



C E N T E R
C H U R C H

Center Kids Handbook

*A Policy and Procedures Manual for
Leaders and Volunteers*



Dear Kids Leaders and Volunteers,

We read in Psalm 127:3, that “children are a gift from the Lord” (NLT), and just as children are a tremendous gift and blessing to their parents, they are gift and blessing to the church, the household of God. Both individual families and the church family play essential roles in making God’s love in the gospel real to children. So, it is our desire to nurture the faith of children, and our responsibility in this is to prayerfully model and teach truth—to display and declare the gospel of grace—partnering with families to make disciples of their little ones.

We want to provide a safe and consistent environment to allow our children to flourish as they learn biblical truths, develop a biblical vocabulary, and see our great God through Bible stories they can understand. We trust the Holy Spirit to bring about this understanding and produce faith in our kids.

We have established this handbook, including our policies and procedures, to protect not only our children but also you, the volunteers, and the mission of Center Church.

These rules will be strictly enforced. It is therefore imperative that you know and observe everything in this handbook. After carefully reading the manual in its entirety, please sign and return the acknowledgement page.

As you invest time in reading these pages, we pray that your partnership with families at Center Church will be strengthened, so that together we will display and declare the gospel of grace to the next generation.

For the glory of Jesus in the lives of our little ones,

Kyle Ogle
Center Church Lead Pastor

Center Kids Kids Team, December 2015

Vision & Oversight: Tami Glasco
Direction, Scheduling, & Care: Haley Ogle

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV). Portions of this handbook have been adapted from similar materials by Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN, Watermark Community Church, Dallas, TX, and Redeemer Church, Round Rock, TX.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section 1 – Introduction	4
About This Handbook	4
Our Convictions and Commitment	4
Our Vision	4
Volunteer Screening Policy and Application Process.....	5
Section 2 – Check-In / Drop-Off / Pick-Up	7
Check-In.....	7
Well Child Policy	7
Drop-Off	7
Pick-Up	8
Section 3 – Behavioral Expectations and Discipline	9
Biblical Principles	9
General Expectations for Children at Center Church.....	10
A Word about Correction.....	10
Discipline Process.....	10
Section 4 – Child Abuse and Protection	12
Policy Against Child Abuse	12
Reporting and Investigations	13
Volunteer and Child Protection	16
Safety at Other Gatherings	18
Section 5 – Safety and Security	19
Stranger in the Children’s Areas	19
Emergency Procedures	19
Section 6 – Volunteer Guidelines	21
Volunteer Attendance	21
Intoxicants	21
Parent Involvement	21
Discipline.....	21
Volunteer Training	22
Classroom-Specific Information	22
Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement	29

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

The primary purpose of this handbook is to provide policies and procedures for the children's ministry of Center Church and the volunteers who work in that ministry. Changes may be made from time to time in the policies and procedures contained in this handbook without prior written or oral notice.

OUR CONVICTIONS AND COMMITMENT

“One generation will commend your works to another and shall declare your mighty acts.” – Psalm 145:4

We are committed to supporting families in raising their children in the ways of Jesus. We believe this is best done in community by exposing children to diverse relationships of all ages, which happens primarily through our Missional Communities. In addition, we equip parents to raise their kids through gospel-centered teaching and training, as well as by developing teachers to provide great, developmentally appropriate ministry during our Sunday gatherings.

Children are a vital part of the church. They are not an inconvenience to be “watched” while we do church; they are a precious responsibility and privilege, the future of the church, the city, and the world.

OUR VISION

The vision of Center Kids is not separate from the vision of Center Church. Center Church is a Christ-centered family making disciples in our city by displaying and declaring the gospel of grace. Center Kids exists to partner with parents to make disciples of their children by displaying and declaring the gospel of grace. This includes...

- Parents feeling well equipped, encouraged, and supported as they raise their children in Christ (Eph 6:4).
- Spirit-led caregivers praying continually and specifically for God's truth to take root and bear fruit in the lives of our little ones (Eph 6:18).
- Parents, volunteers, and children recognizing the dangers of both license *and* legalism, being amazed and strengthened by God's grace in Christ (2 Tim 2:1).
- Weekly leaders and volunteers laboring together, investing their gifts *and* persevering in the teaching *and* modeling of biblical truths (Eph 4:15-16, 23-24).
- The Word of God dwelling richly in our children's hearts and lives (Col 3:16).
- Our children stepping into adulthood secure in their convictions and grounded in the Word of God with an unshakable faith (1 Cor 10:3-5).
- Our children—and our children's children—living with the peace of Christ in their hearts so that whatever they do, whether in word or deed, they may do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to the Father, bearing fruit in every good work, using their God-given gifts and talents as disciples who make disciples (Col 1:10; 3:15,17).

VOLUNTEER SCREENING POLICY AND APPLICATION PROCESS

Purpose of the Policy

Every applicant that wants to work with Center Kids must be familiar with this policy and satisfactorily complete our screening procedures. This policy is motivated by several concerns:

- We believe that it will help us to guard the honor, reputation, and name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Recognizing God's tender love and concern for children (see Luke 18:16), we want to do all that we can to protect our children from any kind of mistreatment including physical or sexual abuse.
- We want to protect our volunteer workers from being suspected or falsely accused of wrongful behavior toward a minor.
- We want to protect our church from the scandal and trauma that an incident of abuse could bring upon our congregation and our mission.

The Policy

- All applicants must complete the Volunteer Application, including providing references and signing the Consent to Background Checks and the Doctrinal Statement.
- All applicants must be at least 18 years of age to volunteer in the children's ministry unless express permission is granted by Center Church Elders or the Kids Director.
- All applicants are required to submit references from people who are not relatives or employees.

The Application Process

We view the application process as an opportunity to promote teamwork (1 Corinthians 12:12-31), to demonstrate mutual submission (Ephesians 5:21), and to get to know one another better. By learning more about each other's gifts, abilities, and ministry goals, we can better encourage workers in their ministry to the children of Center Church (Hebrews 10:24-25).

All information acquired during the screening process is treated as confidential and will not be disclosed to others outside the immediate individuals involved in the screening process unless the leader in charge of screening or the Elders deem that limited disclosure is necessary to protect a young person from possible harm.

1. Application

A few of the questions we ask in the screening process deal with unpleasant issues, such as the use of pornography and sexual misconduct. You may answer these questions either in writing or during a private interview. One purpose is to identify those people who statistically are a higher risk to our children. These discussions can open the way for pastoral counseling, leading to new freedom in the Lord. Answering 'yes' to any of these questions may, but does not necessarily, disqualify a person for ministry with our children.

2. Reference Check

All references will be contacted and asked to assess the applicant's suitability/capability for working with children. This investigation may also include: (1) contacting churches or other organizations where the applicant has served; (2) contacting employers for whom the applicant worked within the past five years.

3. Policies and Procedures

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.

4. Criminal History Check

Center Church uses and pays for the services of a reputable public data screening firm in order to check the background of all volunteers and employees for possible criminal history and/or registered sex offender information.

Individuals who have been arrested for, charged with, are on deferred adjudication or regular probation for, or have been convicted of sexually oriented or sex related crimes, either misdemeanor or felony, cannot serve in any area of ministry to children. Center Church utilizes a comprehensive background check and relies upon the truthful answers of applicants and their references for this information.

Center Church reserves the right to revoke any volunteer's ability to serve in the children's ministry with or without notice at any time for any reason or for no reason at all.

We appreciate your cooperation in this application process to ensure that our volunteer workers are well qualified for ministry to our children. We look forward to working with you as you use your gifts and talents to nurture the children God has placed under our care.

SECTION 2 – CHECK-IN / DROP-OFF / PICK-UP

CHECK-IN

In order to attend Sunday classes, children (Birth through Elementary) must be checked-in at the Center Kids kiosk. Parents receive one security name tag for each child and one parent pick-up security tag that must be shown to classroom volunteers at time of pick-up.

Classes and Ages

- Nursery/Toddler= 0 - 2 yrs
- Preschool= 3 - Kindergarten
- Elementary= 1st - 6th Grade

Center Kids leaders and weekly volunteers can be identified by their name tags. **Only approved adults (scheduled volunteers, Kids Director, and Elders) may be in the classrooms with children.** A parent who wishes to visit a child's classroom may do so on the first visit **with a name tag that clearly identifies them as a parent.** If a parent wishes to participate regularly in their child's class, he/she must successfully complete the Volunteer Screening and Application Process.

WELL CHILD POLICY

For health standards, children must not be checked in if any of the following conditions are present:

- Fever of 100 degrees or more in the last 24 hours
- Vomiting or diarrhea in the last 24 hours
- Persistent cough, croup, or chest congestion
- Untreated red, mattering, or crusty eyes
- Undiagnosed rash

If a child is mildly ill or has been on antibiotics for 24 hours or more, it should be safe to check-in.

DROP-OFF

Drop-off begins 15 minutes prior to the gathering, and children with security name tags may be welcomed into their classrooms at that time *only if two approved adults are present* (see Two Adult Policy, p. 15). Parents may also choose to keep their children with them at the beginning of the gathering to participate in worship. We leave it up to parents to decide what is best for their family, and the classes are organized so that kids who arrive later should not miss out on any teaching or associated activities.

PICK-UP

Nursery

In order to pick-up their children from the Nursery, parents should again form a line outside of the Nursery area. Each parent will first have their security tag matched to the child's name tag and then receive their baby from a volunteer. After the baby is safely in the parent's arms, the diaper bag and other items will be handed to the parent.

Toddlers / Preschool / Elementary

In order to pick-up their children from the Toddler and Preschool classes, parents should again form single-file lines beginning at the classroom doors. Gates will remain at the doors and may be opened only by volunteers. After a parent's security tag is matched to the child's name tag, a volunteer will open the gate to allow the child to leave. If the child has any belongings, they should be handed to the parent over the gate.

SECTION 3 – BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS AND DISCIPLINE

It is our joy to be in community with young people at Center Church, and we hope they will be stirred up to love Jesus and spread his fame.

Recognizing that godly character is a result of a heart transformed by the gospel, our aim is first to introduce children and young people to Jesus Christ. However, both regenerate and unregenerate children should be instructed in righteousness and held to biblical principles of conduct. In this section you will find broad principles regarding conduct as well as specific expectations. We hope these will assist us as the church joins parents to cultivate godly behavior in our young people.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

- Center Church is a big family. As such, boundaries/rules are important. They help us to promote genuine care for the interests of the common family good (Romans 12:10, 18; Galatians 5:13–15; Philippians 2:4).
- Requiring obedience from children in conformity with God’s will confronts them with the meaning of sin in relation to God, the nature of their own depravity, and their need for inner transformation by the power of grace through the gospel of Christ.
- While outward conformity to various rules might be possible, true obedience is a gift of God flowing from a heart that worships Jesus (Luke 6:44–45; John 14:15). Please join us in praying for these soft hearts to be formed in our children.
- Because love for Jesus entails obedience to his commands (John 14:15; Matthew 28:20), discipline will be an important part of nurturing the faith of our young people (Proverbs 3:11–12). Teaching our young people to obey God-given authorities can help them to obey Christ and bend their wills to His (Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20; Hebrews 13:7, 17).
- Our behavioral standards at Center Church are high, yet we’re also committed to understanding. Being destined for salvation, God’s people are urged to admonish the idle while also encouraging the fainthearted and helping the weak. So while stern rebuke might be necessary in one situation, gentle help or encouragement might be more appropriate in another (1 Thessalonians 5:9–14).
- Center Kid leaders and volunteers are eager to partner with parents to promote godly behavior in our young people; yet, parents themselves are primarily responsible for that discipleship (Deuteronomy 6:6–7). So while volunteers will be expected to ensure order and amiable behavior in the classroom, they may direct an unresponsive young person to his parents for discipline if necessary.
- Discipleship is a community project (Hebrews 3:13; 10:24). Center Church is glad to stand with parents to encourage them in their ministry of parenting. Some young people will struggle with behavior concerns more than others. We also recognize that some children have special needs. Center Kids leaders are eager to pray, strategize, and work with parents in these matters.

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS FOR CHILDREN AT CENTER CHURCH

The following expectations are simple expressions of thanks for God's good gifts. Although specific expectations will vary depending on the age of the young person, the activity, and the location of the activity, most expectations will fall under one of the following.

- Respect for Physical Surroundings: Church gathering spaces and equipment (whether owned, rented, or borrowed) should be treated with respect and used as their designs intend.
- Respect for Adults: Honor for adults in the church should be reflected in attitudes, speech, and behavior.
- Respect for Others: Young people will be guided to consider others more significant than themselves and to look out for the interests of others (Philippians 2:2; Colossians 3:12–17).
- Respect for Themselves: Young people will be encouraged to act in ways that do not put their bodies or souls at risk.

A WORD ABOUT CORRECTION

If correction or discipline becomes necessary, we encourage positive, immediate, and consistent responses from our parents and volunteers. We want to see godly behavior affirmed and sinful behavior discouraged before it escalates. While volunteers may initiate correction, we ask that parents take the primary role in correcting their child if they are present.

If a parent is not present, a volunteer may respond with a warning in a spirit of gentleness, followed by appropriate correction if necessary (Galatians 6:1). If a sinful behavior or attitude persists, a volunteer will appeal to the leadership, involving the parents when needed.

If needed, volunteers are permitted to gently restrain a young person to keep him/her from hurting himself/herself or another. Any other physical form of correction is unacceptable in the classroom or other organized Center Church activity.

DISCIPLINE PROCESS

Younger than 3 years (Nursery and Toddlers)

If there are behavior problems with children younger than 3 years, we simply remove them from the situation and redirect their attention to a new activity. However, if a child is harming others (i.e., hair pulling, biting, pushing), we may firmly say “no, no” to them in love. If any behavior that puts other children at risk becomes a recurring problem, the parents will be asked to keep the child out of the nursery/class until the behavior can be controlled.

3 years and older (Preschool and Elementary)

It is our desire to partner with parents as they strive to bring their children up in the love and admonition of the Lord. When discipline of a child's behavior is needed, volunteers will observe the following steps:

1. Explain the inappropriate behavior to the child and communicate expectations in language they can easily understand.
2. Make eye contact with the child so it is clear to them what is expected.
3. If the behavior does not cease or is repeated a second time, remove or direct the child to a corner of the room where the group is meeting (avoid being alone with the child).
4. Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the time-out and a clear explanation of your expectations. ("Jamie, you didn't stop hitting Chris when I asked you to, so you need to sit quietly in the blue chair for three minutes.") In addition, be verbally reassuring, since being removed from the group will likely upset the child. Do not physically hold the child in time-out.
5. Follow the rule of thumb that a time-out is ineffective if it lasts longer than one minute for every year of the child's life (3 years old = 3 minutes).
6. Monitor the child through the entire time-out without giving your undivided attention. For longer time-outs, give intermittent praise to reassure the child and keep them on task. ("Jamie, you're doing a great job of sitting quietly – just 2 more minutes.")
7. Praise the child once he or she has completed the time-out and tell them that their reward is being able to rejoin the group. Remind them that repeating their initial behavior will result in further time-out. Follow this with praise.

If there are problems with behavior requiring parental attention, we will communicate with the parents. If immediate attention is necessary (behavior problems persist or continue to endanger other children), the father will be paged to the classroom if he is available (see Ephesians 6:4), or the mother will be paged if he is not.

SECTION 4 – CHILD ABUSE AND PROTECTION

POLICY AGAINST CHILD ABUSE

Center Church supports and maintains a **zero tolerance** policy against child abuse and neglect. Child abuse and neglect include physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment, or maltreatment. Sexual abuse is defined as the use, persuasion, or coercion of any child to engage in any sexually explicit conduct (or any simulation of such conduct) for the purpose of producing visual depiction of such conduct or rape, molestation, prostitution, or incest with children.

It is against the law and against Center Church’s policy for anyone, male or female, to physically, sexually, or mentally abuse or neglect any child.

Center church reserves the right to refuse membership, to dismiss, or to exclude from affiliation with Center Church any person, member, volunteer, or employee who is or has been convicted of child abuse or neglect of any child.

Center Church will neither condone nor tolerate:

- Infliction of bodily injury upon any child or physically or sexually abusive behavior towards a child.
- Physical neglect of children, including failure to provide adequate safety measures, care, and supervision in relation to church activities.
- Emotional mistreatment of children, including verbal abuse and/or verbal attacks.

Two Responsibilities Under This Policy

1. To refrain from inappropriate behavior and also avoid the appearance of evil in relating to people of any age.
2. To admonish or report inappropriate behavior.

Two Problems Volunteers Must Watch For

1. Behavior by anyone in this church—especially anyone involved in our children’s ministry—that indicates that he or she may be inclined to abuse, molest, or otherwise harm any child, especially under the care of this church.
2. Indications that a child under the care of this church is being abused, molested, neglected, or otherwise harmed, whether by someone in this church or outside of this church.

Behaviors to Watch For In Adults Working with Children

- Inappropriate comments about sexual matters, especially about or in the presence of minors.

- Excessive and inappropriate attention to a particular child, especially if it involves an effort to be alone with the child.
- Harsh treatment or severe neglect of a child.

Admonishing vs. Reporting

- If you observe a children’s ministry volunteer or anyone else talking or acting in a manner that seems to be innocent but might appear to others to be inappropriate, you should privately admonish that person and encourage him or her to exercise greater care in words and actions (see Matt 18:15).
- If you observe a children’s ministry volunteer or anyone else talking or acting in a manner that gives rise to a reasonable suspicion of improper involvement with a child, or of the potential for improper involvement with a child, you should promptly report your concern according to the “Reporting and Investigations” subsection below.

REPORTING AND INVESTIGATIONS

Child abuse is a serious crime, and Center Church intends to prosecute child abuse in any form to the fullest extent of the law.

Volunteers are under these obligations:

1. Reporting requirements

Suspected abuse or neglect

- No single indicator of abuse or neglect is necessarily cause for alarm, but it may be cause to observe a given person or situation more closely. When multiple indicators appear together, however, it is appropriate to discuss the situation with someone else in authority at Center Church or, in urgent cases, to make an actual report to civil authorities.
- Indications of physical abuse: child reports injury by others; unexplained bruises, welts, lacerations, burns, fractures, abdominal injuries, or human bites; child, youth, or young adult is unusually wary of physical contact with adults; demonstrates extremes in behavior, or seems frightened of parents or caretakers.
- Indications of sexual abuse: child reports abuse by others; has difficulty walking or sitting; torn, stained, or bloody underclothing; complaints of pain or itching in genital area; bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal, or anal area; unusual interest in or knowledge of sexual matters; or other unusual and excessive behaviors inappropriate for a minor.
- Reporting abuse can precipitate severe consequences to a family, so it should never be done casually or thoughtlessly, and certainly not for malicious purposes. At the same time, failing to report abuse can have severe consequences to a child at risk. Therefore, if you have reasonable cause to suspect abuse, you

should talk with a Director or Elder to see what steps could and should be taken to protect the child and help the family.

Actual abuse or violation of policy

- All volunteers and employees shall immediately report and document any incident of abuse or violation of the two-adult policy of which they have knowledge or which they have observed. Any person making such a report shall keep the information strictly confidential.
- An “incident of abuse” means any occurrence in which any person:
 - Has threatened to inflict or has inflicted physical injury upon a child or vulnerable adult, other than by accidental means, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.
 - Commits or allows to be committed any sexual offense against a child or vulnerable adult, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.
 - With respect to a child or vulnerable adult, makes any kind of sexual advance, or makes request for sexual favors, or engages in sexually motivated physical contact, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.
 - Exposes a child or vulnerable adult to verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.

2. Imminent threat

In all cases where an imminent threat of continued or actual abuse exists, any witness shall immediately contact the Kids Director or an Elder to request that immediate steps be taken to ensure the safety of the alleged victim. After the safety of the alleged victim has been secured, the person witnessing or with knowledge of the incident of abuse shall complete a written report of the incident of abuse and submit the report to the Kids Director (or in his/her absence, other any appointed Elder).

3. Obligation to report to law enforcement

In all cases where any volunteer or staff member has reasonable cause to believe that a child or youth, known to the volunteer or staff member in a professional capacity, has been or may be abused or neglected by either known or unknown persons inside or outside of Center Church, the worker shall make a report to the local law enforcement agency’s child abuse investigators within 24 hours of the determination of reasonable cause. If the volunteer or staff member is in doubt regarding whether a report should be made, he or she shall telephone the agency anonymously and discuss the situation with an investigator to determine whether the report should be made. The volunteer or staff member shall make a written record of the name and the title of the investigator with whom he or she spoke and the recommendation made by the investigator, then submit a copy of the written record to the Kids Director (or in his/her absence, any appointed Elder). This report can be submitted anonymously if so desired.

4. Internal reporting procedure

The person reporting an incident of abuse shall contact the Kids Director (or in his/her absence, any appointed Elder). The reporter shall provide information regarding all relevant facts with respect to the incident of abuse. Upon receiving a report of an incident of abuse, the person receiving the report, together with the reporter, shall complete a written report of the incident. However, in all cases where the alleged wrongdoer is the person to whom a report should be made, he or she shall be considered absent for the purposes of this reporting procedure, and the report should be submitted to another appropriate Center Church representative.

5. Responding to the report

When someone receives a report of an incident of abuse, he or she shall immediately take steps to ensure the safety of the alleged victim. After the safety of the alleged victim has been secured, and after the report has been appropriately documented, the person receiving the report shall:

- Immediately contact the Kids Director or any appointed Elder who will then contact the parents or guardian of the alleged victim to inform them of the incident.
- Immediately contact the Kids Director or any appointed Elder, who will then contact Center Church's legal counsel. The legal counsel shall -- within 72 hours of the report -- conduct an investigation and determine (along with the Kids Director) whether there is reasonable cause to believe that the abuse may have occurred.
- Take all reasonable steps necessary to ensure that the alleged wrongdoer has no contact with the alleged victim pending investigation.
- Take all steps necessary to ensure that the alleged wrongdoer is barred from further work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults pending the investigation.

Conclusion of No Abuse

If Center Church's legal counsel concludes that there is not reasonable cause to believe the abuse may have occurred, Center Church's legal counsel shall provide a written report to the Elders documenting the conclusions reached and the basis for those conclusions. The contents of the report presented by legal counsel where no abuse was found shall be confidential unless requested by law enforcement officials.

Conclusion of Abuse

If Center Church's legal counsel concludes that there is reasonable cause to believe that abuse may have occurred, Center Church's legal counsel shall provide a written account to the Elders.

The written report shall:

- Identify the alleged victim, the alleged wrongdoer, and all witnesses identified and contacted.
- Set forth the allegations and the steps taken to investigate the allegations.

- Set forth the facts revealed by each significant witness.
- Set forth the temporary actions to be taken by the Elders as well as a recommendation of additional actions to be taken by the Elders.

In addition, Center Church's legal counsel shall:

- Report the incident of abuse to any other appropriate authorities.
- Conduct all further investigations as directed by the Elders.

VOLUNTEER AND CHILD PROTECTION

Center Church intends to ensure the health, safety, and well being of volunteers and children. As a precaution and to ensure strict accountability from one adult to another, volunteers must follow these rules:

1. Two adult policy

At least two approved adults should remain together with children at all times. If someone needs to leave a group of children and only one person would remain, another approved adult must be notified so the two adult policy can be upheld. An approved adult is defined as a scheduled volunteer, the Kids Director, or any Elder.

2. Restroom policy

If the child is three years or younger and needs restroom assistance or has special needs requiring extra assistance, female volunteers may provide assistance. Male volunteers should not provide restroom assistance.

3. Physical contact

Center Church is committed to protecting children in its care and recognizes that appropriate touch is part of a positive, nurturing environment in a healthy children's ministry. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by Center Church's volunteers.

Using good judgment, the following are appropriate ways to touch kids:

- an arm around the shoulder
- walking hand in hand
- carrying small children piggy-back
- short congratulatory or greeting hugs
- a brief, assuring pat on the back or shoulder, handshakes, high-fives, and knuckles

The following are actions a volunteer should NEVER take:

- never touch a child in anger or disgust
- never touch a child in any manner that may be construed as sexually suggestive

- never touch a child between the navel and the knee
- never touch a child's private parts (with the exception of diaper changes— female volunteers only)

Physical contact in any form should be above reproach. The personal behavior of staff members and volunteers must foster trust at all times.

Do not force physical contact, touch, or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.

4. Taboo topics

Certain topics of discussion are best left for parents and their children. If you have a question about the propriety of discussing one of these topics or any other, please speak with the Kids Director:

- The rapture
- The tribulation
- Infant baptism
- Satan - if the purpose is to incite undue fear or confusion
- Hell - if the purpose is to incite undue fear or confusion
- Denominations
- Speaking in tongues
- Human sexuality or reproduction
- Female menstrual cycle
- Drugs or alcohol
- Other questionable/debatable behavior

5. Verbal interactions

Verbal interactions between volunteers and children should be positive and up lifting. Center Church volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission of aiding parents in the spiritual growth and development of children.

To this end, volunteers should not talk to children in a way that is or could be construed by any reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

6. Visibility & Security

It is important that all interaction between children and volunteers happens in a location where others can observe what is going on for safety and accountability purposes. At no time should a child and volunteer disappear behind a closed door or around a corner with no visibility to outsiders.

SAFETY AT OTHER GATHERINGS

While it is beyond the scope of this document to institute policies and procedures for Missional Communities (MC), and other non-formal church family gatherings, we recommend that the leadership and parents of each MC seriously consider the following guidelines.

1. Make use of the policies in this document to set clear expectations for all caregivers, especially as it relates to the following:
 - Behavioral expectations and discipline
 - Policy against child abuse, with its responsibilities, behaviors to watch for, and reporting requirements
 - Two adult policy
 - Physical contact
 - Taboo topics
 - Verbal interaction
 - Visibility & Security

2. Allow only those who have completed the Kids Volunteer Screening and Application Process to provide childcare and teach children.

SECTION 5 – SAFETY AND SECURITY

STRANGER IN THE CHILDREN’S AREAS

Only children, parents, scheduled children’s ministry volunteers and leads, and Elders are allowed in the children’s ministry areas immediately before, during, and after Center Church’s scheduled Sunday Gatherings. All other adults (including any other church members) should be immediately escorted out of the areas. If there is any question or concern associated with a stranger in the area, a Kids Director or an Elder should be notified immediately to question the stranger.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In case of emergency, do the following:

1. Medical concerns

Immediately report any medical needs or concerns to a children’s ministry leader. The notified person will decide if 911 should be called and make the call, if necessary, and/or notify a parent. The volunteer should remain calm and divert the attention of the other children. The victim should be kept quiet and still. Do not attempt to move a severely injured person unless in imminent danger.

2. Hazardous weather

In the event of dangerous weather, volunteers should follow the guidelines below.

- Stay calm.
- Move your classroom in a quiet and orderly manner to a bathroom or remain in the infant area in the main building.
- Await further instructions.

3. Fire

The first priority in any fire is that all children and volunteers’ safety is maintained. Any attempt to put out a fire is absolutely forbidden unless judgment to do so is unquestionable and presents no possible danger to anyone present.

Volunteers should follow the directions below in the event of a fire.

- Stay calm.
- If you are in immediate danger (see smoke or flames), evacuate the room through the nearest safe exit.
- Move your classroom in a quiet and orderly manner to the parking lot.

4. Missing child

Time is critical if a child is reported missing. Volunteers should contact a Kids Director or Elder as soon as possible with the following information:

- Name/age/gender
- Color of hair, shirt, and skin

The person reporting the lost child should remain with the Kids Director or Elder until further direction is given.

SECTION 6 – VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

VOLUNTEER ATTENDANCE

Center Kids takes seriously the obligations to its children and asks volunteers to abide by the following guidelines.

1. Arrival

Volunteers must arrive 30 minutes prior to the event at which they are serving or as otherwise instructed by leadership. This time allows for setup, preparation, and prayer. Volunteers must check-in when they arrive and wear their provided name tags, signifying that they are approved to be in a classroom with children.

2. Departure

Volunteers must remain in the classroom until the last child has been picked up by a parent or until relieved by another approved adult.

3. Absences

Volunteers are responsible for their assigned shifts. Should the need arise for a volunteer to be absent, the volunteer should find an approved substitute and inform the Volunteer Scheduler.

INTOXICANTS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol, tobacco, or any illegal drugs while working with or supervising children at Center Church.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in—or have continuous, ongoing contact with—their children’s programs at Center Church will be required to complete the Volunteer Application and Screening Process.

A parent should be contacted in the event the child is completely inconsolable (after ten minutes of care), is ill or injured, has a severe disciplinary problem, or is a danger to himself/herself or other children.

DISCIPLINE

Physical discipline, such as spanking, is never permitted. Using physical restraint to prevent a child from doing something disruptive or dangerous is permitted and may, in some instances, be necessary. Affirmation and encouragement is always preferred.

Follow these rules for discipline:

- Consistency - Discipline must be consistent to be effective. Do not threaten a consequence without the intention to follow through.
- Response - Make a prompt and individualized response to inappropriate behavior. Correct a behavior the first time and every time.
- Resolution - Seek to both resolve conflict and reconcile relationships.
- Reward - Acknowledge and reward positive behavior. Encourage children who are behaving well and following the rules.
- Preparation - Read the lesson before you arrive at your classroom on Sunday and be familiar with and ready to follow the classroom schedule. Often the best deterrent to discipline problems is a confident, prepared teacher.
- Prayer - Pray for your kids and yourself consistently. Ask the Spirit to guide you throughout the class. Respond to the children's needs with prayer, and lead your class in praise and celebration of who God is and what He has done through His Son.
- Discipline Steps – Children are to be disciplined using time-outs and other non-physical methods of behavior management. Please refer to Section 3 – Behavioral Expectations and Discipline for specific steps to discipline in the children's ministry.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Ongoing training is an important, effective, and required step in fulfilling your responsibility as a volunteer.

1. New Volunteer Training

Each new volunteer shall attend one informational meeting as offered on a regular basis.

2. Ongoing Training

Volunteers are required to attend any ongoing training sessions as designated by leadership.

3. Periodic Training

From time to time, Center Church might provide training sessions to address specific needs and/or topics of interest for volunteers and parents.

CLASSROOM-SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Nursery

Overview and vision: Loving care and prayer characterize this room. Infants are cuddled, rocked, and played with. Caregivers pray individually for each child.

1. Check-in policy

Children must have either a computer-generated or handwritten security name tag to be admitted into a classroom, and each child's information must be placed on the check-in sheet. Volunteers should take note of any special instructions from the parent.

2. Label policy

If not labeled already, please label everything – bag, blanket, bib, bottle, carrier, clothes, coat, diapers, pacifier, and wipes – using the masking tape and marker provided in the classroom supplies.

3. Feeding policy

Volunteers may feed hungry infants with clearly labeled, prepared bottles. If the infant is bottle-fed but the bottle is not prepared, volunteers should contact a parent to prepare the bottle for their baby. Volunteers may never mix or prepare a bottle themselves. If the infant is nursing, mothers should be contacted when the baby is hungry.

With parent approval, a snack of puffs is given to infants aged 12 months and older. Infants who participate in the snack must be placed in a high chair while eating, and the floor must be carefully scanned and cleared of fallen puffs to prevent smaller babies from finding them and putting them in their mouths.

Only parents may give their child medicine.

4. Diaper procedure

If a child's diaper is wet or soiled during their time in the Nursery, their diaper should be changed. Only female volunteers may change diapers, and they must adhere to the following procedure.

- Never move away from or turn your back on the changing table while changing a diaper.
- Place a clean, disposable changing pad under each child before changing a diaper.
- Wear disposable gloves while changing diapers and use new gloves with each change.
- Dispose of diaper, gloves, and changing pad in provided trashcan.
- Disinfect your hands after changing diapers.
- Disinfect diaper-changing area at the end of the gathering.

5. Distraught children

When an infant is distraught and crying, volunteers must adhere to the following procedure.

- Pray for the child
- Change the diaper if needed

- Offer a prepared bottle or contact the mother for nursing
- Comfort the child and try to distract him/her with a toy or picture
- Walk around the room and talk or sing softly with the child
- Ask for help from another volunteer
- **If the child has not calmed down after crying for a full 10 minutes, contact a parent.**

6. Room cleanup policy

It is the responsibility of the volunteers to disinfect and put away all toys and equipment used in the nursery area after each gathering.

7. Check-out policy

A child may not be released unless a parent has the security tag that corresponds with the name tag on that child. If an adult attempts to pick up a child without the corresponding security tag, and if the adult's relationship to the child can be validated, then the volunteer may release the child. If the adult's relationship to the child cannot be verified, then a Kids Director or an Elder must be notified to make the decision to release the child.

Toddlers

Overview and vision: Children in this class begin with quiet, supervised free play. During the class time, simple truths about God are repeated at opportune moments, and prayer is modeled for them as needs arise. A snack is given, and caregivers pray for the children during snack time as well. The class then might sing one or two God-centered songs before the lesson is presented in a group format using a carefully selected curriculum. After the lesson, they color, play, and listen to stories read to them until parents return.

Each week, we provide family take-home sheets that correspond with the class lesson. These sheets include questions to help parents review the Bible story and suggestions for how to apply that story at home.

1. Check-in policy

Children must have either a computer-generated or handwritten security name tag to be admitted into a classroom, and each child's information must be placed on the check-in sheet. Volunteers should take note of any special instructions from the parent. Personal items (toys, stuffed animals, etc.) must not be permitted. If the child brings a personal item to class, it should be taken away, kept from the child for the entire class session, and returned when his/her parent arrives for pick-up.

2. Transfer of children

Children should remain in the classroom for the entire duration of the class until picked-up by a parent. Should an emergency need arise, the class must be taken from one room or building to another in an orderly, single-file line with one volunteer monitoring the front of the line and another monitoring the back of the line. Children should be counted prior to leaving one area as well as upon arrival at the new area.

3. Diaper policy

If a child's diaper is wet or soiled during their time in the Nursery, their diaper should be changed. Only female volunteers may change diapers, and they must adhere to the following procedure.

- Never move away from or turn your back on the changing table while changing a diaper.
- Place a clean, disposable changing pad under each child before changing a diaper.
- Wear disposable gloves while changing diapers and use new gloves with each change.
- Dispose of diaper, gloves, and changing pad in provided trashcan.
- Disinfect your hands after changing diapers.
- Disinfect diaper-changing area at the end of the gathering.

4. Restroom policy

The Toddler classroom is equipped with a restroom. If a child needs to use the restroom during class time, a parent should be paged using the provided walkie-talkie. Volunteers must neither leave the room nor allow a child to walk to the restroom alone.

5. Room cleanup policy

It is the responsibility of the volunteers to disinfect and put away all toys and equipment used after each service and help with other cleanup needs as directed by Kids leadership.

6. Check-out policy

A child may not be released unless a parent has the security tag that corresponds with the name tag on that child. If an adult attempts to pick up a child without the corresponding security tag, and if the adult's relationship to the child can be validated, then the volunteer may release the child. If the adult's relationship to the child cannot be verified, then a Kids Director or an Elder must be notified to make the decision to release the child.

Preschool

Overview and vision: Children in this class begin with supervised free play and opening activities that introduce aspects of that week's Bible story. A snack is given, and volunteers pray for the children during snack time and as needs arise. Then, the Bible story is introduced with another activity or game, is presented in an engaging way, and discussed with a series of questions. Recognizing the great ability of kids at this age to commit repeated phrases to memory, kids are led in memorizing Bible verses and key questions and answers about God's story. After the lesson and memory work, they reinforce the story with

another activity and then color, play, and listen to stories read to them until parents return.

1. Check-in policy

Children must have either a computer-generated or handwritten security name tag to be admitted into a classroom, and each child's information must be placed on the check-in sheet. Volunteers should take note of any special instructions from the parent. Personal items (toys, stuffed animals, etc.) must not be permitted. If the child brings a personal item to class, it should be taken away, kept from the child for the entire class session, and returned when his/her parent arrives for pick-up.

2. Transfer of children

Children should remain in the classroom for the entire duration of the class until picked-up by a parent, except for the bathroom break. For the bathroom break or in the event of an emergency, the class must be taken from one room or building to another in an orderly, single-file line with one volunteer monitoring the front of the line and another monitoring the back of the line. Children should be counted prior to leaving one area as well as upon arrival at the new area.

3. Diaper policy

The Preschool class is not equipped for diaper changes. Should the need arise for a diaper or pull-up change (it's leaky or soiled), the child's parent should be paged using the provided walkie-talkie. Give the last name and security tag number of the child.

4. Restroom policy

There is a scheduled bathroom break for the Preschool class, and the two volunteer policy must be followed. Volunteers should provide assistance to a child using the restroom only if the child is three years or younger or has special needs requiring extra assistance. Only female volunteers should provide this assistance.

One volunteer should check the restroom for occupants before a child enters and then hold the door of the restroom open while the child(ren) goes(go) into a stall. The other volunteer should remain with the other children.

5. Room cleanup policy

It is the responsibility of the volunteers to disinfect and put away all toys and equipment used after each service and help with other cleanup needs as directed by Kids leadership.

6. Check-out policy

A child may not be released unless a parent has the security tag that corresponds with the name tag on that child. If an adult attempts to pick up a child without the corresponding security tag, and if the adult's relationship to the child can be validated, then the volunteer may release the child. If the adult's relationship to the child cannot be verified, then a Director or an Elder must be notified to make the decision to release the child.

Elementary

Overview and vision: Children in this class begin with supervised free play and opening activities that introduce aspects of that week's Bible story. A snack is given, and volunteers pray for the children during snack time and as needs arise. Then, the Bible story is introduced with another activity or game, is presented in an engaging way, and discussed with a series of questions. Recognizing the great ability of kids at this age to commit repeated phrases to memory, kids are led in memorizing Bible verses and key questions and answers about God's story. After the lesson and memory work, they reinforce the story with another activity and then color, play, and listen to stories read to them until parents return.

1. Check-in policy

Children must have either a computer-generated or handwritten security name tag to be admitted into a classroom, and each child's information must be placed on the check-in sheet. Volunteers should take note of any special instructions from the parent. Personal items (toys, stuffed animals, etc.) must not be permitted. If the child brings a personal item to class, it should be taken away, kept from the child for the entire class session, and returned when his/her parent arrives for pick-up.

2. Transfer of children

Children should remain in the classroom for the entire duration of the class until picked-up by a parent. Should an emergency need arise, the class must be taken from one room or building to another in an orderly, single-file line with one volunteer monitoring the front of the line and another monitoring the back of the line. Children should be counted prior to leaving one area as well as upon arrival at the new area.

3. Restroom policy

There is a scheduled bathroom break for the Preschool class, and the two volunteer policy must be followed. Volunteers should provide assistance to a child using the restroom only if the child is three years or younger or has special needs requiring extra assistance. Only female volunteers should provide this assistance.

One volunteer should check the restroom for occupants before a child enters. The other volunteer should remain with the other children. The class should return to the room once everyone is finished in the restrooms.

4. Room cleanup policy

It is the responsibility of the volunteers to disinfect and put away all toys and equipment used after each service.

5. Check-out policy

A child may not be released unless a parent has the security tag that corresponds with the name tag on that child. If an adult attempts to pick up a child without the corresponding security tag, and if the adult's relationship to the child can be validated, then the volunteer may release the child. If the adult's relationship to the child cannot be verified, then a Kids Director or an Elder must be notified to make the decision to release the child.

CENTER KIDS HANDBOOK
STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AGREEMENT

I have received and read a copy of the Center Kids Handbook and understand the importance of the material therein. I agree to abide by these policies, procedures, and guidelines while serving with Center Kids.

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

I acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this handbook in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between Center Church and me. 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 that may be created and distributed.

I acknowledge receipt of the Center Kids Handbook.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Center Kids Director

Date