



## Children's Ministry Policies & Procedures

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## General Purpose Statement

New Life Presbyterian Church seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth (all persons under the age of eighteen [18] years), who participate in our programs and activities. By implementing the below practices, our goal is to protect the children and youth of New Life Presbyterian Church and those visiting our church from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior while also protecting our staff and volunteers from false accusations. Volunteers must agree with the basic tenets of the Christian faith and believe in the Gospel of Jesus as it is stated in the application.

## Selection of Volunteers

All employees and all persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities will be screened. This screening includes the following:

a. Six-Month Rule

No volunteer will be considered for any position involving contact with minors until s/he has been a member of New Life Presbyterian Church for a minimum of six (6) months or a regular attendee for one year. This time of interaction between our leadership and the applicant allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

b. Written Application

All persons seeking to work with children must complete and sign a written application in a form to be supplied by us. The application will request basic information from the applicant and will inquire into previous experience with children, previous church affiliation, references and employment information, as well as disclosure of any previous criminal convictions. The application form will be maintained in confidence on file at New Life Presbyterian Church.

c. Personal Interview

Upon completion of the application, a face-to-face interview will be scheduled with the applicant to discuss his/her suitability for the position.

d. Reference Checks

Before an applicant is permitted to work with children, at least two of the applicant's references will be checked. These references should be of an institutional nature as opposed to personal or family references, preferably from organizations where the applicant has worked with children in the past. Documentation of the reference checks will be maintained in confidence on file at New Life Presbyterian Church.

e. Criminal Background Check

A national criminal background check is required for all employees (regardless of position) and for the following categories of volunteers:

- Those who will be involved in after school/preschool/day care center;
- Those who will be involved in overnight activities with minors;
- Those counseling minors;
- Those involved in one-on-one mentorship of minors; and
- Those having occasional one-on-one contact with minors (that is, church-sponsored events and vehicle drivers)
- All adults who will be volunteering with minors, including Sunday School teachers and assistants; Children's Church teachers, adult volunteers, and check-in volunteers; Sunday and Wednesday nursery workers and volunteers; Vacation Bible School teachers and volunteers; and those serving children's snacks on Sunday mornings.

Before a criminal background check is run, prospective volunteers will be asked to sign an authorization form for New Life Presbyterian Church to run the check. If an individual declines to sign the authorization form, s/he will be unable to work with children.

f. Criminal Offenses

What constitutes a disqualifying offense that will keep an individual from working with children will be determined by The Safety Coordinator and The Ministry Coordinator on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances. Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or for offenses involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances, indecency and any conduct contrary to our mission will preclude someone from being permitted to work with children. Failure to disclose a criminal conviction on the application form will also be a disqualifying event. The background check authorization form and results will be maintained in confidence on file at New Life Presbyterian Church.

## Implementation of General Policies

### Volunteer Application/Vetting Process

**Step 1:** As potential new volunteers are identified (adults and teens), they will fill out an application to serve in New Life Kids. The applications will be available online on the NLPC Connect CCB portal.

- Our Safety Administrator will send the application link to the volunteer through CCB forms. The application document will be saved as an archived shared file.

**Step 2:** Upon receipt of the completed application, each volunteer will be interviewed by the Volunteer Administrator, along with the Department Ministry Coordinator and an Elder to assess the "fit" of the potential volunteer with the specific ministry.

- The Volunteer Administrator and CM Director will be notified once the application is complete, and the Volunteer Administrator will schedule a time to meet with the volunteer.

**Step 3:** Once applicants have been assessed and deemed fit, their names will be sent to the Safety Administrator in order to schedule their Child Abuse Prevention training. Training will be held on the first Sundays in between services at 9:55am-10:30am in Room 5. Training will be scheduled as needed. Teens will review the training material with their parents together and bring back the signed forms. Any final documentation and criminal background consent forms will be signed and collected at the training.

- The Safety Administrator will send the child abuse prevention material to the teen's parent to review and schedule a time for the adult training with the potential volunteers.

**Step 4:** A professional background investigation will be conducted by an outside agency. The outcome of the investigation will be communicated to the Children's Ministry Director, and Safety Administrator. If any potential issues arise, they will be reported to the Executive and CE Pastors.

- The Safety Administrator will send the background consent form and link to CIA once the volunteer has completed the training. The CM Director will send the outcome of the volunteers background check status to The Safety Administrator. The Executive and CE Pastors will be notified if there are any concerns in the background check investigation.

**Step 5:** Upon satisfactory completion of all prior steps, the volunteer is considered vetted and approved to begin serving in the children's ministry. The Volunteer Administrator will follow up with the vetted volunteers, letting them know that they have completed the process. The Ministry Coordinator will send them a welcome letter, volunteer schedule and the policies and procedures for their specific ministry.

- The Volunteer Administrator will be notified once the background check is cleared and she will communicate with the volunteer and the Ministry Coordinator that the volunteer is ready to serve. The Ministry Coordinator will contact their volunteer to go over responsibilities and place them in contact with the Ministry Scheduler.

## Two-Adult Rule

It is our goal that a minimum of two unrelated adult volunteers will be in attendance at all times when children are being supervised during our programs and activities. Some youth classes may have only one adult teacher in attendance during the class session; in these instances, doors to the classroom should remain open and there should be no fewer than three students with the adult teacher. We do not allow minors to be alone with one adult on our premises or in any sponsored activity unless in a counseling situation.

## Allegations of Child Abuse

For purposes of this policy, "child abuse" is any action (or lack of action) which endangers or harms a child's physical, psychological or emotional health and development. Child abuse occurs in different ways and includes the following:

- Physical abuse – any physical injury to a child which is not accidental, such as beating, shaking, burns, and biting.
- Emotional abuse – emotional injury when the child is not nurtured or provided with love and security, such as an environment of constant criticism, belittling and persistent teasing.

- Sexual abuse – any sexual activity between a child and an adult or between a child and another child at least four years older than the victim, including activities such as fondling, exhibitionism, intercourse, incest, and pornography.
- Neglect – depriving a child of his/her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

### Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

Children’s ministry volunteers may have the opportunity to become aware of abuse or neglect of the children under our care. In the event that an individual involved in the care of children at New Life Presbyterian Church becomes aware of suspected abuse or neglect of a child under his/her care, this should be reported immediately to one of the paid staff ministers of the church for further action including reporting to authorities as may be mandated by state law.

### Child Abuse Occurrence Procedures

In the event that an incident of abuse or neglect is alleged to have occurred at New Life Presbyterian Church or during our sponsored programs or activities, the following procedure shall be followed:

- The parent or guardian of the child will be notified.
- The volunteer or employee alleged to be the perpetrator of the abuse or misconduct will immediately be placed on leave from working with children pending an investigation.
- Our insurance company will be notified, and we will complete an incident report.
- We will comply with the state’s requirements regarding mandatory reporting of abuse as the law then exists.
- We will cooperate with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities. In the event there is no investigation of the incident by state or local authorities, a team will be formed to investigate the circumstances of the incident. The team should act only in consultation with our insurance company and/or attorney.
- Any person who is not found innocent of the alleged abuse or misconduct will be removed from their position with children or youth.
- DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSON will be our spokesperson to the media concerning incidents of abuse or neglect, unless he or she is alleged to be involved. All other employees and volunteers should refrain from speaking to the media.
- A pastoral visit will be arranged for those who desire it.

### Open Door Policy

Classroom doors should remain open unless there is a window in the door or a side window beside it. Doors should never be locked while persons are inside the room.

### Teenage Workers

We recognize that there may be times when it is necessary or desirable for babysitters (paid or volunteer) who are themselves under age 18 to assist in caring for children during programs or activities.

The following guidelines apply to such workers:

- Teenage workers must be at least age 13.
- Teenage workers will be screened as specified above, minus the criminal background investigation.
- Teenage workers must be under the supervision of an adult and must never be left alone with children.

## Sick Child Policy

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children at New Life Presbyterian Church. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours
- Green or yellow runny nose
- Eye or skin infections
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease

Children who are observed by our employees or volunteers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up for the day.

## Medications Policy

It is the policy of New Life Presbyterian Church not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Parents are reminded of our sick child policy.

Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with the ministry leader to develop a plan of action.

## Discipline Policy

It is the policy of New Life Presbyterian Church not to administer corporal punishment, even if parents have suggested or given permission for it. There should be no spanking, grabbing, hitting, or other physical discipline of children. Volunteers should consult with the ministry leader if assistance is needed with disciplinary issues.

## Restroom Guidelines

Children five years of age and younger should utilize a classroom bathroom, if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, at least 2 volunteers should escort a group of children to the hallway bathroom.

A volunteer should check the bathroom first to make sure that it is empty, then allow the children inside. The volunteers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, a volunteer should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the volunteers should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall door open as one volunteer assists the child in full view of the second volunteer. For the protection of all, volunteers should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed and never be in a closed bathroom stall with a child. Parents are strongly encouraged to have their children visit the bathroom prior to each class.

## First Aid

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

- For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, volunteers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
- For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the volunteer's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.

## RADIO PROCEDURES AND USES

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Radios should be in each classroom and turned off after each use

### Do's

- Identify self when doing radio check
- Make sure you have the proper channel
- Listen before you speak/have a clear channel
- Put microphone close to mouth
- Key the mike and pause
- Speak in a calm manner
- Identify yourself and when needed your location
- Give brief and clear bits of information
- Familiarize and know the proper nomenclature and designations for your church site locations
- Report broken equipment to team lead or base
- Gauge the importance of your transmission.
- During ongoing situations try and keep the channel clear

### Don'ts

- Yell into the radio
- Just speak.....think first/listen first
- Sit with equipment in such a way that leads to a hot mic situation
- Push and then think of what to say
- Wrap the cord tightly around radio
- Place the radio back into the charger while it is turned on

### Situational Examples

WRONG	RIGHT
"Alpha?"	"We have an unknown Hispanic woman in her mid-30's dressed in blue jeans and a white shirt hanging around the children's nursery acting suspiciously."
"Alpha, do you see the person of interest, to your left?"	"Alpha, do you see the white male in the black hoodie that just walked in on the A-Side and is walking into the church office. "
"Does anybody know about this dog in the back of the church?"	"Alpha in lobby to all, I just talked with white female in yellow dress with small black dog. They are OK"

## EVACUATION GUIDELINES AND MAP

If the fire alarm sounds, parents must follow the evacuation instructions out of the building. Parents flooding the Children's Ministry areas will cause congestion and prevent the children from being able to safely evacuate the building. All volunteers are to be aware of the plan to follow in case of an emergency. Teachers will be responsible for getting everyone in their classroom out of the building. Evacuation cribs are located in the Nursery. The walking ropes should also be in the Preschool areas. Make sure that no one is left in the areas where you are serving. Close the doors as you exit rooms, but do not lock them. Move briskly to leave the building and go to the evacuation areas. Teachers will have attendance sheets in their class to bring during evacuation.





