

Covenant Presbyterian Church

Child Protection Policy

September 29, 2016

Welcome!

Welcome to children's ministry at Covenant Presbyterian Church. It is our goal to create a safe and loving environment in which the children entrusted to our care are able to learn about the character of God, biblical truth, and what it means to follow Jesus Christ.

This handbook is designed to familiarize parents and caregivers with our childcare procedures and our child protection policy. The specifications contained in this handbook apply to official children's ministry occurring at the church building during Sunday morning worship, Sunday school, and regular Youth group meetings (not trips, social events, etc.). **Note:** the church does not provide childcare for meetings away from the church building, such as, picnics, small groups, etc. Parents bear the sole responsibility to provide care for their own children at all such meetings outside the church building. "Children's ministry" refers to classes and programs for children aged newborn to and including high school.

If you have any questions or comments, please call the church office at (731) 300-7351.

Mission

The children's ministry of Covenant Presbyterian Church exists to glorify God by:

- Supporting and encouraging parents who are primarily responsible for teaching biblical truths to their children (Ephesians 6:4)
- Making the whole counsel of God known to children with special emphasis on the Gospel (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Romans 1:16-17)
- Praying for children and relying on the Holy Spirit to regenerate their hearts through the faithful teaching of His Word (Romans 10:17; Ephesians 2:4-10)
- Living faithfully before children and modeling for them how Christians are called to respond to God, interact with each other and with the world around us (Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 11:1)

Caregiver Expectations

All children's ministry volunteers share a particular responsibility for:

- Loving children as Christ loves them
- Setting an example of proper Christian conduct in the way we live our lives
- Ministering to children
- Understanding that the care of children is a service to the body and embodies responsibilities to God and to the church for ministering to and caring for children

Child Protection Policy

Our first concern is that children are safe while they are in our care.

To this end we:

- Screen all children's ministry volunteers
- Require training for all children's ministry volunteers
- Utilize an identification system
- Employ scheduling procedures and caregiver/child ratios that optimize safety
- Adhere to a healthy child policy for admittance to children's ministry
- Equip the children's area with a first aid kit
- Educate our volunteers to recognize child abuse and to report any known or suspected abuse to appropriate governmental authorities consistent with applicable laws and to church officials.

According to Tennessee law, all persons (including doctors, mental health professionals, child care providers, dentists, family members, and friends) must report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. Failure to report child abuse or neglect is a violation of the law. **If you believe a child has been abused or neglected call 877-237-0004 to report it.** (Source: <http://state.tn.us/youth/childsafety/whoshouldreport.htm>)

Protecting the Children Before They Arrive

Ensuring a safe environment begins long before Sunday morning. Every applicant who wishes to serve in children's ministry is required to go through a screening process and attend childcare training.

Screening Procedure

To ensure safe and quality care, Covenant Presbyterian Church has established several criteria that all caregivers must meet in order to work with our children:

- All caregivers must be members in good standing of CPC.
- All caregivers must be eighteen years of age or older. Youth may assist, but only with an adult present.
- All caregivers must have completed childcare training.
- All caregivers must have completed the caregiver application and been approved by the Session

- All reference checks must be satisfactorily completed. Criminal records checks and other appropriate screening checks may be completed, subject to the discretion of the Session.
- All completed records of screening procedures will be kept securely along with the original application.
- Caregivers are to be approved by the Session.

Training

All caregivers must attend childcare training before they are allowed to work with children. Additional training sessions will be scheduled for existing caregivers to update them on policies and procedures. Parents with questions about childcare training are welcome to attend these sessions as well.

Protecting the Children As They Arrive and Depart

Arrival and Departure Times

Caregivers should be ready to accept children 15 minutes prior to the start of any session, so that parents have enough time to transition their children before the session begins.

Parents of children in 5th grade and below are encouraged to pick up their children immediately after the conclusion of the class, event, or service. In the event that a child is not picked up promptly at the end of the class, event, or service, caregivers will ask someone to locate the parents. Parents whose children (of any age) will be attending the worship service should ensure that their children use the restroom before the worship service begins. Children in grades 6-12 will be released at the end of the session to go where their parents have told them to go upon being released.

Signing a Child into Children's Ministry

Any parent who would like his/her child to participate in a children's ministry program will check the child in the appropriate classroom, nursery, or activity when he/she arrives, granting permission for the child to participate in that CPC event or program. This will authorize CPC to secure medical services for the child in the event of accident or injury if the parents or legal guardians are unavailable. The parent should also use this opportunity to note any allergies or special needs the child may have on a "Child Information Sheet" and verbally alert the caregivers.

Checking Children into and out of Nursery and Extended Session

Parental Authentication Identification System

In order to protect the children in our care, each child must be checked into his/her class (nursery or extended session) by a parent or guardian. Upon checking a child in the nursery, the parent/guardian and the child will receive a label with a family-specific identification code. This number is used to match parent to child.

Sign-in/Release Procedures for Nursery

Parents/guardians should bring their children to the entrance of the nursery where they will be given a nametag for each child. The parent then will hand his/her child off to a caregiver to be taken to his/her classroom.

At the end of the service, parents should come to the nursery area immediately to pick up their children. They should wait outside the nursery area. Their child will be brought to them by a worker. Children will not be released to anyone except the parent unless other plans have been arranged and communicated to the nursery director in advance.

At the end of the service, event, or class when the parent/guardian comes to pick up the child:

1. The parent/guardian will come to the nursery gate to check his/her child out.
2. The children's ministry volunteer will bring the child to the nursery gate and remove the child's label. If the child or parent is unknown to the volunteer, the volunteer will check the numbers on the parent's ID card and child's label to ensure that they match.
3. Caregivers will REMOVE & DESTROY the child's label before child leaves the nursery area. This will prevent strangers from referring to children by name and potentially luring them away from their parents.

Paging System

Each family's identification number, found on the child's security tag (the tag that is placed on his/her back), is also used as a pager number. If a parent is needed, the number will appear on the paging box located on the wall to the right and left of the pulpit. The parent who has been paged will wait at the nursery gate in the hallway, and his/her child will be brought to him/her by a caregiver.

Ordinarily, only the parent/guardian who signed the child into the class will be permitted to retrieve the child. There are three exceptions to this rule:

1. In the event of an emergency that would result in neither parent/guardian being available to sign out the child at the end of a session, the child will be released to the care of a designated member of CPC and/or health care provider.
2. A parent may make prior arrangements with the nursery coordinator or designate to allow for someone other than him/herself or his/her spouse to pick up the child at the end of a session.
3. Members of the church who check-in their children will have the option to grant permission for their spouses (and only their spouses) to pick up their child in the event that the parent/guardian who signs in the child is unable to sign the child out.

If no teacher is present at the time of arrival, parents should wait with their child(ren) until the appropriate teachers arrive.

Protecting the Children While They Are In Our Care

Two Caregiver Rule

At least two qualified, adult caregivers must be present in each classroom at all times. We consider adults to be age eighteen and older.

Two male caregivers may not serve together without a female caregiver also being present.

Two members of the same family cannot serve together unless a caregiver from another family is present.

Child-to-Caregiver Ratios

In addition to always having two caregivers present, the following ratios are maintained during the regularly scheduled weekly meetings of the church:

- Children ages 0-3 One adult for every two to four children, depending on their ages
- Children ages 3-4 One adult for every eight children
- Children ages 5-18 One adult for every twelve children

Elders, Deacons, or Children's Ministry Directors should be notified if more caregivers are needed in order to maintain these ratios.

Hygiene/Cleaning

Diapering Procedures

Only females and married men should change diapers. Caregivers should wash their hands and/or use hand sanitizer before and after changing a diaper. Each child should have a clean diaper before the end of the church service. **DO NOT LEAVE A CHILD UNATTENDED ON THE CHANGING TABLE.**

Cleaning Toys

In addition to the regular clean-up of the room, toys will be cleaned by the workers after each service. Soft, cloth toys should not be in nursery as they cannot be properly cleaned. All cleaning supplies will be kept out of reach of children.

0-Walkers

Spray and wipe all toys which were used. Remove, tie, dispose of (Put trash in the big trash can in the janitorial closet.), and replace trash bags with clean bags which are located on the shelf in the entry area of the nursery. After the service, remove the sheets from the beds which were used.

Walker-2

Spray and wipe all toys which were used. Remove, tie, dispose of (Put trash in the big trash can in the janitorial closet.), and replace trash bags with clean bags which are located on the shelf in the entry area of the nursery. Wash and dry any cups belonging to the church which were used.

2-3 Year Olds

Same as above.

3-4 Year Olds

Spray and wipe all toys which were used.

Rest Room Procedures

Parents are asked to take their potty trained children to the restroom prior to signing them into a class and prior to taking them into the worship service. Older children under their parents' supervision should also use the restroom prior to going to class and prior to attending the worship service.

Potty trained through 4 years old

Preschool children (potty trained through 4 years old) should be provided a bathroom break during Sunday school. If because of potty-training a parent believes his/her child needs another planned bathroom visit, the parent may come and take the child to the restroom. Caregivers taking children to the restroom should teach the children to walk in line quietly down the hall and wait patiently in line for their turn to use the restroom. A female caregiver should accompany 3&4 year old children to the larger women's restroom and prop the restroom door open before allowing the children to enter. Children should go into the stalls alone, and the female teacher should assist only if necessary, in which case the stall door should remain open. If one child in the classroom has an "emergency" and must use the bathroom immediately (apart from the bathroom break), the female teacher may take the child to the bathroom, but the main door should remain open, and if the child needs assistance, the door to the stall should remain open.

2&3 year old children are considered in potty training. They can be taken to the restrooms on the end of the hall outside of their room. The back classroom door should be propped open. Restroom doors must be propped open. Female caregivers accompany children to provide assistance as needed.

Other Classes

For all other classes up to (but not including) Junior High, any child needing to use the restroom shall go with another child of the same age and sex. A female caregiver will accompany the pair to the restroom and wait outside the closed restroom door until the children are finished. The children must wash their hands with soap and water before returning with the caregiver to their classroom.

Junior High and Senior High

Students in the Junior High or Senior High class shall use the appropriate restroom on their own. No caregiver or other child should accompany him/her because that would just be creepy.

Managing the classroom

Managing the classroom well by establishing routines and procedures will help children be safe and happy during their time in your care.

Classroom Safety

For the protection of children and teachers, a minimum of two teachers (at least one teacher should be female) should be present in the classroom at all times. If one teacher must be left alone with the children for any reason, the top part of the door should remain open. Under no circumstances should children be left alone.

Take Roll

Taking roll is important. It can give you the opportunity to speak personally to each child. In the event of an emergency, grab the class roll on the way out. We will need to know as quickly as possible the children who are present.

Establish classroom rules and procedures

Rules should be reviewed with children at the beginning of every class. They should be reminded of rules as needed during class time. Procedures are how you want children to do what they do during class. Before doing any activity, tell the children what you want them to do and how you want them to do it. Remind them of procedures during the activity as needed.

Plan your lesson

A well-planned lesson will work wonders in managing behavior. Your lesson is not just the Bible story. It is everything you do during the class time. Even transitioning for one activity to another is part of the lesson. Plan a schedule for class time so that you do not have dead time, allot a certain amount of time for each activity, and explain to kids how to transition from one activity to the other before you transition them.

Appropriate Discipline

All children's ministry volunteers are responsible for providing a loving, respectful, and orderly atmosphere in which children can learn, play, and interact with others. This atmosphere should be maintained by preparing beforehand, proactively directing children towards acceptable activities, verbally encouraging positive behavior, and, when necessary, correcting or redirecting inappropriate behavior.

Acceptable means of redirecting inappropriate behavior include correcting the child verbally, withholding a certain privilege or activity for a brief time, or separating a child from the group for a brief time (particularly if his behavior is endangering or upsetting other children).

Children's ministry volunteers and staff members should never yell at, spank, or hit a child. If behavior is uncontrollable or the child does not respond to the disciplinary measures above, parents should be sent for. Parents should take their child from the room and deal with him/her privately to avoid upsetting the other children and allow the class to continue without further interruption.

Inconsolable Children

If a child is inconsolable for five minutes, parent should be contacted through the paging system. Parents should take their child from the room and deal with him/her privately to avoid upsetting the other children and allow the class to continue without further interruption.

Accidents and First Aid

First Aid Kit

For basic injuries a first aid kit is available in the cabinet at the nursery desk. All injuries must be reported to the nursery director. If a child is injured, please inform parents and indicate the type of first aid given. Volunteers may not administer any medication to a child.

Emergencies

In case of an emergency, a teacher should call 911 immediately. Parents should be notified immediately if there is an emergency with their child.

IN CASE OF CHOKING, REFER TO THE INSTRUCTIONS PLACED ON THE WALL OF THE NURSERY ROOM. Additionally, medical personnel within the church should be sent for immediately.

Health Issues

Allergies

If a child has an allergy, the nursery director should be notified during sign-in and the allergy will be noted on the child's security tag.

Illness

If a child gets sick while in the classroom, keep the child separate from the other children and locate the parents. Parents should not bring a child to the nursery if they have had a fever, have vomited, or had diarrhea in the past 24 hours or currently have a severely runny nose, severe cough, pink eye, or a contagious rash. Volunteers may not administer any medication to a child.

Universal Precautions

Universal precautions are employed such that all human bodily fluids are treated as if they carried infectious diseases. Universal precautions are applicable in a nursery setting and should be utilized. The method is very effective for protecting both the children and caregivers in the nursery from illness. This is not to imply that any children or caregivers in the nursery are carrying infectious diseases. By treating all bodily fluids as if they are infected, any infections or contaminants can be avoided at all times, providing a safer and healthier environment for caregivers and children alike.

Important Points of Universal Precautions:

- Wash hands before and after any contact with bodily fluids, including wiping noses, changing diapers, cleaning vomit, and treating a blood spill.
- Always wear disposable gloves when dealing with any bodily fluids.
- Treat all soiled linen (i.e. sheets, clothing) as potential infectious agents.
- Remove toys that children have mouthed from the general play area. Set them in the container by the sink and wash.
- At the end of the session, disinfect the toys and the room.

Ongoing Care for Children with Allergies

Parents of children with allergies who attend regularly should talk with the Children's Ministry Directors about how to handle any unexpected allergic reactions.

Child Protection Team

The Child Protection Team (CPT) consists of the pastor, the Nursery Coordinator, and the Session. All members of the CPT stand ready to receive information related to suspected child neglect, abuse, or molestation. They are committed to addressing all allegations in accordance with the principles of Matthew 18 and in harmony with the CPC church policies and the laws of the state of Tennessee. Any children's ministry volunteer or staff member, who witnesses a violation of the Child Protection Policy short of abuse, should first notify the person violating the policy and encourage compliance. If the person violating the policy refuses to comply, a member of the Child Protection Team should be notified immediately. Any children's ministry volunteer or staff member who witnesses or suspects neglect, abuse, or molestation should report their concerns immediately to the proper state authorities (Department of Children's Services at **877-237-0004**) and a member of the Child Protection Team.