

1

Purpose and  
Commitment

## Serving in the Children/Youth and Family Ministries at Downtown

Our purpose for establishing this Child Protection Policy is to demonstrate our absolute, unwavering commitment to the physical and emotional safety and to the spiritual growth of all our children and youth.

Our commitment to this purpose includes the adoption and enforcement of this policy on child protection. This policy applies to all adults who work with children or youth in any paid or voluntary capacity. All adults who regularly interact with children or youth must read, be in agreement with, and sign this policy, and affirm that they have not resigned or been terminated from a position or leadership role for any reasons related to misconduct.

The Downtown church reserves the right to modify, supplement, rescind, or revise any policy or provision, with or without notice, as necessary or appropriate. However, at all times, this church will comply with all applicable laws.



## Welcome

Welcome and thank you for volunteering to serve with us at the Downtown Church of Christ. The staff, Ministry leaders and Shepherds of the church are excited about your gifts and skills, and we look forward to your service as part of the church's ministry team.

At our church, we sincerely believe that God equips all believers to serve in ministry. In 1 Peter 2:9, God calls his followers "a royal priesthood"; 1 Corinthians 12:1 says that "God gives [spiritual gifts] to *each one*, just as he determines." We sometimes use the term "volunteers" as a convenient way of referring to those who serve, but what we're really talking about is people who lovingly respond to Jesus' call to serve in his ministry.

Therefore, it's important to keep in mind that during your service with our church, you're representing both our congregation and the Lord as you live out every aspect of your life. As you minister to others here, as well as in your private life away from church, you should be striving toward living in a way that serves as an example to others of your own deepening relationship with God.

## Application, Selection and Screening

## Teacher Qualifications

We believe that appropriate personal relationships between adult leaders and the Children/youth (e.g., hugs), affirmation (e.g., pats on the back), support (e.g., prayer) and physical caretaking (e.g., changing diapers) are appropriate in our community of caring Christians. Care will be taken, however, to ensure that adults do not behave in inappropriate ways at anytime while caring for our children/youth

**The following are required of all Children and Youth and Family Ministry Teachers/Volunteers:**

- ♥ Must submit an application form with referrals.
- ♥ Must be a baptized believer.
- ♥ Must have an in-person interview.
- ♥ Must sign the Agreement and ***Acknowledgement of Receipt Form*** indicating an understanding of and agreement to adhere to Downtown's Child/Youth Protection Policies and Procedures.
- ♥ **May be subject to criminal history checks and referral checks.**
- ♥ Teachers must be a Downtown Member for a minimum of 3 months.
- ♥ Teachers Assistants need only be a member in good standing, no minimal membership required.
- ♥ All teachers and teachers assistants must be approved by either the teacher selection committee or the appropriate minister.

## Teacher Guidelines

*All paid staff will be required to pass a criminal history check.*

*All applicants information will be kept confidential and in a secure location.*

The following guidelines are required of all teachers and assistant teachers:

- ♥ Take the commitment to teach seriously. Pray and prepare.
- ♥ Arrive **at least** 15 minutes before class begins. Remember! "If you are 10 minutes early, you are still 5 minutes late!"
- ♥ Give at least 48 hours notice to the Children's/ Youth Ministers when a substitute is needed for your class. In cases of sudden illness or last minute emergencies, make sure to call the church office or the ministers at home.
- ♥ Guard your mouth. Don't use any language which could be considered offensive to children or adults.
- ♥ Make sure to take note of allergies listed for each student in your classroom. All teachers must receive prior approval for serving any snack/food that is not already provided in the classroom.
- ♥ Make sure attendance is completed at each class time including visitor information. Attendance records are important for follow-up.

## Dress Code

Each teacher and assistant teacher should observe the following:

- ♥ Nursery workers should wear an apron/smock and name tag.
- ♥ You may wear comfortable but modest attire; no short shorts, short skirts, low neck blouses, crop tops or other revealing clothing.
- ♥ Any visible body piercing other than pierced earrings, must be discussed and approved by the minister in charge.

## Harassment

Downtown is committed to providing an environment that is free of discrimination. In keeping with this commitment, Downtown policy prohibits unlawful harassment, including verbal, physical and sexual harassment. It is important for all teachers to understand that jokes, stories, cartoons, nicknames, and comments about appearance, sexual content, or racism will not be tolerated.

2

General Policy

## Classroom Policies and Procedures

Classroom policies and procedures have been incorporated to help protect our children and our teachers. All Downtown teachers, volunteers, and staff are expected to support the rules with a positive attitude and compliance.

- ♥ Under no circumstances is a teacher/volunteer to be alone in a private room, bathroom, vehicle, etc. with a child or teen.
- ♥ All classrooms designated for children and youth activities should have a door with a window. Doors to classrooms or offices in which meetings may take place should remain open or have windows that prevent total privacy.
- ♥ **TWO ADULT RULE** - It is the goal of the church that two screened adults be present with children at all time. In those circumstances where an adult must be alone with children or youth for a brief time, he/she may only do so when subject to being visually observed at all times, such as through an open door or door with a window.

## Restroom Breaks

**Male teachers are NOT allowed to assist children/youth inside the restroom.**

In classrooms where you have an adjoining restroom (Nursery - Preschool):

- ♥ Allow only one child at a time in the restroom.
- ♥ Keep door slightly open.
- ♥ Stand outside the door so you can hear if the child needs help.
- ♥ If a child needs help, leave door open and have another teacher stand at the entrance where they can see you and the child.
- ♥ Both teacher and child should wash hands.

In classrooms where there is **NOT** an adjoining restroom (K - 6 grade):

- ♥ Preschool and Kindergarten students should be supervised by a teacher from OUTSIDE the restroom door. Prop open door if necessary.
- ♥ Teachers/volunteers should supervise children of the same gender.
- ♥ Students in grades 1—6 should be sent to the restroom in same sex pairs.
- ♥ Have children wash hands.

## Prohibited Acts

**Prohibited conduct includes any form of physical, emotional, sexual, or mental abuse of a child. Prohibited conduct may include, but is not limited to:**

- ♥ Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of sexual conduct towards a youth or child;
- ♥ Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any adult and a protected minor;
- ♥ Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between an older child and a younger child;
- ♥ Any kind of verbal remarks with sexual connotations, overtones, or innuendo directed to or about a minor;
- ♥ Infliction of physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a minor;
- ♥ Spanking;
- ♥ Possessing obscene or pornographic materials at any church activity;
- ♥ Possession or being under the influence of any illegal substances;
- ♥ Consuming or being under the influence of alcohol while leading or participating in a function of the Children's or Youth and Family Ministries;
- ♥ Carrying any type of weapon on church property.

**Response  
Procedures  
(Church  
Sponsored  
Event)**

If a child, parent, or volunteer makes allegations of inappropriate conduct on the part of a volunteer worker or teacher while participating in a church sponsored activity the following steps will be taken:

1. The first person to learn of an incident of misconduct toward a child/youth during a Church-sponsored activity should first secure the safety of the child, children or youth and then immediately report this incident to the Minister in charge or to one of the Elders. This individual should not leave the child, children, or youth alone to report the incident and should not personally confront the alleged violator of the policy
2. The individual reporting the incident will be required to fill out an **Incident Report Form** as soon as possible - ideally, immediately after the initial, verbal reporting of the incident. This written report is extremely important - the information provided will be critical to the investigation of the incident.
3. Two individuals - the person in charge and the Minister, or the Minister and an Elder will respond to inform and support the child's parents and family as needed.
4. The Minister or Elder will alert the established Child Safety Team which will assist with the investigation of the situation and determination of appropriate actions to be taken.

**Response  
Procedures  
Cont...**

5. If abuse is suspected, the minister in charge and an elder will contact the accused, tell him or her of the allegation, and get a statement concerning the allegation. He or she will be informed of our obligation to report the situation to Child Protective Services and will be asked to suspend any involvement with children and youth until an investigation has been completed. Both statements will be recorded in written form and kept on file, using the "Incident Report Form".
6. If the allegation appears to be one involving inappropriate conduct the incident must be reported to the Department of Human Services (DHS) as soon as reasonable suspicion has been confirmed. The church administrator should then contact the Church's liability insurance carrier.
7. All persons involved with the report and investigation shall keep the information in strictest confidence.

**Cooperation  
with Civil  
Authorities**

The Church will cooperate with DHS and all other civil authorities in the investigation of an alleged incident of child abuse. Whenever possible, an appropriate staff person should be involved during all interviews of the child and/or the accused.

**Response to  
the Media**

The elders will name an individual who will be responsible for all media inquiries about the alleged incident.

**Response to  
the  
Congregation**

If and when it is deemed appropriate by the Child Safety Team and the Elders, a brief statement will be given to the congregation regarding the alleged incident without giving unnecessary details, placing blame, interfering with the victim's privacy, or violating any confidentiality concerns.

**Response to  
the  
individuals  
Involved**

The church will take appropriate steps to provide for the immediate needs of the alleged victim, the person against whom allegations have been brought, alleged abuser and any other individuals affected by the alleged misconduct.

**Records of  
Alleged Child  
Abuse**

Every effort will be made to keep all conversations and written records pertaining to the alleged incident of child abuse in strictest confidence. Documentation will be kept in a locked file.

**Drivers and  
Travel  
Events**

No fewer than three persons, one of them an adult, should occupy a vehicle traveling to an event. Only adults will transport youth. Drivers will be expected to adhere to ALL traffic laws. **All drivers must be appropriately licensed for the vehicle they are driving when transporting children to or from an event.**

**Overnight  
Event  
Chaperones**

It is our goal that every sleeping unit (motel room, camp cabin, etc.) has two adults of the same gender. Under no circumstance is an adult to be alone at any time with a child/youth in a sleeping unit. Sleeping units are subject to unannounced visits by a monitor. Lock-in hours will be observed for overnight events and adults are not allowed to share a bed with a child or youth unless it is their own child. **It is the responsibility of the minister responsible for the event to keep records of sleeping quarters complete with dates and locations.**

**Pick-up  
after  
Events**

Upon return from a travel event, children and youth will be released only to their parent or guardian unless the person in charge of the event has been notified in advance by the parent or guardian.

**Ratios for  
Travel and  
off-site  
Activities**

**The following ratios are recommended for off-site activities and for events requiring travel:**

Children, ages 0–5	1 adult to 3-4 children
Children, grades 1-6	1 adult to 4–6 children
Youth, grades 7–8	1 adult to 8 youth

## Nursery Caregiver Procedures

### GENERAL POLICY

- ♥ 2 adults will be present in each class.
- ♥ No medication will be given by church staff.
- ♥ If a child becomes ill during our care time, page parents immediately.
- ♥ Male Caregivers are NOT allowed to change diapers.

### ARRIVAL AND CHECK IN

- ♥ Arrive 15 minutes before class or worship time.
- ♥ During early service, infants go in room 152. Toddlers go in room 154. (Late Service—152 only) Please make sure you are in the assigned room. Thermostat is in room 152
- ♥ Make sure you are easily identified: Name tag, wear smock, readily available to help!
- ♥ Clean up nursery if needed.
- ♥ Wash hands thoroughly with soap to avoid spreading germs.
- ♥ Greet children by name with a smile.
- ♥ Distract crying children with toy, bubbles, or a soothing song.
- ♥ Try to keep ratio of 1 adult to 3 children.  
(If you find that you have too many children, ask a parent to stay or send someone to get some help.)

Nursery  
Caregiver  
Procedures  
Cont...

**DROP OFF & RELEASE PROCEDURES**

- ♥ Each parent must take a pager.
- ♥ Permanent name tags are provided for families who are members at Downtown.
- ♥ Temporary name tags are available for visitors.
- ♥ Make sure the pager number is written on the tag and place the tag on the child's back or bag.
- ♥ make sure to take note of any food allergies or medical conditions
- ♥ Verify all bags, bottles, cups, pacifiers and blankets are labeled with the child's name.
- ♥ Ask? Last diaper change, nap time, snacks okay?

**RELEASE**

- ♥ Only the parent/guardian with the pager can pick up the child. No exceptions.
- ♥ Make sure to verify that the pager number matches the tag on the child's back/bag
- ♥ Make every effort to get to know your parents!

**Nursery  
Caregiver  
Procedures  
Cont...**

**DURING CLASS & CARE TIMES**

- ♥ All children should be checked for wet or soiled diapers at least once during care time. Place stickers on babies back for checked or changed.
- ♥ Place a new changing pad down prior to each diaper change. Changing area should be sprayed with disinfectant after each child is changed.
- ♥ Supplies should come first from the child's diaper bag. Additional supplies are provided in each room if needed.
- ♥ Caregivers should disinfect hands after each change.
- ♥ Conversations should be directed to interaction with children.

**BEFORE YOU LEAVE**

- ♥ **Clean and pick up before leaving.**
- ♥ Disinfect toys used.
- ♥ Wipe counters clean.
- ♥ Place pagers back in charger base & turn out lights.

## Wellness Policy

**The committee on Control of Infectious Diseases of the American Academy of Pediatrics says a child should not be placed in a classroom with other children when any of the following exist:**

- ✓ Fever. (child must be fever-free for 24 hours)
  - ✓ Vomiting or Diarrhea.
- ✓ Any symptom of childhood diseases such as scarlet fever, German measles, mumps, chicken pox, or whooping cough.
- ✓ Common cold (from onset through one week.)
  - ✓ Persistent cough, sore throat or croup.
- ✓ Any unexplained rash or skin infection, including boils, ringworm, impetigo.
  - ✓ Pink eye or other eye infection.
  - ✓ Any colored discharge from the nose.
    - ✓ Any communicable disease.

### **Our Nursery Philosophy**

**To instill within the child a feeling of love, security and pleasantness in a Bible-centered learning situation.**

**To enable parents to participate in Bible Class and in worship service without the care of the child.**

**To encourage and stimulate spiritual growth for all, especially for the child and his/her parents.**

**Care and Service to child and parent.**

## Classroom Discipline

**Classroom behavior and discipline directly affect the ability of the teacher to teach and the students to learn**

- ♥ Pray for God's wisdom, direction and peace in your classroom. Pray for the students. Pray especially for the children who are disruptive and disobedient. You may need an extra measure of grace to love them as Christ would!
- ♥ Come early, be prepared and greet your students as they arrive. Class begins when the first student arrives!
- ♥ Understand the attention span of the children you're teaching; rule of thumb is they can sit and listen one minute for every year of their age. Have reasonable expectations and age-appropriate activities.
- ♥ Communicate classroom rules clearly and on a regular basis. Make sure children know your expectations. Make sure your expectations are realistic.
- ♥ Use positive reinforcement whenever possible in lieu of criticism. Never raise your voice or make degrading comments to or about a child/youth.

## Classroom Discipline Cont...

- ♥ Identify the children who seem to pick on each other or get each other in trouble. Don't allow them to sit together.
- ♥ Redirect a child's activity to help improve and privately correct.
- ♥ Always follow this rule: publicly praise and privately correct. Emphasize good behavior by name.

### **STEPS TO GOOD DISCIPLINE:**

1. If a child/youth breaks a rule, the teacher will verbally warn him/her once.
  2. If it is necessary to correct a Child/Youth again, removal of a privilege is appropriate. Stress that disruptive behavior in Bible class is a serious matter. At no time should physical force be used to control a Child/Youth. This includes all forms of corporal punishment (hitting, shaking, spanking.)
- ♥ If misbehavior continues, a parent conference should be set up under the supervision of the minister in charge. A plan of action will be developed to avoid further classroom behavior problems.
  - ♥ If a Child/Youth's behavior is extreme, the Volunteer/Teacher should remove the Child immediately from the classroom and place in the hands of the minister in charge.

# 3

# Classroom Placement

## Promotion

Promotion is an annual event, always occurring on the first Sunday in August.

## Developmental Placement

Children in our nurseries promote based on developmental readiness:

- ♥ Birth up to crawling - Nursery 1
- ♥ Crawling and early walkers - Nursery 2
- ♥ Walking to promotion age - Nursery 3

## Early Childhood Age Placement

Preschool children will promote on the first Sunday in August and then as needed throughout the year. Parents with children turning two to five years old during the year must receive approval from the Nursery/Preschool Coordinator before moving their child to the next age group. Many factors are considered when promoting preschool children including number of teachers, student readiness and class size.

## Upper grade Age Placement

Elementary through High school children are placed with their grade level in school on the first Sunday in August.

# 4

## Safety First

## Fire Alarm

# Emergencies

Safety in the midst of an emergency depends on:

- ♥ Prior planning
- ♥ Adequate communication of the plan.
- ♥ The ability of teachers to keep a calm, Clear mind when facing danger.

If the fire alarm sounds, do not assume it is a false alarm unless you are "called off" by your director.

**In the event of a fire, all children will meet on the south side of the Children's building (between the Searcy Children's Home and the children's building).**

**The path each class should take is posted in each classroom.**

1. Take the alarm seriously.
2. Don't panic. Assure the children everything will be okay and keep them calm.
3. Take your class role/clipboard with you. Count heads.
4. Asses the situation. Does your door feel hot? If not, check to see if it is safe to enter the hallway. The nearest exit is posted on a sheet by your door.
5. If you have walking children, keep them together and exit the building. Emergency containers are available for 2's through 3rd grade with flashlights, a rope and water bottles. Have children hold onto the rope as they exit the building.

## Fire Alarm Cont...

6. If you have infants or crawlers, put the children in a rolling crib and roll them to the nearest exit and designated meeting place.
7. If your door is hot and/or exits are blocked, stuff damp paper towels at the bottom of the door to keep smoke from filling the room.
8. Keep children as far back as possible. Throw a chair through the window to break it for an exit.
9. Clear away as much jagged glass as possible. Send one adult to the outside, and pass children out one at a time.
10. Keep Children together. When entire class is out of the building, proceed to the parking lot between the children's wing and the Searcy Children's Home.
11. If your exit is blocked and you don't have a window, or if you are on the second floor, place a wet paper towel over each child's nose and mouth. All children and teachers should move as far away from the door as possible; lay on the floor and wait for the fire department to rescue you.
12. Once outside, sit children down in rows. After the all clear is indicated, hold your clip board up (class name is written on back) for parents to see where to pick up their children. All children must be signed out by a parent!

## Tornadoes

Tornadoes may strike with little warning. A quick response on the part of the teacher may save the lives of their students.

In the event of a tornado:

- ♥ Don't panic. Assure the children everything will be Okay and keep them calm.
- ♥ Count heads.
- ♥ Slowly walk or carry your students to the basement.
- ♥ Remain in a duck and cover position until an "All Clear" is sounded.

**The ministry team will insure that severe weather will be monitored while church activities are in progress.**

## Acknowledgment of Receipt Form

I have received a copy of Downtown Church of Christ Child/Youth Protection Policies and Procedures and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the handbook.

I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at the church.

Further, I understand that the volunteer handbook may be modified at any time, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by the church.

I understand that my service as an employee or volunteer/teacher at the Downtown Church of Christ is dependent on my strict adherence to these policies.

I further acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this handbook in no way express or imply an employment relationship between the church and me.

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines that are created and distributed as well as handbook guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of the volunteer handbook.

Volunteer's name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



# Child Abuse Resources

For additional information about child abuse, request information from these agencies.

- ♥ The National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse offers a catalog of publications, resources, training opportunities, and assistance. To order call 800-244-5373 and leave a message.
  
- ♥ The Child Welfare League of America is an association of hundreds of agencies serving children, youth, and families of abuse. Write to 440 First St. NW, Ste. 310, Washington, DC 20001. Or call (202) 638-2952.
  
- ♥ The National Network of Children's Advocacy Centers provides training, consultation, and information services for professionals working in all areas of abuse. For contact information in your area write to 1319 F St. NW, Washington, DC 20004. Call 800-239-9950 or (202) 639-0597.
  
- ♥ The Child Abuse Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information is a service of the Office of Child Abuse and Neglect—a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. They offer printed materials on child abuse and abuse documentation. Write to 330 C St. SW, Washington, DC 20447. Or call (703) 385-7565.
  
- ♥ The Bureau for At-Risk Youth distributes resources for adults to help children with issues such as child abuse, sexuality, or drug abuse. Write to 135 DuPont St., Plainview, NY 11803-0760. Call 800-99-YOUTH or (516) 349-5520.
  
- ♥ The Hazelden Foundation publishes many resources, including some 12-step formats. Write to 15251 Pleasant Valley Rd., Center City, MN 55012. Call 800-328-9000 or (651) 257-4010.
  
- ♥ The American Association of Pastoral Counselors is a membership organization that certifies pastors to do mental health. For a referral, write to 9504A Lee Hwy., Fairfax, VA 22031-2303. Or call (703) 385-6967.
  
- ♥ The Counselor's Bookshelf offers discounted literary resources for church workers to give to counselees. Write to Nelson/Word Direct, 404 BNA Dr., Bldg. 200, Ste. 600, Nashville, TN 37214. Call 800-933-9673 or (615) 889-9000.
  
- ♥ Channing L. Bete, Co., Inc. produces several booklet series on child abuse. Write to 200 State Rd., South Deerfield, MA 01373. Or call 800-628-7733.
  
- ♥ Samaritan Counseling Centers is a network of faith-based counseling services that can assist in developing programs, offering counseling intervention, and forming prevention strategies. For a center near you, write to The Samaritan Institute at 2696 S. Colorado Blvd., Ste. 380, Denver, CO 80222. Or call (303) 691-0144.

This article is excerpted from: Children's Ministry Magazine