Children's Ministries
Volunteer Handbook

Updated January 2015
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Dear Real Life Kids Team,

Welcome to Real Life Kids Ministry! We are thrilled that you are joining our church family and team as we minister with children. We say “minister with” children as we believe that we are more than mere volunteers, we are truly ministering to children, and we say “with” because we learn from children as we teach them.

We believe that children can be taught from an early age that they have to be in right relationship with God. We also believe that they can be used by God to minister to other children and to us “adults” as well. We know that children learn through relationship with other children and adults. The children you work with will look to you as a role model and you will have many opportunities to share examples from your own walk with God.

We recognize that you and those co-ministers who serve with you, are the foundation of a successful ministry team. No matter what your role is within our ministry, you are an integral part of the Real Life Kids Team as we work together to effectively minister to the children that God entrusts to our care. That is why we are diligent in our inviting, interviewing, and placement process for all volunteers.

We want you to have a great sense of joy and satisfaction in your ministry area. To accomplish this goal, we empower you by providing the necessary materials, facilities, and training to make you successful. We will endeavor to provide training and fellowship times that strengthen our bond as parents and co-ministers.

This manual is designed to introduce you to our ministry with children. It should provide you with a clear understanding of our ministry.

Thanks again for joining the Real Life Kids team! You can look forward to many opportunities for personal growth and fulfillment as we minister together.

Pastor Michele Smith
Pastor of Family Life Ministries
REAL LIFE CHURCH

MISSION: To Lead People to Become Fully Devoted Followers of Christ

Strategy: Connect --> Grow --> Go

CONNECT
Our Sunday Morning CONNECT Service is about bringing people into an atmosphere that is all at once attractive, comfortable, and understandable, yet also inspiring and challenging. Through experiencing the presence of God and interacting with how the scriptures powerfully apply to real-life situations, our goal is to connect each person present to God, no matter where that person is on their journey in knowing Him.

GROW
Since one of our Core Values is that discipleship (GROWing in your relationship with God) happens best in the context of caring relationships, our goal is to see people move from Sunday attendance to regular participation in a community with others; small groups that we call Life Groups.

GO
Seeing people move from being a “spectator” to being an active part of the life change that happens around here at Real Life is what GO is all about! This involves not only learning your spiritual gifts, serving, and giving, but also helping bring the Good News of Jesus to those around you….helping people CONNECT with God and others.
REAL LIFE KIDS CHILDREN’S MINISTRIES

Staff Team:

- Pastor of Family Life Ministries: Michele Smith
  - Michele.smith@reallifechurch.net
- Director of Early Childhood Ministries: Barb LeMire
  - Barb.lemire@reallifechurch.net
- Infant Nursery Coordinator: Barb LeMire
- Sandbox Classroom Coordinator (age 18 months – 3 years): Belle Kranz
- Big Backyard Classroom Coordinator (preschool): Missy Byers
- Kid Connect Classroom Coordinator (K-5th Grade): Pastor Michele Smith

Vision
To partner with parents, to help kids become life-long followers of Christ.

Mission
We desire to serve the kids of Real Life Church and their families by providing opportunities to CONNECT with others and God, GROW in the knowledge and understanding of His Word, and prepare them to GO and be a “light” in this world by showing love and serving others.
REAL LIFE KIDS VOLUNTEER SELECTION

Everyone desiring to work with children or students at Real Life Church, whether paid staff or volunteer, must go through the volunteer selection process. Legal and insurance requirements call for the church to take specific action in worker selection and supervision, and in the reporting of allegations of child abuse. Our Selection Process has two components: screening and training.

Screening
Screening may include, but may not be limited to, one or more of the following: application, reference checks, personal interview, and criminal background check. Not all serving positions require all of the below screening steps:

1. Application: Designed to get to know you better
2. Reference Checks: Conducted so we can hear from the people who you’ve said know you best and anyone else that we think may be helpful in helping us understand you and your background.
3. Personal Interview: Held to help RLC determine if RLC has an appropriate serving position for your experience, gifts, and passion – and if so what that serving position is.
4. Background Check: Requested for all staff and volunteers who work around minors, volunteer positions involving specific situations, and special circumstances.

Any person wishing to serve in Children’s Ministries at Real Life Church must be actively attending our weekend service for at least 6 months.

Student Volunteers must be at least 13 years old and will be approved and trained by the classroom coordinator. They must complete a Youth Volunteer Application and Verification of Clear Criminal Record must be completed by parent/guardian.

Individuals not allowed to work with/around minors at Real Life Church include:
- Individuals convicted at any time of any crime of child abuse or molestation and/or any other violent crime against another person or an animal.
- Individuals convicted of felonies of any kind within the past 5 years
- Individuals who, in Real Life Church’s sole discretion, are not determined by RLC to be a good fit to serve with our Children’s Ministries.

Training
Our training is conducted mainly by the classroom coordinators and is for all people who serve around minors on a regular basis. The purpose of these trainings is to fully equip our volunteers in ministry.

All employees and volunteers shall read and indicate in writing their understanding and agreement to follow the RLC Handbook. Refer to the RLC Handbook Acknowledgement & Agreement Form located at the end of this Handbook.
SERVING WITH REAL LIFE KIDS

The Rule of Three
The Rule of Three will be enforced. No worker will have one-on-one contact with a child apart from the group. You do not take a child alone into the rest rooms. You do not spend time privately with any child either on or off the church grounds. Always walk in threes or more. Spending time with several children is permitted. The Rule of Three states, "there will never be less than three people in any given situation. This can be two workers and one child, or one worker and two children."

Serving Schedule
A quarterly serving schedule will be posted on our Planning Center Online site. This online scheduling site is where our main volunteer schedule is kept, therefore all volunteers need to become familiar with it. If you do not have access to internet, please speak with your classroom coordinator to set up an alternate way to receive your schedule.

Most volunteers will serve once every six weeks, depending on the classroom need for volunteers, age of the volunteer, and level of involvement in other specific areas of ministry (e.g. typically those who volunteer in areas that require specific skills, such as worship and tech team, are not asked to volunteer as frequently).

If you are unable to serve during your scheduled time, please contact a fellow volunteer in your specific classroom to fulfill your commitment and then let us know by contacting the classroom coordinator AND the office (office@reallifecurch.net). You may use the RLC Superheros Facebook page (but NOT the RLC Women’s Facebook page). If you need to cancel at the last minute and have a hard time getting ahold of your classroom coordinator, then you may contact the church office and leave a message. However, we cannot guarantee we will get the message in time, but it will show a good faith effort on your part and make us aware of how often this issue comes up. It is your responsibility to find a sub when you are unable to serve in your scheduled time.

Maternity Leave:
If you are a volunteer who is expecting, please let your classroom coordinator know when you are due as soon as possible. This will help with volunteer planning. We like to give new moms at least 6 weeks off from volunteering before putting them back on the schedule. At this time, we ask that dads continue to volunteer 1x per month to help make sure we have enough volunteers during these leaves. This also helps to cover and provide a second volunteer to pair up with single parents or those with spouses that do not attend church. If you have any questions, please contact your classroom coordinator.
Arrival Time
Please arrive by 9:30am for all classrooms.

Early Education Classrooms:
When you arrive, put your nametag on and get your room ready to go. The materials you’ll need will be waiting for you in the classroom. Please follow the recommended schedule and do the activities provided for you. If you have any questions or cannot find the material please see your classroom coordinator for assistance.

Kid Connect:
When you arrive, please check in with the scheduled teacher in the Chapel for more directions. They should go over the plan for the day with you and will let you know if there is any prep work they need your help with. Please plan on staying until either all children are picked up or the teacher releases you. If you have any questions, please see Michele Smith or Barb LeMire who is the designated RLC staff person making rounds to check on classrooms for assistance.

Check-In Time
If a first-time visitor comes to the classroom, please let the parents know that they need to fill out a Kid Connect Card to get their child registered. This should be done when the child is dropped off.

These cards will be kept in your classroom, typically along with your classroom’s 3-Ring binder. If this is not their first time and they have already registered, please check the box to ensure it is in there and fill it out if applicable. Please see your classroom coordinator for specific instructions or questions regarding these cards.

Please follow this procedure during check-in time:
- Infant, Toddler, and Preschool Rooms:
  - Greet each child and parent/guardian with a smile and helpful hand. (For nurseries, there is a baby gate to put up at the door, please have parents hand children over the gate. This will ensure no children will slip out during drop offs or pick-ups.)
  - All children must be checked in at the Check-In Kiosk in the Lobby. The child and parent will come from the kiosk with matching stickers.
  - Cubies or hooks are available to store the child’s diaper bag or personal belongings. All items coming with the child need to be labeled by the parents (including diaper bags, bottles, etc).
  - Check the sticker that is on the child to familiarize yourself with any allergies, special needs, or instructions.
Physical Contact
Rules about physical contact work both ways. Make sure people are appropriate with you and also that you are appropriate with other people. Some guidelines to follow:

- Appropriate touching would come as an expression of affirmation such as non-demanding, gentle touch on the shoulder, hands, arms, head or back. Keep in mind, though, that any touching (even if it’s something listed above) that a person clearly indicates is unwelcome, is inappropriate.
- Examples of inappropriate touching would be kissing, demanding kisses or hugs, touching of the chest, waist, stomach, bottom, or private areas, and piggy back rides. In addition, anything that makes you (or the other person) feel uncomfortable should be clearly indicated as unwelcome. Any such touching should immediately cease and should be avoided in the future.
- Any touching used to express power or control over another person is inappropriate, such as grabbing a person’s arm or wrist, punching, slapping, and poking a finger into a person’s chest to make a point.

Behavior Management
*Ten Minute Cry Rule: If infants or toddlers can’t be soothed by the volunteer within 10 minutes, someone needs to go and get a parent/guardian.

The goal of discipline is to:
- Help kids learn responsible behavior
- Facilitate appropriate and positive social interaction
- Structure your group for success
- Notice and praise positive behavior

Ways to Avoid Problem Behaviors:
- Come prepared
- Keep things moving
- Be sensitive to the moods of the children in the group
- Provide enough elbow room
- Set clear expectations with the children

When Kids Require Discipline or Guidance:
- Use a firm but gentle voice to address the behavior
- Remove the child from the activity and if needed and appropriate, give the child a time-out
- Focus your remarks on the behavior you want to see
- Don’t use words or a tone of voice that shames or frightens a child
- Don’t use sarcasm or scream at a child
- Never make remarks that put down the individual as a person or make negative references about appearance, race, or gender
• Never use corporal punishment, spanking, and/or physical discipline of any kind
• Use touch only in appropriate, affirming, and welcome ways.

If, at any time, you have questions or would like further information about ways to engage in positive interactions with children, you are encouraged to contact your classroom coordinator or the RLC Family Pastor.

Bathroom & Diaper Changing Procedure
• Infants and Toddlers in diapers:
  o Diapering should be done on the changing table located in each of these rooms and in close proximity to other care providers/volunteers.
  o Please wipe down and clean the changing area every time a different child is changed.
  o All volunteers must wear gloves when changing a diaper.
  o A new set of gloves must be worn each time you change a diaper.
  o For the protection of our volunteers and our children, only women may change diapers.
  o Make sure all diapering is done while other people are in the room.
• Toddlers and Preschoolers who are potty-training:
  o Be sure to ask parents/guardians if their child is potty training and mark on the child’s sticker.
  o Please ask children if they need to potty.
  o There are bathrooms located in either the classroom area or next door to the classroom. Please leave bathroom stall doors unlocked and open.
  o Child may need assistance. For the protection of our volunteers and our children, only women should provide bathroom assistance.
• Kid Connect (K–5th grade):
  o Permission granted to use facility
  o Check to see if any other adults are already in the bathroom.
  o Unless special help is required, volunteer should wait outside the bathroom door. Special help refers to very young children or medical conditions which require help. A witness should always be present for this incidence.
Check-Out Time
Please locate and return all of child’s belongings.

Security Sticker ID Procedure:

• Only release a child to a person with a security ID sticker that matches the number on the sticker of the child. If they lose their security sticker ID tag, a staff person or classroom coordinator will need to be notified and a driver’s license or other identification will be asked for. If no identification is available, the Children’s Ministry Director and/or Family Pastor will be asked to intervene.

• Do not allow the child to leave your classroom with anyone who does not have a security sticker tag with numbers that match!

If your child is in the Playground Classroom or Kid Connect on a week that you are volunteering in another classroom, please pick up your child as soon as the service is over. We will hold your child and not release him or her to anyone else without your prior permission. In the event that you are unable to pick them up in a timely manner, we will arrange for a volunteer to escort them to you.

Room Clean-Up
Room clean-up is a very important part of your ministry. Before you leave, prepare the room for the next service. We’ve tried to make it easy for you to clean things up before you leave by providing detailed instructions in each classroom. Most bookshelves and cubbies have been labeled for you to make it easy to distinguish what goes where.

Any craft or papers left behind by children can be thrown away. Snack leftovers need to be put in the cupboard or closet. Crayons, paper, and anything else that came out of a cupboard or storage closet needs to be returned to the appropriate place.

Please take out the trash to the dumpster and replace the trash cans with new liners and wipe down the diaper changing area.

For all Early Education Classrooms/Nurseries, please wash and sanitize toys that have been put in a child’s mouth. There is a sanitizing spray provided for each classroom that can be used to sanitize ALL toys that have been used and pulled out and to wipe all surfaces down at the end of class.
Promotions to New Classrooms
Promotions happen in September, with the exception of those infants who are between 15 months and 18 months, walking, and ready to transition to the Toddler Nursery (the Sandbox). When a child meets those requirements and the parent(s) would like to transition them to the Sandbox, they need to contact their child’s Classroom Coordinator regarding the best Sunday to move them up.

NURSING MOTHERS
We do have a private area for nursing mothers to take care of their little ones in the women’s restroom on the main level. Please see the Infant Nursery Classroom Coordinator if you have questions.

SICK-CHILD POLICY
ILLNESS: Because we are concerned for the safety and health of every child, we ask that parents do not bring their child to our nurseries if one or more of the following symptoms are present:

- unusual fatigue or irritability
- coughing, sneezing, runny nose, or obvious cold symptoms
- fever of 101 degrees or higher within 24 hours
- vomiting within 24 hours
- inflamed mouth or throat
- impetigo (a contagious skin infection that usually produces blisters or sores on the face, neck, hands, and diaper area)
- conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- abnormally loose stools or diarrhea within 24 hours
- undiagnosed rash (diaper rash is acceptable)
- any diagnosed viral infection

Should any of the symptoms mentioned above be detected in a child, the nursery volunteer needs to ask the parent not to bring their child into the room. Parents should be called from the service immediately if injury occurs or illness is detected in their child.

If a child is being treated with antibiotics, he/she should be on the drug for at least 24 hours before coming to a classroom or nursery. A nursery worker is not permitted to administer any kind of medication to your child, unless your child has an allergy that requires an epi-pen. In this situation, the parent/guardian is responsible to inform the volunteer what their child needs and how to use an epi-pen in the event that he or she has an allergic reaction.

We realize that some symptoms hang on long after the child is no longer contagious. Remember, we want all of our children to remain healthy and happy.
EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Injuries

- Typically a minor injury can be treated with a little loving attention, a cool cloth, and a Band-Aid. A first aid kit is available in each room.
- Serious injuries include, but are not limited to, those involving broken bones, traumatic falls, bleeding that cannot be immediately controlled, convulsions, fainting, and unconsciousness. Serious injuries should be handled as follows:
  - Keep calm and keep the injured person and the children as calm as possible. Speak calmly to assure the injured person that he or she will be okay.
  - Do not move the injured person and do not leave them.
  - If the injured person is a child, send a fellow volunteer to find the parent/guardian and a staff member.
  - If the injured person is an adult, send a fellow volunteer to find a family member and a staff member.
  - If needed, the staff member will contact 911 and any medical personnel available on campus.

Fire

In the event of a fire, follow this procedure:

- Acquaint yourself with the evacuation route for your classroom. Make exiting the building your first priority.
- Before evacuating, get the attendance clipboard, count the number of children that are in your care, and write it down.
- Evacuate to the nearest parking lot. Parents will be instructed to pick up their children in the parking lot area. Release children to people who have proper I.D.
- Remain calm in order to keep your children calm.

Tornado

In the event of a tornado, follow this procedure:

- Before evacuating, get the attendance clipboard, count the number of children that are in your care, and write it down.
- Evacuate the children into the hallway and have the children put their heads down between their legs. A staff member will inform those classrooms on the main level if they need to move down to the basement level.
- Make sure the classroom door is closed behind you.
- Count your children.
- Await further instructions from the RLC Staff.
CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

Understanding Child Abuse

- Child Sexual Abuse
  - Is any sexual activity with a child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child
  - May be violent or non-violent. All child sexual abuse is an exploitation of a child’s vulnerability and powerlessness in which the abuser is fully responsible for the actions.
  - Is a criminal behavior that involves children in sexual behaviors for which they are not personally, socially, and developmentally ready
  - Includes behaviors that involve touching and non-touching aspects
  - Includes types that involve actions such as: fondling; oral, genital, and anal penetration; intercourse; forcible rape
  - Includes types that do not involve touching, such as: verbal comments, pornographic videos, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, allowing children to witness sexual activity

- Child Neglect
  - The failure to provide a child with basic needs, including food, clothing, education, shelter, and medical care
  - Abandonment and inadequate supervision

- Child Emotional Maltreatment
  - A pattern of behavior that attacks a child’s emotional development and a sense of self-worth, such as constant criticizing, belittling, insulting, manipulation
  - Providing no love, support, or guidance

Recognizing Child Abuse

The following signs may signal the presence of child abuse or neglect. It is important to note that any one of these things could mean anything or nothing. For example, there are many reasons a child may not want to go home on any particular day, or a child may be overly compliant when they are trying to please a favorite teacher. However, when you have a cluster of two or more of these indicators, this should raise a red flag to at least talk to the child and/or parent. It is also important to remember that issues related solely to poverty are not considered child maltreatment issues.

- The Child:
  - Shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance
  - Displays overt sexualized behavior or exhibits sexual knowledge that is inconsistent with their age
  - Has not received medical attention for a physical injury that has been brought to the parents’ attention
- Has learning problems that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes
- Is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen
- Is overly compliant, an overachiever, or too responsible
- Comes to school early, stays late, and does not want to go home
- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Has bruises or marks in non-prominent, “fleshy” areas of the body (for example, inside of biceps or behind the knees)
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
- Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home from school
- Shrinks at the approach of adults
- Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver

- The Parent or Other Adult Caregiver:
  - Shows little concern for the child, rarely responding to the school’s requests for information, for conferences, or for home visits; denies the existence of (or blames the child for) the child’s problems in school or at home; asks the classroom teacher to use harsh physical discipline if the child misbehaves; sees the child as entirely bad, worthless, or burdensome
  - Demands perfection or a level of physical or academic performance the child cannot achieve
  - Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child’s injury
  - Describes the child as “evil” or in some other very negative way
  - Is abusing alcohol, prescription drugs, or illegal drugs and that abuse is having an adverse impact on the child
  - Uses harsh physical discipline with the child
  - Has a history of abuse as a child

Recognizing Child Neglect
- The Child:
  - Begs or steals food or money from classmates
  - Lacks needed medical or dental care
  - Lacks age appropriate adult supervision
  - Lacks clothing appropriate for the weather
  - Reports family violence in the home
  - Reports use of illegal substances or excessive use of alcohol by parents or caregivers (for example, to the point the parent passes out)
  - Abuses alcohol or other drugs
  - States there is no one at home to provide care

- The Parent or Other Adult Caregiver:
- Appears to be indifferent to the child
- Seems apathetic or depressed
- Is involved in an abusive domestic relationship
- Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner
- Is abusing alcohol, prescription drugs, or illegal drugs

Reporting Suspected Abuse/Neglect

Abuse is the intentional maltreatment of a child and can be physical, sexual, or emotional in nature. Neglect, on the other hand, is the failure to give children the necessary care they need.

If you suspect that a child is being abused or neglected, or if you think a child may have died from being mistreated, you have a duty to report any actual or suspected abuse or neglect of a child verbally to the Children’s Ministry Director, Early Education Coordinator, or Lead Pastor immediately. You will be required to put your accusations in written form and the Children’s Ministry Director, Early Education Coordinator, and Lead Pastor may determine that it is necessary to schedule an interview with you.

No employee or volunteer shall conduct any investigation or attempt to “solve the problem” independently. After the suspected abuse case has been reported to RLC we will take proper steps to timely report the suspected abuse/neglect to the appropriate designated reporting agency.
Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect Written Report

Child’s Name: ________________________  Nickname: __________________

Child’s Address: ___________________________________________________

The present whereabouts of the child if not at the home address: __________

Child’s Date of Birth: _________________

Names & ages of other juveniles in the home:

____________________________________________

____________________________________________

____________________________________________

The nature and extent of an injury or condition resulting from abuse or neglect:

________________________________________________

________________________________________________

________________________________________________

Any other information that you believe might be helpful in establishing the need for protective services or court intervention:

________________________________________________

________________________________________________

________________________________________________
SLEEPOVER AND ACTIVITY GUIDELINES
All sleepovers and activities must be approved in writing in advance by the Family Pastor or Director of Children’s Ministries.

Off-Campus
- RLC-approved permission slips/releases of liability in favor of Real Life Church must be signed by and obtained from every participant’s parent(s)/guardian(s).
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) are responsible to ensure the accuracy of this information.
- As long as any children are awake, one of the leaders must also be awake to monitor and promote safe behavior.
- Separate sleeping quarters must be designated for males and females.
- Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn.
- Leaders should be cognizant of areas of potential risks and take steps to safeguard the minors from inappropriate material. Some topics to be aware of include the following:
  - Leaders should check with parent(s)/guardian(s) for permission to watch PG movies. No PG-13 or R rated movies are permitted.

On-Campus
In addition to the guidelines outlined above:

- In the event of a cross-gender sleepover at church, boys and girls must sleep in separate rooms properly supervised with same gender leaders.
- Approved and non-approved areas of occupancy must be explained and monitored.

One-On-One
It is acceptable for an adult leader or children’s leader to take one of his/her group members individually for an activity only if the following guidelines are followed prior to the activity:

- The one-on-one meeting must be approved in writing in advance by the Family Pastor or Director of Children’s Ministries.
- Specific signed and dated parental/guardian approval must be given. This approval should include, at the least, the following information:
  - The location and nature of the activity
  - The curfew set with the parent(s)/guardian(s)
  - Any other guidelines given by the parent(s)/guardian(s), which must be followed.
  - Emergency Contact Information exchanged
Real Life Kids Handbook Acknowledgement & Agreement Form

I acknowledge receipt of the Real Life Church Children’s Ministry Handbook on the date shown below. I have read the Children’s Ministry Handbook and agree to follow them in any and all of my contact with minors at Real Life Church.

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________

Printed Name: ______________________________

Signature of Parent/Guardian (for Student Volunteers Only):

_____________________________ Date: ___________

Printed Name: ______________________________

Primary Contact Info:

Address: ________________________________

Phone Number: ____________________________

Email: ________________________________