

Children's Ministry Handbook



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This report is to be completed within twenty-four (24) hours and given to the Children's Director.

- After the suspected child abuse case has been reported by a worker, proper steps will be taken to report the suspected abuse to the designated reporting agency.

Thank you for your attention to the details in this booklet. Some of it is not pleasant to consider, but our desire here at the Visalia Evangelical Free Church is to provide a safe, loving, Christ-centered environment. We appreciate all you can do to help us in this endeavor.

May the Lord bless you as you minister to children...either yours or others. Please contact me with any questions or concerns.

Serving Him together,

Karen Damko

Children's Ministry Director

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- **Neglect**

The failure to provide a child with basic needs including food, clothing, education, shelter, and medical care; also abandonment and inadequate supervision.

- **Sexual Abuse**

The sexual exploitation of a child by an older person as in rape, incest, fondling of the genitals, exhibitionism or pornography. It may be done for sexual gratification of the older person, out of a need for power or for economic reasons.

- **Emotional Maltreatment**

A pattern of behavior that attacks a child's emotional development and a sense of self-worth, such as constant criticizing, belittling, insulting, manipulation; also, providing no love, support, or guidance.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

Familiarize yourself with the definitions and descriptions of child abuse listed above. If you suspect that a child involved in any of the programs of our church has been abused, the following steps are to be followed:

- Report the suspected abuse to the Children's Director or an elder.
- Do not interview the child regarding the suspected abuse. This will be conducted by a member of the church staff or a trained counselor.
- Do not discuss the suspected abuse with the other workers, parents, etc. All information regarding the child should be kept confidential with your church leadership and the proper authorities.
- You will be asked to complete a Suspected Child Abuse Report. Confidentiality will be maintained where possible.



Dear Parents, Teachers and Helpers:

The purpose of this manual is to provide the structure and information needed to effectively minister to your children. It is not exhaustive, but hopefully it is instructive as you consider the necessary guidelines to make ministry to children effective.

Those that minister to children do so from a sense of gratitude and love for what we have in Christ Jesus. This ministry may take many forms and will require varying amounts of energy. Regardless of the method, the goal should be allowing God to use our body to reach children for Christ and to assist their parents in the discipling process. The end in view is maturity, as Paul said, "that I may present every man complete in Christ." (Colossians 1:28)

I pray that as you consider this aspect of our church's ministry to your children or those children that you love, that you will sense the calling on your life to add to the discipling process of the children of our church.

With warmest thanks,
Karen Damko
Children's Ministry Director

- It is recommended when taking children to the restroom that they should only take children of the same gender.
- Children in grades 4-6 may be sent in pairs to the restroom without supervision of an adult. Teachers should monitor this situation closely.
- Children should have as much privacy as possible. Enter a bathroom stall only when absolutely necessary to assist a child and keep the door open.
- Diapers are only to be changed in designated areas and in the presence of other workers.

Classroom Procedures

Physical contact with children should be minimal and only in the presence of other adults. Appropriate touching should be limited to "high five's" brief hugs, or a brief touch on the shoulder.

At least two workers should be present whenever possible. No child should be alone with a worker. If a child arrives before other members of your teaching team arrive, prop open the door of your classroom. Window blinds are to be kept open at all times unless it is necessary to darken the room for proper showing of videos or projected audio/visual equipment.

Definitions of Child Abuse

As defined by "The National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse":

- **Physical Abuse**

Non-accidental injury, which may include beatings, violent shaking, human bites, strangulation, poisoning or burns. The result may be bruises and welts, broken bones, scars, permanent disfigurement, long-lasting emotional damage, serious internal injuries, brain damage or death.

- If the child is to be transported to a hospital and the parents cannot be located in time, the Children's Director or elder will accompany the child to the hospital.
- The Children's Director will follow up with the parents as needed.
- All individuals involved in the emergency should write out a report of what happened immediately following the emergency. This report form is available in the supply room on the desk and should be given to the Children's Director.

Child Abuse Prevention Policy

One goal of the Children's Ministry Department is to provide a safe, positive, nurturing, and age-appropriate learning environment. Therefore, we have a policy that reflects our desire to prevent child abuse and to stop child abuse, as we become aware of it. This policy that follows is a supplement to the church policy and application process.

Our first line of defense in preventing child abuse is the interview and screening process and the background check that all our volunteers in our ministry must complete prior to being placed permanently in a classroom. All people who work with children regardless of their area of ministry are expected to adhere to the policies as outlined in the Policy for Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse. Failure to do so may result in dismissal from their ministry position.

Restroom Procedures

- Workers may never take a child alone to the restroom. They must be accompanied by another adult or other children.

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Vision Statement

To make disciple-making disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ who are committed to loving God, one another and the world. This vision includes the equipping of parents to disciple their children and provide a strengthening atmosphere for the family.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to introduce children to Jesus Christ and enable them to grow to maturity in Him.

growth in his/her relationship with Jesus Christ and His Word.

- Fostering skill-building through relevant Biblical teaching and positive role-modeling.

SEND children to minister to others by:

- Preparing children to discover their uniqueness and God's mission for their lives.
- Teaching them their responsibility to fulfill the Great Commission, including an emphasis on missions.
- Providing opportunities to serve and reach others with Christ's love.

Strategy

WIN children to Jesus Christ by:

- Encouraging children to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and become a part of our church family.
- Providing ministries to reach our community with the message of Christ's love for children.
- Training and encouraging our children to be evangelists in their spheres of influence.

BUILD children in their faith by:

- Equipping parents in the discipling of their children. Facilitating each child's

for the event must also submit a copy of his proof of insurance by the day of the event.

(*These are in process of being updated due to new laws. You will be informed of the changes.)

Emergencies

Typically an injury can be treated with a little loving attention, a cool cloth, soap and water, ice and/or a Band-Aid. A first aid kit is available in the Supply Room on the top shelf to the left as you enter. Please treat the child and complete an "Accident Report." Please make two copies of the report. One copy should be given to the parent and the other should be returned to the Children's Director by leaving the report on the desk tray in the supply room. Keep in mind that we are not authorized to dispense any over-the-counter or prescription medications. In the event a child needs more attention than we can provide, the parent should be notified.

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

- Keep calm and keep children and the injured person as calm as possible. Speak calmly to assure the child.
- Do not move the injured child and do not leave him.
- Send a fellow teacher or adult to the Worship Center to locate the Children's Director or an elder and the parent(s).
- If needed, the Children's Director or elder will call 911 and any medical personnel available on campus.
- The Children's Director or an elder will refer to parents for details on doctor or hospital preferences.

Off-Campus Outings Procedures

We encourage all of our teachers to plan extra-curricular outings with their class. We believe that getting together with your class is an encouragement to your students. It builds them up and adds a new dimension of excitement to the environment. Some possible events could be a class party, day at the park, trip to the zoo, pizza party, birthday party, skating, trip to beach, movie night, or sports event.

Here are the guidelines:

- The parents are to be well informed of the dates, times, and location of the event.
- The cost for the entire event is to be covered by the class itself. This could be by raising the money or by each member of the group contributing their own expense. It is the church's policy that no funds can be spent on a single class event.
- Transportation is to be arranged for when it is appropriate. All vehicles that are borrowed should be returned with the same amount of fuel that it started with and it should be returned in the same basic condition.
- All events and their dates should be cleared through the Children's Director.
- Each participant must have a completed permission/release of liability form for other than church activities. These forms are available from the Children's Director.
- *All drivers must submit a photocopy of their drivers license by the day of the event.
- *Any adult that is using (or allowing the use of) his car

Expectations

Of the Volunteer:

- A commitment to Jesus Christ that is demonstrated through growth and a model of spiritual leadership.
- A commitment from leaders and teachers to the Visalia Evangelical Free Church through membership in our body.
- A teachable spirit exemplified by a growing relationship with Jesus Christ and faithful attendance and participation in training.
- A desire to serve as a member of a team, praying regularly for the other members of the team, the children you minister to, and the church staff.
- A commitment to excellence in your preparation and execution of your responsibilities as one who ministers to children.

Of the Children's Ministry Director:

- A commitment to properly equip volunteers in their ministry.
- A commitment to provide adequate facilities, materials, curriculum, and resources to ensure success in our ministry to children.
- A commitment to support each teacher in prayer, supervision, and assistance.
- A commitment to provide a clear statement of our philosophy of ministry and job description for each member of the team.

Our Beliefs

We believe . . .

- and hold to the statement of faith of our church.
- children are a gift from God and should be handled with love and care.
- children are important in the kingdom of God and that Christ died to redeem them from their sin.
- children should have a safe, positive, nurturing, and age-appropriate learning environment.
- God has appointed parents as the primary teachers of their children and the church's role is to assist in the cooperative effort of that task.
- successful ministry is the shared responsibility of the ministry staff, volunteers, parents, and the church body.
- ministry should be thoroughly Biblical, creative, and innovative.
- effective teachers are the most important component of our ministry.

Inappropriate Behavior:

- Using materials inappropriately (e.g. throwing scissors, etc.)
- Deliberately disobeying authority (incl. Lack of cooperation)
- Rough-housing and physical aggression
- Inappropriate language (e.g. name calling, cursing, racial slurs)

Consequences:

The following steps will be taken in order:

1. Reminder of rules and appropriate behavior expectations.
2. Time out - sitting apart from class for a period to include counseling and prayer by either the teacher or Children's Director.
3. If the behavior continues to be a problem, the parents will be notified on campus and encouraged to discuss the matter with their child. The parents should be encouraged to correct the problem and allow the child to continue in class for the remainder of the class time.
4. If the behavior continues to be a problem, the parents should be contacted and requested to keep the child with them for the rest of the service.
5. The teacher should strive to maintain contact with the parents of the disobedient student until the behavior has resolved.
6. If the behavior continues for several weeks in a row, a parent meeting will need to be set up with the Children's Ministry Director, the teacher, and the parents.

and before eating. Disposable towels will be used after hand washing.

- When an infant or toddler is seen putting an object in his/her mouth, this object shall be cleaned with disinfecting solution before being returned to the "clean toy" container.
- A disinfecting solution should 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 nursery and preschool areas.

Parental Responsibility

- Parents will be requested to refrain from bringing their child to a specific session if the child has a cold, temperature greater than 99.5 degrees orally (100.5 rectally), has a rash, or if diarrhea is present.
- Parents are to bring disposable diapers during the time that their child is in an early childhood session.
- If any child exhibits persistent biting behavior while in an early childhood session, his/her parents will be asked by the Children's Director or teacher to remove the child from activities until the behavior stops.

Behavior Guidelines for Classroom Safety

One of the purposes of our children's ministry is to help our children grow spiritually within the structure of our church. We expect the children to participate, have fun, and also respect the instruction of their leaders, parents, and chaperones. In the instance that there is a lapse in appropriate behavior, we have formulated the following consequential guidelines!



Security & Safety

One of the goals of our children's ministry is to provide a safe, secure, and loving environment for children. In an effort to accomplish this we have several security measures in place to protect our children, their parents, and the church.

Security Measures

Nursery

When parents check in their child (birth - 24 months) they are asked to put the child's name on a sign-in sheet as well as their own name and other relevant information.

Because of the complexities of child custody situations, we will only return the child to the parent that dropped the child off.

Pre-School

The check-in procedure for the preschool department is that parents are to sign the child in with a teacher present. The parent/guardian that drops the child off must be the same individual that picks the child up. The check-in form has a place for the child's name, any items that were brought, and the parent's name. The form must be fully completed. At the time the child starts attending the church on a regular basis, that is 3 times or more, an enrollment card will be sent home or filled out there. This allows us to better minister to the child and family.

Elementary

Children in 1st - 6th grades may be dismissed on their own with an adult seeing to their safe crossing of the alley. If you as a parent wish to have your child stay in the classroom until you pick them up, please let the teacher know. The students will be dismissed from their classes at 10:05 and any remaining children will be escorted to the fellowship hall.

Bathroom Runs

For the safety of the child as well as the adult, an adult will always take at least two children with him/her to the bathroom. All children from early childhood through kindergarten must be accompanied to the bathroom.

Teacher Identification

All adults in the classroom are required to wear a name tag as provided by the Children's Director as a means of identifying them as the adult authorized to be in the classroom. New volunteers and all that are observing in a class must wear a visitor name tag available from the Children's Director.

General Security

During services children are not allowed to wander around the campus. If you see a child who is "ditching" class, please approach them or contact the Children's Director. The child will be taken to the appropriate class or to the Worship Center so he/she may sit with his/her parents. If there are any suspicious people that are hanging around the children's classes, please send quietly for the Children's Director or an usher. The individual may just have questions that might be able to be answered easily.

Safety Measures

Infection Control Policy and Procedure

In order to minimize the spread of any infectious diseases within the children's ministry and to insure the health and safety of all children and care givers, we have adopted the following policies and procedures.

Infections such as diarrhea and Hepatitis A are primarily spread by a fecal/oral route, meaning that there is a higher spread among children who are in diapers. Infections such as serious forms of meningitis, influenza, chickenpox, and most

respiratory infections are spread by contact with respiratory secretions. Infections such as pink eye, impetigo, scabies, lice, and ringworm are spread by person-to-person contact. Fever blisters (Herpes) are spread by contact with saliva. Cytomegalovirus, a viral infection often without symptoms in children, but one that can cause birth defects in unborn babies, is spread through urine and saliva. So far as is now known by medical science, Hepatitis B and AIDS are spread by contact with blood (transfusions) and intimate contact (sexual intercourse and possibly breast feeding). There have been no known cases of Hepatitis B or AIDS spread in day care centers and no documented spread through daily living activities within families. By the very nature of preschooler's activity, diapered infants and toddlers, and normal infant mouthing behavior, preschoolers are naturally exposed to a higher rate of infection than are other children.

Specific Procedures

- Diapers shall be changed at the changing table (with changing paper) which is sanitized after each use. Rubber gloves should also be used. Soiled diapers should be put in a plastic bag, tied in a knot, and placed in a trash container.
- Strict hand washing is of utmost importance in the prevention of the spread of infection. Therefore, care-givers are required to wash hands after each diaper change, after accompanying a child to the toilet, after assisting a child 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. Care-givers should make sure that a child's hands are washed after toileting, after use of tissues for wiping eyes and nose,