



HOLY TRINITY CHURCH CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Children and youth ministry at Holy Trinity Church exist to come alongside parents as they obey God’s commands to raise their children under His authority and in His Word. We take our responsibility seriously when children and youth are in our care. The following guidelines are set forth to ensure a safe and nurturing environment throughout instruction.

All of the guidelines are designed to protect and promote a growing faith in God for each person involved. Everyone who teaches, helps, or cares for others under the sponsorship of Holy Trinity Church, whether paid or volunteer, must follow these policies and procedures. Everyone who works regularly with children or youth at Holy Trinity Church has undergone a screening process.

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Staffing Policies

Volunteer Screening

All volunteers working with children and youth (ages 0-18 years) on a regular basis should be regular attendees who have been attending Holy Trinity Church for at least six months (some exceptions granted on an individual basis by Director/Pastor), have completed a Volunteer Application and been approved, are familiar with the Child Protection Policy, and have undergone a background check.

Classroom Guidelines

1. Children and youth should be under adult supervision during the scheduled ministry program time.
2. The Director of Children's Ministry will make regular visits to the Kid City classrooms and nursery to ensure that children are properly supervised.
3. Two-deep leadership is essential. Teachers should serve in teams so that at least two workers are in the room at all times.
 - An exception to this rule, rooms that are subdivided into sections, easily visible, and regularly visited by the Director, may have one teacher.
 - Every effort will be made to staff rooms for children ages 0-4 with at least one worker who is a woman.
 - Although we encourage family ministry, for your protection, we do not schedule all teachers in one room to be from the same family unless other workers are present or the class is in a public place and is visited regularly by the Director.
4. The following ratios are staffing guidelines. (A minimum of two teachers is understood regardless of the number of students present.)
 - Nursery One adult per 3-5 children
 - Pre-School One adult per 6-8 children
 - Elementary One adult per 10-12 children

5. If a class is unexpectedly short-staffed, the following steps will be taken:
 - Combining Classes: Two classes may be combined, if practical, to meet the staffing requirements. Parents will be informed of a new pick up location if necessary.
 - Using Parent Helpers: If combining classes is not an appropriate option, a parent will be asked to stay to meet the staffing guidelines before additional students will be admitted to the classroom. The teacher will assume responsibility for informing the parent of pertinent policies (example: bathroom policy).
 - Canceling Class: Programs without adequate staffing will not commence. Additionally, programs, which continually experience staffing deficiencies, will be subject to review by the Session and possible cancellation.

6. When babysitting is provided for a church-sponsored event not defined as children's ministry (example: congregational meetings, Community Group meals, musical events, etc.) and church facilities are used, the following is required:
 - An adult who has gone through the screening process must be present to ensure that protection policies are followed.
 - Two-deep leadership is required (one must be over 18 years old, the other may be a "helper" who is over 12 years old), as well as adherence to the staffing ratios listed above.

Special Events/Overnights

1. Field Trips and Special Events

- Church-sponsored off-campus activities must be pre-approved by the appropriate Ministry Director (Director of Children's Ministries, Youth Pastor, or Senior Pastor). Parents will be notified at least one week prior to the outing.
- Proper written consent and medical release forms are required for each child participating in off-campus activities. These forms are available from the child's classroom teacher or for youth from the Director of Youth Ministry.
- Appropriate adult/student ratios will be ensured by the staff member or volunteer in charge (See Staffing Guidelines listed above). Two-deep leadership is essential for any excursion.
- When transportation is involved in an activity, all drivers must have a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance. The number of persons per car should never exceed the number of seat belts.

2. Overnight Policy

- All overnight activities must be pre-approved by the appropriate Ministry Director/Pastor.
- No overnight activities for children younger than 6th grade will be allowed (except for parent/child outings).
- All overnight activities must have a ratio of two leaders for every 10 children.
 - a. Two-deep leadership is required.
 - b. One of the leaders should be an adult who has gone through the application and screening process. Each leader will be assigned a group of children that they will be responsible for throughout the duration of the overnight event.
 - c. Never permit sleeping arrangements where one leader is with only one student/child.

Program Guidelines (birth-5th Grade)

Classroom Space Policy

1. Preschoolers will use rooms with adjoining toilets whenever possible, preventing the need for children to leave the room. Small toilets are advisable so children can use them with little assistance.
2. Rooms for children under age three: use gates to help keep children contained.
3. The door into the nursery should remain locked/obstructed to prevent anyone from entering unnoticed.
4. Nursery changing tables are in full view.

Registration Policy

1. Parents shall fill out a registration card for any child who regularly attends any of the HTC children's programs. There is a form specific for nursery-age children and another form specific to children aged preschool through 5th grade. The forms are available in the nursery and at the Welcome Table, respectively.
2. Children should be registered and attend the class for their age, grade or development level. The exception to this rule is for children who are visiting and feel more comfortable attending a class with a family member or friend who brought them even if the class is not their exact age group.
3. The nursery, which is provided for children ages 0-2, will have available a weekly sign-in sheet. Parents are required to complete the information requested.

Drop-Off Policy

Children should never be dropped off in a classroom without a leader present, one of which has gone through the application process. Generally, supervision will be provided 10 minutes before a program starts.

Bathroom Policy

1. Preschoolers

- A teacher should never be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed or go into a bathroom stall with a child and shut the door.
- If a classroom for preschoolers does not have a bathroom, an adult should escort a child/children to the hallway bathroom. The supervising adult should remain outside the bathroom door and then escort the child/children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the supervising adult should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the supervising adult should prop open the bathroom door and leave open as the child is assisted.

2. Grade Schoolers

- When a child is out of the classroom for any reason, he or she should be escorted or supervised by a teacher at all times. Teachers are required to keep track of any student in their care.
- Parents are strongly encouraged to take their children to the bathroom prior to class.

Discipline Policy

1. The Session desires to encourage, stimulate and foster the Christian growth of all participants. Because of this, students will not be allowed to disrupt the classroom and/or hinder the growth and learning of others. The purpose of discipline is not punishment for wrongdoing, but assistance in doing what is right. All discipline will carefully consider a child's dignity and fragile life. Physical punishment or intimidation will not be used.
 - When a child's behavior is disruptive to the learning of other children, the disruptive child will receive one warning acknowledging that their behavior is disruptive and suggestion of how they can change the behavior.
 - If the disruptive behavior continues, a teacher will escort the child back to the parents. The Director of Children's Ministries is available to escort the child if needed.
2. Every September, at the start of the ministry year, teachers will clearly communicate with the children the expectations for behavior, what is considered "disruptive behavior," and the consequences for disruptive behavior.

Security Policy

1. Nursery

- All infants and toddlers will be issued a claim tag. The claim tag is used to release children back to their parents.
- A child will be released only to the person with the child's claim tag.
- If the security tag is lost, verification of a person's identity will be needed before the child can be released. The Children's Director or Pastor will be responsible to verify an identity.
- Parents are advised not to enter the nursery when picking up their child unless requested to do so.

2. Preschool through 5nd grade

- Children are dropped off to the classroom by parents at the start of class or escorted by a teacher from the worship service.
- If the classroom is accessed via an elevator, children may not ride the elevator without an adult present when in the care of Kid City volunteers.
- Children will be released to their parents or other authorized adult at the end of class; Children in 3rd grade or older will be dismissed from class by the teacher.

Policy for Displaying Affection

1. Touch is essential in nurturing lives. Physical contact with children should be age and developmentally appropriate. Be aware of and sensitive to differences in children's development, family backgrounds, individual personalities and special needs. The following guidelines will help promote pure, genuine and positive displays of God's love.
 - Hugs & Kisses: Younger children are especially affectionate. Use discretion in initiating full contact, body-to-body hugs. Kissing on the lips is inappropriate. One-arm side hugs or hand-to-arm hugs are appropriate, especially for the older children/students.
 - Lap Sitting: Appropriate sitting on laps may occur with younger children. Discourage lap sitting with older children. Rather, encourage them to sit next to you.
 - Casual Touch: Gentle contact during activities may be on children's heads, shoulders, arms and hands. Roughhousing and physical discipline should never be used.

2. The Ministry Director should be especially sensitive to proper/improper contact between adults and children.

Diaper Changing Policy

Due to the classroom safety precautions and staffing requirements, men and women may both change children's diapers using the changing pads provided. Children under the age of 14 should refrain from changing diapers. Nursery changing tables need to be in full view.

Suspect of Abuse

Suspicion of Abuse

Anyone working with children/youth (ages 0-18) in the ministries of Holy Trinity Church shall immediately report to the designated individual or board member (Director of Children's Ministry, Youth Pastor, Senior Pastor, or Session Member) any suspicions of child abuse or neglect which may indicate a need for further investigation. It is not the responsibility of the reporting person nor the Director to substantiate any allegations or suspicions. Possible indications of abuse or neglect can include:

- Pattern of injuries not typical for everyday childhood accidents (i.e., marks or bruises on the back, buttocks or abdomen, symmetrical or patterned bites or bruises, skin markings or welts in the shape of a hand, belt or rope).
- Very poor hygiene or obvious lack of medical care.
- Sexual knowledge or speech not appropriate for the child's age.
- Overtly sexual behavior or demonstrations.
- Extreme reluctance to go to a particular place or be with a particular person; withdrawal and depression.
- Allusion to incidents in writing or through prayer requests.

Confidentiality

At all times keep the information confidential. If your Ministry Director is unavailable, please contact a Pastor or Session Member.

Communication with the Child/Student

Rather than a teacher observing signs of possible abuse, a child may approach a trusted adult with testimony of abuse. In such a case, be sure to take the child's word seriously. Listen attentively and calmly, reassuring the child that he/she is not at fault and was right in telling you about the problem. Do not promise the child you will not tell anyone. Gently affirm the child.

Report Form

1. Immediately contact the appropriate Ministry Director (Director of Children's Ministries or Youth Pastor).
2. Together fill out a Suspicion of Child Abuse Report Form as mandated by the state of Illinois.

Assessing the Report

1. The Director of the ministry, along with the Pastor and Session, will make every effort to make an assessment within 24 hours of the report. A review committee consisting of a lawyer, doctor, and psychologist/psychiatrist (preferably one experienced in working with children) may also assist in assessing the report.
2. If after the review it is determined that the investigation should continue, the Session will review how best to proceed.

Responding and Investigating Abuse

Initial Response (The following steps should be handled by the Pastoral Staff and/or Session).

1. Document all your efforts in handling the incident.
2. Notify the parents.
3. Report the incident to the church's insurance company and lawyer.
4. Report the incident to the proper authorities.
5. Notify the accused after the safety of the child is secured.
6. Appoint a spokesperson.
7. Prepare a public statement to answer the media and to convey the news to the congregation.

Responding to Alleged Victim

1. Do not minimize or deny the allegation or assess blame.
2. Assure victim that the church is taking allegations seriously.
3. Make sure the care and safety of the victim is the first priority.
4. Provide ongoing support and assurance of acceptance to victim and the victim's family.
5. Help the family find professional counseling if desired.
6. Commit to helping the victim and the family toward full restoration.

Responding to Alleged Perpetrator

1. Treat the accused with dignity and support.
2. Remove the leader immediately from his/her position until the investigation is finished.
3. Put in place a process of healing and restoration.
4. Future restoration to church fellowship should be handled with great care, taking the feelings of the victim and the victim's family into consideration.
5. If the accused confessor is convicted, concern and support should be given, with the goal of forgiveness and restoration. However, no convicted child abuser should ever be placed in a position to work with children or youth. Other appropriate places of service should be encouraged.

Works Cited

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