

*Covenant Presbyterian Church  
Children's Ministry Policies and Procedures*



*210 Poppell Drive, Lakeland, Florida 33813  
(863) 646-9631*

**Title:** Children's Ministry Policy and Procedures  
**Date:** August 27, 2017  
**Revision Status:** Revision of January 14, 2013  
**Purpose:** To standardize procedures for the various ministries to children at Covenant.  
**Scope:** All ministries serving children aged birth-5<sup>th</sup> Grade  
**Author/Title:** Stephanie Terry, Former Director of Children's Ministries  
**Revision By/Title:** Lauren Strawbridge/Director of Children's Ministries  
**Date Approved:** August 27, 2017  
**Approved By:** Executive Commission

---

Dear Children's Ministry Volunteer or Staff Member,

Welcome to Covenant Presbyterian Church!

Our desire is to offer a safe, secure, loving environment for the children and parents who attend our services. Therefore, we have established guidelines which are intended to facilitate such an environment in which children can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for Covenant Presbyterian Church volunteers and staff members. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children, protecting children, you, and the mission of Covenant Presbyterian Church. The following procedures have been adopted and will be strictly enforced.

**After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.**

Sincerely,

Covenant Presbyterian Church Staff

## **Mission**

To develop a safe, nurturing, and comprehensive program that will provide our children the opportunity to:

- Increase in their knowledge and understanding of God
- Acknowledge Christ as Savior and to grow in grace
- Use their spiritual gifts for the benefit of the body of Christ
- Live Gospel-centered and kingdom-focused lives at home, school, and play

**Covenant Presbyterian Church Policies and Procedures**  
**Table of Contents:**

Overview of the Covenant Presbyterian Church Safety System . . . . .	4
Our Philosophy, Purpose, Core Values. . . . .	5
Classroom Policies and Procedures . . . . .	6-7
Physical Contact . . . . .	8
Discipline Policies and Procedures . . . . .	9
Bathroom Supervision and Assistance Guideline . . . . .	10
Accident and Medical Procedures . . . . .	11
Infection Control Procedures . . . . .	12-13
Child Safety and Abuse Reporting . . . . .	14-16
Appendix 1: Children’s Ministry Leaders . . . . .	17
Appendix 2: Characteristics of Children . . . . .	18
Appendix 3: Accident Report Form . . . . .	19
Appendix 4: Medical Authorization Release . . . . .	20
Appendix 5: Child Abuse Reporting Form . . . . .	21
Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement . . . . .	22

# Overview of the Covenant Presbyterian Church Safety System

Because we love children and desire to protect them, Covenant Presbyterian Church requires all staff members and volunteers working with children or students (and other vulnerable populations) to complete **4 SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placements begin.

## **STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training**

Covenant Presbyterian Church policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a supervisor or a member of the Covenant Presbyterian Church Safety Committee. Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in 'grooming' a child for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or 'gatekeeper'), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip Covenant Presbyterian Church staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, Covenant Presbyterian Church requires all staff members and volunteers to complete Protect My Ministry sexual abuse awareness training (live or online at [www.protectmyministry.com](http://www.protectmyministry.com)).

## **STEP TWO: Screening Process**

Staff members and \*volunteers are required to complete the Covenant Presbyterian Church Screening Process, which requires a staff member or volunteer to:

- complete an Employment Application (employees only)
- complete the Safety Application (employees and volunteers)
- complete a face-to-face interview (employees and volunteers)
- provide references to be checked (employees and volunteers)

\*a volunteer must regularly attend Covenant Presbyterian Church for six months before being eligible to serve in positions providing access to children or students.

## **STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures**

Staff members and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material, and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

## **STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check**

Covenant Presbyterian Church requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in children's or student activities or programming undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of background check may be required.

# Children's Ministry at Covenant

## Purpose

"...what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD... so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands." These verses from Psalm 78 summarize the purpose of children's ministry at Covenant. Our goal is to assist parents in teaching their children the truths of God's Word so that these children would put their faith and trust in Christ. Our prayer is that God would use the lives of these children and their families to bring the saving love of Christ to others.

## Core Values

1. Children are a gift from God. (Psalm 127:3-5, Luke 17:2)
2. Children are sinners in need of redemption-- as are adults. (Genesis 8:21, Ps 51:5, Prov 22:15)
3. Children from an early age can understand deep Biblical truths. (2 Timothy 3:15, Psalm 78:1-8)
4. Children can grow in grace and use their spiritual gifts for the glory of God. (1 Peter 3:18, Ps 8:2)
5. Children must be included in corporate worship. (Deuteronomy 31:12-13)
6. Parents have primary responsibility for teaching God's truth to their children. (Deuteronomy 6:7)
7. Covenant will corporately assist parents in spiritually mentoring children. (Deuteronomy 11:18-21)

## Our Philosophy For Ministering to Children

We desire that our children's ministry be an integral part of the total church program. If we are to effectively communicate the Gospel to the children in our fellowship and community we must recognize our dependency upon God and the importance of cooperative effort by all persons attending Covenant.

The PASSION of our ministry is to be Christ-centered. We desire our children to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and equip them to grow in that relationship. We want each child to understand that Jesus Christ is to be an integral part of life so that he or she will say, *"for me to live is Christ."* *Philippians 1:21*

The FOUNDATION of our ministry is God's Word. Scripture is the firm foundation for teaching and training in righteousness; it judges the thoughts and intents of the heart. It is our prayer that our children will *"delight in the law of the Lord and on His law meditate day and night."* *Psalm 1:1*

The PEOPLE who teach our children must demonstrate a life committed to Jesus Christ and a desire to model the love of God. We provide materials, curriculum, and proper training to equip teachers and helpers to successfully work with children. *"Let my teachings fall like rain on tender plants."* *Deuteronomy 32:2*

The PROGRAMS are designed to be age appropriate. We desire to consider on the spiritual, social, physical, and mental needs of the child. We strive toward active learning by using a variety of teaching techniques and styles. Our emphasis is not on developing great programs but developing great children of faith who will grow *"in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."* *Luke 2:52*

The PLACE we meet must provide an environment that stimulates worship, learning, security, and fun. In planning classroom arrangement, furnishings, and supplies, we must keep in mind the age-characteristics of the children in each particular room. We want our children to *"rejoice when they go into the house of the Lord."* *Psalm 122:1*

# CLASSROOM POLICIES

## 1. Volunteer/Staff

- 1) Each step of the 4-Step Safety System must be completed and the volunteer or staff member must be officially approved prior to beginning service in Children's Ministry.
- 2) Membership is required to assume a teaching role or the role of Nursery Nanny.
- 3) Minors may work ONLY when accompanied by two adults. Adults are persons aged 18 years or older.
- 4) Sleeper Room (guideline ages birth-12 months): Workers must be age 18 or older.
- 5) Creeper Room (guideline ages 13 months-24 months): Workers must be age 16 or older.
- 6) Leaper Room (2years to 3 years): Workers must be age 14 or older.
- 7) Preschool (age 4) Classrooms: Student helpers must be in 6<sup>th</sup> grade or above.
- 8) Grades K – 3: Student helpers must be in 7<sup>th</sup> grade or above.
- 9) Grades 4 – 5: Student helpers must be in 9<sup>th</sup> grade or above.

## 2. Classroom Policy

- 1) At least one adult must be in every room at all times.
- 2) The "Two Person Rule" is the rule to follow. At no time should a child be away from public view and alone with a worker—thus the name, "Two Person Rule".
- 3) Be visible! Inform the parent to keep the child with them or wait with you until other children arrive.
- 4) Children should not sit on a worker's lap while the room is darkened [watching videos].
- 5) Dismissal procedures: All children under second grade must be picked up by their parent or adult caregiver. Children may not be dismissed to a sibling who is a minor. The adult children's ministry worker may escort a child to their parent or adult caregiver.

## 3. Adult/Child Ratio for Classrooms

	<b>AGE</b>	<b>ADULT TO CHILD RATIO***</b>
	Birth – 12 months (Sleepers)	2 to 6
	13 – 24 months (Crawlers)	2 to 8
	2 years – 3 years (Leapers)	2 to 12
	4 years – 5 years (preschool/K)	2 to 18
	1 <sup>st</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup> grade	2 to 20

\*\*\*Under NO circumstances should one person be alone with a child- a minimum of two workers are required.

If a worker is 'out of ratio' it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the program supervisor or the Director of Children's Ministry. Supervisors will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately bring worker to children ratios into compliance with Church policy.

## 4. Social Activities

- 1) Special events outside regularly scheduled programs must be pre- approved by the church staff.
- 2) All activities must include more than one adult.
- 3) All minors must provide parental permission forms in order to participate in activities outside of regularly scheduled programs.

## 5. Medication

- 1) Absolutely no medication will be given to any child at any time. If a child needs medication his/her parent must come to administer it.

## **6. Playground Safety**

- 1) On the children's playground, staff members and volunteers are to circulate, watching children during play periods, giving particular attention to the areas which are not easily seen from all viewpoints. (Example: under slides, in corners, behind structures).
- 2) Any two children together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area of the playground.

## **7. Parental Involvement**

- 1) Parents are encouraged and have an open invitation to visit any and all services and programs in which their child is involved at Covenant Presbyterian Church. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their children's programs at Covenant Presbyterian Church will be required to complete the Covenant Presbyterian Church volunteer application and screening process.

## **8. Release of Children**

- 1) At any time that a child has been entrusted to Covenant Presbyterian Church staff members or volunteers, the Church incurs responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.
- 2) Children's Ministries staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians at the close of services or activities.
- 3) It is presumed a person who drops off a child or student has authority to pick up the child.
- 4) In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact their immediate supervisor or the Director of Children's Ministries before releasing the child.

## **EXCEPTIONS**

While no adult is to be alone with a child on church property and during church functions, we recognize that at other times it may be necessary for an elder or youth volunteer to meet with a child. In these cases the meetings should occur in a public place and with parental permission.

## PHYSICAL CONTACT

Covenant Presbyterian Church is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, Covenant Presbyterian Church has implemented a 'physical contact policy' which promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our Children's Ministries while protecting children. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in Children's Ministries programs:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children are important for children's development, and are generally suitable in the church setting.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to an immediate supervisor, the Associate Minister of Youth and Families or the Director of Children's Ministry.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
4. Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children or children's staff members and volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
5. Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in Children's Ministries must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
6. Do not force physical contact, touch or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.
7. Children's staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by a staff member or volunteer must be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor, the Associate Minister of Youth and Families or the Director of Children's Ministry.



# DISCIPLINE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

## Philosophy

We understand the Bible to teach that the root of all actions, whether good or bad, can be found in the heart. As a loving Father, God disciplines us in order to mold our hearts and actions into conformity with the likeness of His Son. As parents, we endeavor to teach our children that their behavior reflects the condition of their hearts, always pointing them back to the salvation found in Christ alone. Our children's ministry will come alongside parents and reinforce those lessons in loving, positive ways. The goal of discipline and correction here at Covenant is always reconciliation and forgiveness. Our discipline guidelines are listed within this document. Please note that no form of physical discipline will be used.

## Some guiding Scripture passages for Biblical discipline include:

I Samuel 16:7b: "The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Proverbs 22:6: "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it."

Jeremiah 17:9-10a: "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind,"

Luke 6:45: "The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks."

Ephesians 6:4: "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."

## Discipline Procedures

- 1) Explain expectations at beginning of session.
- 2) Explain consequences for uncooperative behavior.
- 3) Use Three-Step Correction:
  - First correction: A gentle authoritative verbal correction.
  - Second correction: A gentle authoritative verbal correction with asking, "Do you understand what is expected of you?" and a warning of "Time Out."
  - Third correction: Follow through with "Time Out", discuss reason for "Time Out", pray with child, and affirm love for child. (A good general rule of thumb is one minute per year of age for Time Out, so 3 years old = 3 minutes.)
- 4) If the child persists in uncooperative behavior, then the parent should be called immediately.
- 5) Talk with the parent and ask the parent to stay with the child for the duration of the class.
- 6) For children with habitual discipline problems, seek the guidance of your ministry coordinator or the Director of Children's Ministry.

A few guidelines to follow in disciplining children are:

- Discipline should be handled in a loving and firm manner.
- Be aware of facial expression--do not scowl when you speak.
- Do not yell; speak with a controlled or soft voice.
- Avoid demeaning a child; try to keep any discipline situation on a one-on-one basis, not as an audience for the rest of the class.
- Never grab, jerk, push, shake, slap, or hit a child.
- Affirm and pray with the child after you have disciplined him or her.

# BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINE

## **Nursery children**

Because nursery children may require complete assistance with their bathroom activities, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies:

### **Diapering**

- 1) Only female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.
- 2) Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.
- 3) Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
- 4) Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in nursery will be recorded on the registration cards ("Seth Adams has a medicine in the bag for rash.")
- 5) Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
- 6) Children should be changed on changing stations only and according to diaper changing procedures only.

### **Children Who are Toilet Training**

- 1) No child will be forced to toilet train.
- 2) Only female nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will participate in toilet training efforts with children of either sex.
- 3) When children are taken into bathrooms the door will be left partially open.
- 4) Young children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
- 5) Parents should be consulted on each child's progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with volunteers or staff members. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the nursery will be recorded on the registration card ("Georgia can use the toilet, but she needs to be reminded – ask her if she needs to go.").
- 6) Children should be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.
- 7) "Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of diapers or underwear and clothing. Extra clothing and diapers are available from Covenant Presbyterian Church in the children's area, if the parent has not furnished a clothing change.

### **School Age Children**

School age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. (However, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities.) Staff members and volunteers should never take a lone child to the restroom.

If a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another worker to accompany him/her. If another worker is not available to accompany, he/she should go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. If the child requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall.

Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer.

### **Children With Special Needs**

Parents will offer instruction to staff members or volunteers to change the diapers of special needs individuals. After the age of 4, parents or legal guardians will change all special needs individuals.

# ACCIDENT AND MEDICAL PROCEDURES

Typically injuries can be treated with loving attention, a cool cloth, ice pack, or a Band- Aid.

A small First Aid Kit is available in each classroom. Please treat the child and complete an accident report. Accident reports are duplicated and are located in each classroom. Complete the report and give the original copy to the parents and the duplicate to ministry coordinator. Please talk with the parent about what occurred and how the injury was treated.

Serious injuries involving broken bones, convulsions, fainting, unconsciousness, or other accidents should be treated as follows:

1. Keep calm and keep children and the injured person as calm as possible. Speak gently to assure the child.
2. Do not move the injured child and do not leave unattended. Send active children to another classroom. Dispatch a fellow teacher to locate parents, as well as a ministry coordinator, or a Covenant staff member.
3. If needed the parent, ministry coordinator, or staff member will call 911. If the child is to be transported to a hospital and the parents cannot be located, a staff member will accompany the child to the hospital.  
**Note: In order for a child to be moved without parental presence, there must be a medical authorization permission/release form signed by the parent or guardian prior to the incident (see Appendix 4).**
4. Participating staff member will follow up with the parents as needed.
5. Immediately following the emergency, all persons involved in the emergency should write a report describing the incident (see Appendix 3).

# INFECTION CONTROL PROCEDURES

## Part I: Introduction

By the very nature of diapered infants, runny-nosed toddlers, and inquisitive preschoolers, we realize that children in these age groups have the potential of being exposed to a higher rate of infection than are older children. In order to minimize the spread of any infectious diseases within the nursery and to insure the health and safety of our children and caregivers, we have adopted the following policies and procedures.

## Part II: Specific Procedures

1. Diapers shall be changed at the changing table or on a non-porous surface, which must be sanitized after each use. Only female nursery workers are permitted to change diapers. (Exception: A father may change his own child's diaper).
2. Nursery workers must wear gloves when changing diapers. Diaper changing is addressed in detail in the Covenant Nursery Procedures and posted on the wall beside each changing station.
3. Strict hand washing is of utmost importance in the prevention of the spread of infection. Caregivers are required to wash hands after each diaper change, after accompanying a child to the toilet, after assisting a child to wipe his/her nose, after contact with blood (e.g., a cut or bloody nose), after toileting, after contact with his/her own nasal secretions, and before food preparation. Caregivers should make sure that a child's hands are washed after toileting, after use of tissues for wiping eyes and nose, and before eating. Disposable towels will be used after hand washing.
4. Toys that have been "tasted" by an infant or toddler shall be cleaned with a disinfecting solution before being returned to the "clean toy" bin.
5. A disinfecting solution, which is available in the nursery rooms, shall be used for wiping up all spills, soiling of blood, urine, and feces, cleaning of diaper changing tables, cleaning of play equipment and toys, and cleaning of all equipment used by children in the preschool area.
6. All infant and toddler toys and all play equipment in the nursery area shall be cleaned with the disinfecting solution after each session. All equipment in infant and toddler rooms (e.g., cribs, swings, and walkers) shall be wiped thoroughly with the disinfecting solution after each session.
7. Universal precautions, with every child and caregiver, shall be taken with handling of blood, urine, and feces. All persons cleaning bathrooms and disposing of trash shall wear disposable gloves. Gloves are required while changing diapers and should be changed after each use. (In the event an emergency precludes the use of gloves in contact with blood, cleaning of skin with soap and water or disinfectant should be done as soon as possible). A disinfectant, waterless hand cleanser is available in every classroom.
8. All diapers and items contaminated with blood, urine, and feces shall be placed in covered trash cans which are lined with disposable liners and kept out of reach of children. These containers are to be emptied at the end of each session.

## Part III: Implementation

To insure that these guidelines are implemented, the children's ministry chairperson shall assist the different department heads in arranging for initial and also for periodic continuing training in infection control procedures for church workers serving in various program activities. The department heads of each individual ministry shall be responsible for the day to day observance of these guidelines.

## Part IV: Parental Responsibility

For the overall health of our children as well as our workers, parents will be requested to refrain from bringing their children to any activity if the child has been sick within the last 48 hours.

Symptoms may include but will not be limited to:

a temperature greater than 100 degrees  
illness-related diarrhea  
Vomiting  
cold or flu  
yellow or green runny nose

persistent, productive cough  
head lice  
body rash  
evidence of conjunctivitis (pink eye)

If a child exhibits any of these symptoms while engaged in any of our various children's activities and classes, the parents will be contacted and asked to keep the child with them.

Parents are asked to bring disposable diapers each time their babies are left in our care as well as a labeled sippy cup or bottle. If your child uses a pacifier, please label it as well. Please do not bring toys from home.

If any child exhibits persistent biting behavior, his/her parents will be asked by a ministry staff member to remove that child from activities until such behavior ceases.

#### **Part V: Confidentiality of Medical Information**

If medical information regarding a child is available to the Covenant Children's Ministry staff, the staff will make this information available only to those caregivers who need to know. Parents of children enrolled in any Covenant Children's Ministry shall not be privy to any confidential information.

Parents who have children in the same classroom with the sick child, whose child may have been exposed to the sickness, should be notified after the sickness has been confirmed. Parents should not be called to the nursery/classroom or notified of the sickness if it is not yet confirmed.

## **ABUSE REPORTING POLICIES**

### **ABUSE TOLERANCE**

Covenant Presbyterian Church has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff and volunteer at Covenant Presbyterian Church to act in the best interest of all children in every program. In the event that staff or volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is their responsibility to immediately report their observations to their immediate supervisor, the Associate Minister of Youth and Families or the Director of Children's Ministry.

### **REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS**

Covenant Presbyterian Church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to the Covenant Presbyterian Church Safety Committee Chair and the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agency.

An element of the safe environment referenced above includes the fostering of a culture of reporting relevant information to a supervisor or a member of the Covenant Presbyterian Church Safety Committee. Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a child for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to a supervisor or a member of the Covenant Presbyterian Church Safety Committee.

### **ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES**

Covenant Presbyterian Church staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Covenant Presbyterian Church policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from Children's Ministry's positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Session.

## **Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse**

### **REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY**

In order to maintain a safe environment for our children, Covenant Presbyterian Church staff members and volunteers must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation that is a violation of these policies. All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to an immediate supervisor in the ministry area, the Associate Minister of Youth and Families, or the Director of Children's Ministry.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION**

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child may be immediately suspended from participation in Children's Ministries. Prohibited acts include but are not limited to violations of the Physical Contact policy (above), seeking to be alone with a child, and any other behaviors referenced on the Ministry Safe training video. The Safety Committee will convene to determine

whether a suspension is necessary. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act should be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children or students at Covenant Presbyterian Church. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from Covenant Presbyterian Church.

Failure to report a prohibited act to the designated person is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination of employment of a staff member or employee. Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act may be restricted from participation in any activities involving children, students or vulnerable populations at Covenant Presbyterian Church.

### **REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES**

Staff members and volunteers at Covenant Presbyterian Church are required to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, or any inappropriate behavior of a colleague or co-worker, to the immediate supervisor of the area, the Associate Minister of Youth and Families, or the Director of Children's Ministry.

Florida law requires that any person having cause to believe a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect must make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency. A staff member or volunteer *may* report to an immediate supervisor, the Associate Minister of Youth and Families or the Director of Children's Ministry and allow supervisory personnel to make the appropriate report to law enforcement agencies.

Staff members and volunteers are required to verbally report an incident to supervisory staff as soon as possible after the incident. After receiving a report from a staff member or volunteer in Children's Ministries, the Associate Minister of Youth and Families or Director of Children's Ministry will speak with the person or volunteer to whom the child spoke in order to get detailed information about the entire conversation.

If appropriate, the Associate Minister of Youth and Families or the Director of Children's Ministry will inform the Department of Children and Families.

### **RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE**

The Covenant Presbyterian Church Safety Committee will take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs.

### **SAFETY COMMITTEE**

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children, Covenant Presbyterian Church will appoint and maintain a Safety Committee, which will meet regularly. The Safety Committee will be comprised of one Teaching Elder, one Ruling Elder, the Director of Children's Ministry, and one involved volunteer serving in children's ministry at Covenant.

The purpose of the Safety Committee is to enable Covenant Presbyterian Church Children's Ministries to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical or sexual

abuse. They will discuss risk management practices and updates. The Safety Committee will also meet on an emergency basis upon the recommendation of a member or following the report of any incident or allegation.

The Safety Committee will be charged with the following duties:

1. Applying existing Covenant Presbyterian Church policies and procedures related to children's safety and risk management issues.
2. Monitoring all Children's Ministries programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
3. Making recommendations to the Covenant Presbyterian Church Session regarding safety issues.

### **Ongoing Monitoring of Children's Ministries**

Monitoring of staff and volunteers will include regular (announced and unannounced) visits in each program to provide supervisors the opportunity to observe staff members and volunteer interactions with children.



**Appendix 1:**  
**Children's Ministry Leaders (2019)**

<u>Title/Department</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Phone #</u>
Associate Minister of Youth and Families	Adam McNeal	513-312-3463
Sessional Contact	Bill Campbell	646-9631
Director of Children's Ministry	Lauren Strawbridge	397-6112
Sunday School Superintendent	Alice Middleton	619-7199
Children's Worship Hour Director	Ashley Valenti	529-4552
Kids' Quest Catechism Club Director	Stephanie Terry	640-2126
Nursery Director	Lauren Strawbridge	397-6112
Special Events Coordinator	Lauren Strawbridge	397-6112
Tuesday Morning Women's Bible Study Nursery Coordinator	Kelsey Sligh	925-899-7386
Children's Choir Leaders	Eric Holseth	646-9631

## Appendix 2: Characteristics of Children

Age	Mental	Physical	Spiritual	Social
<b>Nursery</b> 0-3 <i>Age of Discovery</i>	<b><u>Discoverer</u></b> Needs familiar surroundings; limited vocabulary; likes rhyme and rhythm; attention span 3-6 minutes; impressionable, imaginative, and curious; learns through five senses.	<b><u>Actor</u></b> Rapid growth rate; likes to imitate; learns through physical play; needs rest periods.	<b><u>Imitator</u></b> Can learn simple concepts about God; recognizes Bible, church; can clasp hands and close eyes to pray.	<b><u>Self-Centered</u></b> Plays alone; upset by confusion; needs to feel safe.
<b>Pre-school</b> 4-5 <i>Age of Questioning</i>	<b><u>Questioner</u></b> Asks “Why” and “How” questions; likes to make up rhymes; enjoys stories; can memorize short verses; thinks literally; talks constantly; attention span about 10 minutes.	<b><u>Player</u></b> Energetic, tires easily; wants to do things himself/herself.	<b><u>Believer</u></b> Begins to think of God in a personal way; can be taught simple prayers; understands disobedience is sin.	<b><u>Self-Centered</u></b> Self-centered; able to interact with others; learning to share and to take turns; desires to please.
<b>Primary</b> 6-8 <i>Age of Activity</i>	<b><u>Observer</u></b> Learns quickly; thinks literally; learns by concrete examples; learning to read; enjoys learning games.	<b><u>Energetic</u></b> Rate of growth slows; loves activity; likes varied activities; prefers to run or jump rather than walk; tires easily; susceptible to childhood diseases.	<b><u>Discerner</u></b> Discerns between right and wrong; strong sense for fairness; trusts people; able to have prayer life and commitment to Jesus; receptive to responding to Gospel.	<b><u>Group Player</u></b> Likes children own age; has a best friend; likes pets; wants adult approval; prefers non- competitive activities; likes pretending.
<b>Junior</b> 9-11 <i>Age of Energy</i>	<b><u>Investigator</u></b> Inquisitive--eager to learn; excellent memory--best time to memorize; likes hobbies; enjoys jokes and tricks; interested in problems; is creative	<b><u>Rover</u></b> Healthiest stage of life; wants to go places, do things; is active and exuberant; responds to adventure, camp, and outdoors	<b><u>Worshipper</u></b> Can understand a doctrinal truth; asks questions about God, Bible; has an interest in people outside his world—generous desire to help	<b><u>Team-Spirited</u></b> Likes to be recognized by own peers; needs to belong; enjoys competition; is loyal; hero worshipper; interested in fairness; compares self to others
<b>Young Teen</b> 12-14 <i>Age of Change</i>	<b><u>Critical</u></b> Has a keen mind--needs to be challenged to learn; has a sense of humor; extreme moods; over-responds emotionally: happy, sad, rebellious; daydreams	<b><u>Changing</u></b> Growing fast and unevenly; is awkward and easily embarrassed; has spurts of energy followed by fatigue.	<b><u>Challenging</u></b> Why, where, what, and how stage. Sincere and serious about desire to understand spiritual truth and develop own faith.	<b><u>Companionship</u></b> Wants to feel accepted; influenced by peers; may transfer loyalty from home to school friends, teacher, or idol; attracted to opposite sex; looks up to young adults.

*Reference Source: Child Evangelism Fellowship, INC. Children's Ministry Bible*

### Appendix 3: Accident Report Form

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Volunteer Preparing  
Report: \_\_\_\_\_

We had an injury today . . .

Here is what happened:

Here is how we treated it:

\_\_\_\_ Your child seems fine now

\_\_\_\_ Further action may be necessary

**Appendix 4:  
Medical Authorization Release**

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents' Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell/Other: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell/Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Physician: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Dentist: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell/Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Permission**

I am aware of the activities planned for my child by Covenant Presbyterian Church and I give my child permission to participate. I realize that if my child does not abide by the rules set by Covenant Presbyterian leadership, I may be required to remove my child from the activity at my expense.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent or Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

**Medical Release**

I hereby give my express permission to Covenant Presbyterian Church to administer emergency first-aid treatment to my child. I further authorize Covenant Presbyterian Church to arrange for professional emergency, hospital, medical, or surgical treatment in the event my child suffers injury or becomes ill while in the care of Covenant Presbyterian Church, its staff, and/or volunteers. I agree to be responsible for payment of all hospital and professional medical or surgical treatment rendered to my child. I also release Covenant Presbyterian Church, its staff, and/or volunteers from all liability connected with the above medical treatments.

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent or Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Please list any medical conditions, allergies or other information we should know regarding your child:  
\_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 5:

### Covenant Presbyterian Church Child Abuse Reporting Form

*(for observed abuse, suspected abuse, or child-reported abuse)*

Name of victim:	Name of possible responsible person or alleged perpetrator:
Name of reporter:	Relationship of the alleged perpetrator to the victim:
Complete addresses for subjects (numbered street address, apartment/lot number, city, state, zip):	
Phone numbers (area code first):	Dates of birth or approximate ages:
Description of the abuse, neglect, abandonment, or exploitation (include injuries if any):	
Names, telephone numbers, and/or addresses of witnesses and/or others involved:	

Developed in accordance with the Department of Children and Families abuse-reporting form:  
<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/abuse/publications/mandatedreporters.pdf>

## **Policies and Procedures Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement**

I have received and read a copy of Covenant Presbyterian Church's Children's Ministries Policies and Procedures and understand the importance of the material in the manual. I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving or working at Covenant Presbyterian Church.

I understand the manual may be modified, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated by Covenant Presbyterian Church.

I have reviewed the duties listed in my ministry position description, and I agree to fulfill these duties. I understand I may choose to end my employment or voluntary service at Covenant Presbyterian Church at any time (If possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to my supervisor).

I acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this handbook in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between me and Covenant Presbyterian Church. If applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no monetary compensation for hours worked.

I understand it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which may be created and distributed.

I acknowledge receipt of Covenant Presbyterian Church policies and procedures manual.

---

Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

---

Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

[This page to remain attached to the Covenant Presbyterian Church Policies and Procedures.]