

Safety Policies for Children's Ministry Department (CMD)

This policy covers Nursery-6th grade

One major goal of Faith Community Church is to keep our children safe in an increasingly dangerous world. We therefore embrace these policies, not to reduce the amount of joy, fun, or affection that should be a part of our Children's Ministry, but to help us foster such an environment while reducing unnecessary risks to the safety of the children and the reputation of the volunteer.

We have sought to anticipate as many scenarios as possible, we understand that unique situations will arise that are not specifically addressed in this document. In those situations, we encourage you to use your best judgment and always strive to make sure the safety of our children is of the utmost priority.

We thank you for your hard work and loving dedication to our children.

1) Child Pick-up/Self Release

Volunteers must supervise when any child leaves, and confirm that they are leaving with the appropriate parent/guardian. If you don't know the parent/guardian, ask for the sticker to confirm. It's not rude -- you're keeping their kids safe!

If a sticker is lost, you can identify the parent/guardian by confirming with

1. The child
2. A trusted member or volunteer
3. The parent/guardian's identification (driver's license, etc.)
4. If you are not comfortable for any reason, request the Children's Ministry Director's assistance

It is recommended that one volunteer stands in the doorway for check-out (YOU are the door!) to prevent children from leaving and parents/guardians from entering. The others can help clean-up, finish class, gather activities to take home, etc.

Children are not permitted to release themselves from the area of a church activity unless:

1. They are in the fifth grade or above, and
2. They have written approval from parents.

2) Volunteer Guidelines

Name Tags

All church employees and volunteers are required to wear a Faith Community Church nametag whenever working with children.

Walkie-Talkies

Whenever volunteers take a class outside the building (like the sport court), walkie-talkies are mandatory.

Two-Adult Policy

A minimum of two volunteers shall be in attendance at all times when children are present at any church activity. At no time shall a volunteer be alone with a child except during an emergency.

Bathroom Use

Use of a bathroom should be overseen by two volunteers whenever possible.

There are three bathroom options on the church's bottom floor where the classrooms are located. They should be used as follows:

1. The in-classroom bathrooms should be used as first priority for children in rooms A3, A4, and A5.
2. When a bathroom outside the classrooms is needed, a child must be escorted by one female or one male and a "hall monitor" (or other appropriate assistant) to the single bathroom near the office. That bathroom will be checked to ensure no one is present before a child is permitted entry, with a responsible party standing directly outside to ensure no one else tries to enter.
3. If the single bathroom is not available, the child should be escorted to the general bathrooms under the same conditions as "2" above. Once the responsible escort ensures that the general bathroom is not occupied, the child can be allowed entrance and the responsible escort shall wait directly outside the door to ensure no one else tries to enter.
More than one child can be in the "general" bathroom at the same time only if they are from the same classroom. Children from different classrooms shall not be allowed access to the "general" bathroom at the same time.

If a child needs help to button, snap, belt, etc, only an adult female shall assist and the door should be cracked open to maintain a measure of privacy for the child but also visual accountability for the female volunteer.

Open Visibility

All classroom settings shall be open to public view during activities with children, usually through a window (not covered by blinds or obstructed in some other way). If no window exists, the door must remain open. Volunteers shall not meet alone with a child in any room or place where the door is closed or in an area where they cannot be seen.

Personal Contact with Children and Displays of Affection

As a church, we are a family, and home to many children who are loving and affectionate. Common expressions of affection will be a part of a loving environment.

At the same time, it is important for the volunteer to know the appropriate way to respond to this affection in order to prevent inappropriate touches of any kind:

Appropriate Contact:

- Hugging a child at their level. If a child approaches a volunteer for a hug, the volunteer should kneel or bend down so the child is at eye level. This will avoid the child hugging the volunteer at the waist and will allow the volunteer to hug the child back. If the volunteer is physically unable to kneel down, a "side to side" hug should be practiced.
- Sitting next to a child with a hand on his or her shoulder. This is a good alternative for the child who wants to sit on the volunteer's lap.
- Holding hands while *walking* with children if they initiate it or for their safety (crossing a street, moving from one room to another, etc.)
- Patting a child on the back and including an encouraging word
- Shaking hands
- High-Fiving

Inappropriate Contact:

- Spanking, slapping, hitting or any type of corporal punishment
- Physically forcing a child to go someplace or do something unless it is for his or her safety

- Touching of “private parts” (genitalia, buttocks, or breast area) over or under clothing (*see diaper changing section for exception*)
- Kissing a child
- Allowing a child to sit on a volunteer’s lap or holding a child (*at the nursery and toddler level holding a child is necessary – please see that section*). If a younger child needs comforting upon being dropped off, he or she may be held by a female volunteer if at all possible, but should be set down once he or she is able to participate in the class.
- In general, the ministry volunteer should not be the one to initiate physical contact

3) Child Safety Reminders

Some scenarios require additional care to maintain the children’s safety.

Sick Children

Steps to take for an ill child:

1. Isolate the child
2. Contact the child’s parents
3. Take child to the church office
4. Inform the Children’s Ministry Director

Missing Child

Steps to take when a child is missing:

1. Confirm child was checked into the room attendance roster and contact parents
2. Contact any COPS team member
3. Inform Children’s Ministry Director
4. Inform Church Administrator
5. Assist staff and safety personnel in locating the child

Emergency Exit Plan

Steps to take when evacuation of classroom is necessary:

1. Count all children in the room
2. Line up children in two lines (boys/girls)
3. Grab classroom attendance roster
4. Move as a room to a safe zone (in most cases, this will be onto the sport court/playground)
5. Count your children again in the safe zone
6. Review class roster to confirm all children are accounted for

Some infractions to the Volunteer Guideline are so serious that they endanger the child’s safety and must be immediately reported to the Children’s Ministry Director, after the safety of the child is ensured.

Unacceptable Behavior by a Ministry Volunteer

1. Any type, demonstration, or display of sexual activity
2. Physically abusive behavior or physical/corporal punishment
3. Physical neglect, including lack of proper supervision
4. Mentally or verbally abusive behavior
5. Presence or possession of obscene or pornographic materials
6. Presence, possession, or being under the influence of any illegal or illicit drug
7. Consumption of, or being under the influence of alcohol (includes alcohol on the breath)
8. Use of prescribed medications that impair your ability to work with children

Reporting Suspected Abuse

Any time a volunteer sees something at a church-related activity or program that creates a concern regarding any type of child abuse, the following procedure shall be followed:

1. Intervene as necessary to halt the suspected abuse
2. Immediately notify one of the leaders of the Children's Ministry
3. Notify the Church Administrator and a member of the COPS safety team
4. Continue involvement and cooperation as requested by the Children's Ministry Director in any additional reporting requirements

4) Added Details for Specific Situations

Based on ages, special needs, or genders, some situations require additional considerations.

Nursery and Toddler Age Children

This age group demands certain exceptions since babies need to be held and diapers need to be changed. Our goal with our youngest children is still to provide a loving environment while seeking to eliminate the risks of abuse.

Below are some special exceptions for this age group:

Changing Diapers

- Diapers are only to be changed by female nursery volunteers over 18 years old
- New latex gloves are to be worn with each diaper change
- Gloves and diapers must be disposed of in the appropriate bin
- Record of the diaper change must be made on the record sheet

Holding Children

- If an infant or toddler needs to be comforted, he or she may be held until they are contented again
- Physical touch should still not be forced upon the infant or child except for their own safety or good (diaper change)
- Children should never be removed from the nursery

Children with Special Needs

The Lord has blessed us with many children with special needs. Those aides dedicated to minister to a singular child with a special need should seek to adhere to this policy as much as is possible. When it is necessary to remove a child from the classroom, or walk them in the halls, do everything possible to ensure that your service is not done in anonymity. Male volunteers may assist special needs children, but never in a one-on-one situation.

Male Volunteers

To protect our children as well as the reputations of men at Faith Community Church, the following conduct is prohibited for all male volunteers:

1. Changing diapers, clothing, or going into a bathroom with any child
2. Allowing children to sit on their laps
3. Providing piggyback rides, placing children on their shoulders, tickling, wrestling, or roughhousing