – We will let the child know that if he/she misbehaves again, his/her parents will be retrieved.

Step 3: Retrieve Parents – We will page the parents to remove the child for the remaining time in the session.

Step 4: Conference-If the behavior continues over a period of time, notify the Children’s Ministry Director, who will then schedule a conference with the parents.

Under no circumstance is a children’s worker permitted to use corporal punishment (i.e., “spanking”) or otherwise physically hurt a child, for the purpose of discipline or otherwise, in the children’s ministry. The primary responsibility of a child’s discipline lies with his/her parent(s) or guardian(s). Therefore, if a discipline problem arises, please follow the steps above and notify the child’s parent and the Children’s Ministry Director.

GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

1. Do not treat any suspicion as frivolous.
2. Please share any suspicions confidentially with the Children’s Ministry Director or church staff and continue to monitor the situation.
3. PLEASE NOTE: Suspicious can include incidents committed at church or church functions by church personnel, or incidents committed in another sphere (home, church, sports teams, etc.) of a child’s life by any other individual. *If a child verbally tells you of an incident committed by someone, the TRCC staff is obligated by state law to report it. If a child or youth also verbally tells you of their intent to harm someone else, the TRCC staff is obligated by state law to report it.*
4. If it is determined that an incident has taken place, report the incident IMMEDIATELY to the church staff. Church staff will be responsible for confirming the facts reported and the condition of the child when the report is made.
5. When the incident is reported verbally to the staff, the report is to be documented by the staff on an *Incident Report Form*. Staff will also continue to document how the reporting and follow-up is being handled.
6. In accordance with state law, the church staff is then responsible for reporting the suspected incident to Child Protective Services at (706) 295-6550 who will then handle further investigation to confirm the actual occurrence of the incident. *Note: failure to report to appropriate public authorities can hold the church, even individuals, legally liable. By law, any suspected abuse MUST be reported.*
7. The entire pastoral staff is to be made aware of the situation so as to best decide how to handle the situation and best minister to the families involved.
8. Church staff must notify the church’s attorney and insurance company.
9. Workers, families, and church staff are asked to *maintain confidentiality* of the investigation and not to discuss details with anyone not involved.

10. Everyone is asked to cooperate fully with law enforcement officials.
11. The accused, if a part of the church, will be suspended from the performance of church duties involving children or youth until the investigation is completed.
12. When appropriate, church staff will inform the family of the concerned child of the steps being taken, and continue to keep them advised of the status of the investigation.
13. In the instance of confirmed child abuse, the worker will be immediately dismissed from his/her church position. Church discipline will be considered in the case where the perpetrator is a TRCC member.
14. Church staff and workers will work together to provide the utmost care for the family involved.

GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING SUICIDE ATTEMPTS

1. Do not treat any suspicion as frivolous.
2. Please share any suspicions confidentially with church staff and continue to monitor the situation.
3. PLEASE NOTE: Suspicions can include a suicide attempt committed at church or church functions, or attempts committed in another sphere (home, church, sports teams, etc.) of a child's life. *If a child verbally tells you of plans to make a suicide attempt, the TRCC staff is obligated by state law to report it. If a child verbally tells you of a previously made suicide attempt, please report that to a staff member who can alert the family.*
4. If it is determined that an attempt has taken place or is planned to take place, report the incident IMMEDIATELY to the church staff.
5. When the attempt or planned attempt is reported verbally to the staff, the report is to be documented by the staff on an *Incident Report Form*.
6. In the case of a past suicide attempt, staff will work to notify parents and to counsel with the family or refer the family to a professional counselor.
7. In the case of a reported planned attempt and in accordance with state law, the church staff is then responsible for reporting the planned attempt to the parents and proper authorities (such as the Child Protective Services at 706.295.6550 or police) who will then work to protect the individual. *Note; failure to report to appropriate public authorities can hold the church, even individuals, legally liable. By law, planned suicide attempt MUST be reported.*

CODE OF ETHICS

1. While acting in your capacity as a child or youth worker at TRCC, please adhere to the following:
2. Smoking, or using tobacco products in the presence of the children or youth is prohibited.
3. Using, possessing, or being under the influence of illegal drugs in the presence of children or youth at church or church events is prohibited.
4. Using or being under the influence of alcohol in the presence of the children or youth at church or church events is prohibited.
5. Children and Youth workers shall not abuse children or youth including:
 - a. Any evidence of sexual activity in the presence of or in association with a child or youth
 - b. Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of activity or abuse with a child or youth
 - c. Any sexual activity or advance between a child or youth
 - d. Any physically abusive behavior or intended bodily injury to a child or youth

- e. Physical neglect of a child or youth, including failure to provide adequate supervision during a church-sponsored event
 - f. The presence or possession of obscene or pornographic materials at any function of the church
 - g. The possession or consumption of any illegal drugs or alcohol while participating in a children's or youth function.
6. All workers shall refrain from using profanity in the presence of children or youth.
 7. If you believe you are ill, please notify the children's staff and find an alternate worker for you.
 8. All workers will do everything in their power to avoid being put in one-on-one situations with a child other than their own.
 9. Under any situation other than emergencies, children should not be left unsupervised.
 10. Workers will report any accidents or injuries to children, youth or themselves to parents and/or staff.
 11. Workers will report any suspected abuse or suicide attempt or suicide plan to the staff and to proper authorities and shall cooperate to the full extent of the law.