

FCC Children's Ministry Policy



rev. March 2020

Dear Faith Community Church Children's Volunteer or Staff Member,

At Faith Community Church, we take our responsibility to care for children very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which children can grow in relationship with Jesus Christ. The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for Faith Community Church volunteers and staff members. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children, protecting children, you, and the mission of Faith Community Church. The following procedures have been adopted and will be strictly enforced. After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

Faith Community Church Elders

Faith Community Church Policies & Procedures for Children’s Ministries

CONTENTS

Faith Community Church Policies & Procedures for Children’s Ministries	2
OVERVIEW OF THE FAITH COMMUNITY CHURCH SAFETY SYSTEM	3
CHILD SAFETY POLICY	4
REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS	4
SAFETY COMMITTEE	5
CHILDREN’S MINISTRIES STAFF MONITORING PLAN.....	6
BUILDING SAFETY	6
TWO ADULT RULE.....	7
DISCIPLINE	7
BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINE	7
INTOXICANTS.....	8
MEDICATION.....	9
NUDITY	9
ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN	9
TRANSPORTATION.....	9
PARENTAL CONTACT	9
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT.....	9
PHYSICAL CONTACT	10
SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS.....	10
SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS.....	10
TOBACCO USE.....	10
VERBAL INTERACTIONS	11
RELEASE OF CHILDREN	11
SUPERVISION	11

OVERVIEW OF THE FAITH COMMUNITY CHURCH SAFETY SYSTEM

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

STEP ONE: Screening Process

Staff members and volunteers are required to complete the Faith Community Church Screening Process, which requires a staff member or volunteer to:

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

*a volunteer must attend Faith Community Church for three months before being eligible to serve in positions providing access to children, students or vulnerable populations.

STEP TWO: Policies & Procedures

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

STEP THREE: Criminal Background Check

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

STEP FOUR: Agree to the FCC Code of Conduct

Faith Community Church requires that all staff members and volunteers sign our Code of Conduct agreement.

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

Abuse tolerance

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

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

Faith Community Church is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to the Children's Ministry Director or any pastor, and the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agency. An element of the safe environment referenced above includes the fostering of a culture of reporting relevant information to the Children's Ministry Director or any pastor. Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a child for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to the Children's Ministry Director, any pastor, or Elder.

Enforcement of policies

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

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

Reporting violation of policy

In order to maintain a safe environment for our children, Faith Community Church staff members and volunteers must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation that is a violation of these policies. All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to the Children's Ministry Director, any pastor, or Elder.

Consequences of violation

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in Children's

Ministries. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or Child Protective agencies. Any person found to have committed a prohibited act should be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children, students or vulnerable populations at Faith Community Church. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from Faith Community Church. Failure to report a prohibited act to the designated person is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination of employment of a staff member or employee. Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act may be restricted from participation in any activities involving children, students or vulnerable populations at Faith Community Church.

Reporting suspicions of abuse to law enforcement agencies

Staff members and volunteers at Faith Community Church are required to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, or any inappropriate behavior of a colleague or co-worker, to the Children's Ministry Director, any pastor, or Elder. Pennsylvania law requires that any person having cause to believe a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect must make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency. A staff member or volunteer *may* report to the Children's Ministry Director, any pastor, or Elder and allow supervisory personnel to make the appropriate report to law enforcement agencies. Staff members and volunteers are required to verbally report an incident to supervisory staff as soon as possible after the incident. After receiving a report from a staff member or volunteer in Children's Ministries, the Sr. Pastor or an Elder will speak with the person or volunteer to whom the child spoke in order to get detailed information about the entire conversation. The Sr. Pastor or Elder will be notified as soon as reasonably possible. If appropriate, the Sr. Pastor or Chairman of the Elder Board will inform Childline.

Response to report of abuse

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

Faith Community Church Safety Committee

SAFETY COMMITTEE

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children, Faith Community Church will appoint and maintain a Safety Committee, which will meet once each quarter.

Mission statement

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

Composition

The Safety Committee will be comprised of the following members:

1. the Sr. Pastor
2. Associate Pastors
3. the Chairman of the Elders
4. the Children's Director
5. the Youth Director

Meetings

The Sr. Pastor will chair the meeting of the Safety Committee on a quarterly basis to discuss risk management practices and updates. The Safety Committee will also meet on an emergency basis upon the recommendation of a member or following the report of any incident or allegation.

Responsibilities

The Safety Committee will be charged with the following duties:

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

CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES STAFF MONITORING PLAN

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

- 1. The Sr. Pastor** meets with the Children's Director once monthly to discuss Children's Ministry.
- 2. The Elder Board** meets with the Children's Director once each year to discuss Children's Ministry, including safety training and procedures.
- 3. The Children's Director** conducts an unscheduled periodic observation for programs occurring regularly.

BUILDING SAFETY

The Children's Director will be responsible for ensuring that the children's classrooms are monitored during Sunday classes or programming. This will include unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers and children in children's classrooms. No child will ever be left unattended in a classroom or on church property during children's ministry programming or classes. Children's Ministries staff members or volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in any room or building. In the event a staff member or volunteer finds himself/herself alone with a single child, that staff member or volunteer will take the child to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: if a child is the last in a class to be picked up by a parent, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present.) On the children's playground, staff members and volunteers are to circulate, watching children during play periods, giving particular attention to the areas which are not easily seen from all viewpoints.

Any two children together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area of the playground.

TWO ADULT RULE

Faith Community Church is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Children's Ministries programs. Accordingly, every ministry will strive to maintain two approved adult workers at all times. If a ministry falls below two adults it is the workers' responsibility to immediately notify the program supervisor or the Children's Director. Supervisors will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately reestablish two adults.

DISCIPLINE

It is Faith Community Church's policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children. **No form of physical discipline is acceptable.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. Children are to be disciplined using timeouts and other non-physical methods of behavior management. In employing this procedure, staff members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines: 1) Verbally redirect the child before physically intervening. With younger children, some physical redirection may be necessary (for example, removing a toy from the hands of a child that is hitting another). 2) If the behavior does not cease, remove or direct the child away from the group to a corner of the room where the group is meeting (avoid being alone with the child). 3) Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the time-out, and provide the child with 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, as being removed from the group will likely upset the child. Do not physically hold the child in time-out. 4) Provide the child with a chair to sit in or a "spot" to sit on (using a pillow, blanket, carpet square, etc.) until their time-out is complete. 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 enter 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. Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported immediately to parents and the Children's Director.

BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINE

Nursery children

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

Diapering

1) Only approved nursery workers or the child's parent or legal guardian will undertake the diapering of children of either sex.

- 2) Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of other nursery workers.
- 3) Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
- 4) Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in nursery will be recorded on the registration cards (“Seth Adams has a medicine in the bag for rash.”)
- 5) Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
- 6) Children should be changed on changing stations only.

Toilet training

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

School age children

School age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. (However, children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities.) Staff members and volunteers should never take a lone child to the restroom. If a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another worker to accompany him/her. If another worker is not available to accompany, he/she should go to the exterior bathroom door, knock, and ask if the child needs assistance. If the child requires assistance, the worker should leave the exterior bathroom door open when entering the bathroom area and try to verbally assist the child in completing their activities, while the child remains behind the door of the bathroom stall. Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another staff member or volunteer.

Special needs

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

INTOXICANTS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in any Faith Community Church facility, while traveling with children, or while working with or supervising children.

MEDICATION

Medication may be given to a child by a staff member or volunteer with a doctor's prescription. The medication must be in the original packaging, including over the counter medication. The only exceptions to this policy are diaper ointment/medication and insect bite cream, after a parent information sheet is signed by a parent or guardian.

NUDITY

Staff and volunteers in Faith Community Church's student ministry should never be nude in the presence of students in their care (i.e. changing clothes during a pool party, weekend or overnight retreat, etc.).

ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Staff members and volunteers should never conduct one-to-one, unobserved meetings or interaction with children while participating in Faith Community Church Children's Ministry program. Another adult who has completed the Faith Community Church application and screening process should always be present.

TRANSPORTATION

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children:

1. Children should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.
2. Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.
3. No drivers under age 21 may drive Faith Community Church owned or rented vehicles.

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents who leave a child in the care of Faith Community Church staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Children's Ministries programs.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents are encouraged to visit any and all services and programs in which their child is involved at Faith Community Church. 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 Faith Community Church will be required to complete the Faith Community Church volunteer application and screening process.

PHYSICAL CONTACT

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

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

SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children, and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any child in the program.

SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS

Staff members and volunteers in Children's Ministries at Faith Community Church are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children that are not a part of the approved curriculum.

TOBACCO USE

Faith Community Church requires staff members and volunteers to abstain from the use or possession of tobacco products in church facilities, while in the presence of children or their parents, or during Faith Community Church activities or programs. Faith Community Church is a tobacco-free facility.

VERBAL INTERACTIONS

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. Faith Community Church staff members and 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, staff members and 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, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

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

SUPERVISION

Staff members and volunteers in Children's Ministries are expected to provide adequate supervision for children in their care while working in church programs.

Policies and Procedures
Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of Faith Community Church’s Children’s Ministries Policies and Procedures and understand the importance of the material in the manual. I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving or working at Faith Community Church. I understand the manual may be modified, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated by Faith Community Church. I have reviewed the duties listed in my ministry position description, and I agree to fulfill these duties. I understand I may choose to end my employment or voluntary service at Faith Community Church at any time (If possible, I will provide two weeks’ notice to my supervisor). I acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this handbook in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between me and Faith Community Church. If applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no monetary compensation for hours worked. I understand it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which may be created and distributed. I acknowledge receipt of Faith Community Church policies and procedures manual.

Staff Member or Volunteer’s name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer’s signature

Date:

[This page to **remain attached** to the Faith Community Church Policies and Procedures.]

Policies and Procedures

Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement

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Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date:

[This page to be **signed, detached and delivered** to the Faith Community Church Safety Administrator]