



## **Children's Ministry Policy**

Welcome to the Children's Ministry at Westwood 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, discover biblical truth, and learn what it means to follow Jesus Christ.

In keeping with the desire to develop children we want to be proactive in seeking their good in everyway possible. We thank God for His protection and that none of our children have been mistreated in our ministries. We are, however, being proactive in our policies and have created a Children's Ministry Policy. It is designed to familiarize parents and caregivers with our childcare procedures and our child protection policy. The specifications contained in this handbook apply to Westwood Children's Ministry occurring during a regular Sunday morning service. Children's Ministry is designed for children aged newborn through fifth grade.

If you have any questions or comments, please call us at (812) 424-2110.

In Christ alone,  
The Children's Ministry Team

## **Mission**

To seek God in all His persons, with all of our heart, soul & mind and, to serve Him by loving those around us through intentional biblical development, to the end that others may know Christ and tell others of Him.

## **Caregiver Expectations**

All Children's Ministry volunteers share a particular responsibility for:

- Loving the children as Christ loves them.
- Setting an example of proper Christian conduct in the way we live our lives.
- Ministering to the children.
- Understanding that the care of children is not a right, but a privilege; this privilege embodies responsibilities to God for ministering to and caring for the children.

## **Child Protection Policy**

- Screening all Children's Ministry volunteers.
- Educating volunteers in recognizing child abuse.
- Directing proper reporting methods.
- Employ scheduling procedures and caregiver/child ratios that optimize safety.
- Equip each hall with a first aid kit.
- Utilize the Parent Pager System. (see page 3)
- Adhere to a healthy child policy for admittance to Children's Ministry.

## **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 an abuse prevention session.

### **Screening Procedure**

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

- Primary caregivers must be 18 years of age or older. Youth who are at least 11 years of age are welcome to assist primary caregivers (subject to the approval and direction of the Director of Children's Ministry).
- All caregivers must complete the caregiver application and meet with the Associate Pastor of Family Ministry or the Director of Children's Worship.
- All reference checks must be satisfactorily completed. Criminal records checks and other appropriate screening checks may be completed, subject to the discretion of the pastor overseeing Children's Ministry.
- All completed records of screening procedures will be kept securely along with the original application.

### **Training**

All caregivers must attend the abuse prevention session before they are allowed to work with the children. Additional sessions will be scheduled for volunteers as needed. Parents with questions about the abuse prevention are encouraged to attend these sessions.

## **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 class/service, so that parents have enough time to transition their children before the class/service begins. Parents are encouraged to pick up their children immediately after the conclusion of the class/service.

### **Signing a Child into Children's Ministry**

Authorized parents/guardians who would like his/her child to participate in a Children's Ministry program will check their child in at one of the Parent Pager stations when they arrive, granting permission for the child to participate in that Westwood event or program. The parent should also use this opportunity to note any allergies or special needs the child may have. For more details on our procedures for caring for children with allergies, please see the "Snack and Food" section below.

### **Parent Pager System**

In order to protect the children in our care, after checking the child in at a Parent Pager station, the parent/guardian must put the identification sticker on their child. The parent/guardian will be directed to the correct class where they will give the child and the printed check-in form to the caregiver. The Parent Pager System will be used for all childcare from nursery up to and including fifth grade.

At the end of the session when the parent/guardian comes to pick up the child:

1. The parent/guardian will proceed to a Parent Pager station where they will receive a check-out slip.
2. The parent/guardian will proceed to the child's classroom where a volunteer will ask for their check-out slip and bring the child to the door where they will remove the identification sticker so it can be shredded.

## **Protecting the Children While They Are In Our Care**

### **Child-to-Caregiver Ratios**

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

- Children ages 0-2: One adult for every three-four children
- Children ages 3-5: One adult for every eight children
- Children ages 6-11: One adult for every twelve children

### **Rest Room Procedure**

Children five years of age and younger should utilize a classroom bathroom, if one is available. If a classroom bathroom is not available, workers should escort a **group** of children to the hallway bathroom. They should always go in a group, never taking a child to the bathroom alone. The workers should **check the bathroom first** to make sure that it is **empty**, then allow the children inside. The workers should then remain outside the bathroom door and escort the children back to the classroom. If a child is taking longer than seems necessary, the worker should open the bathroom door and call the child's name. If a child requires assistance, the workers should prop open the bathroom door and leave the stall door open as he/she assists the child.

For children over the age of five, at least one adult male should take boys to the restroom and at least one adult female should take girls and follow procedures above.

### **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 toward 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 the child's behavior is upsetting other children).

Children's Ministry volunteers and staff members will never yell, spank, or hit a child. If behavior is uncontrollable or the child does not respond to the discipline measures above, then the parent/guardian can be called by letting the Sound Booth know the child's identification number and it will be flashed on the screen during the worship service so the parent/guardian can respond.

For further information regarding discipline please speak with the Director of Children's Ministry.

### **Accidents and First Aid**

Both hallways are equipped with basic first aid kits. Caregivers will be familiarized with their contents and uses at orientation and training. In the event of life-threatening injury or illness, emergency medical services and the parents will be called immediately. Caregivers will complete an Accident Report Form for all injuries, whether major or minor.

## **Snacks and Food**

### **Nursery**

Only food, bottles or sippy cups brought by parents for a designated child may be served only to that child while they are in the care of our nursery workers, and according to parents instructions.

Mothers who would like to nurse their children are welcome to make use of the Nursing Moms Corner in the nursery.

### **Children from Toddler to fifth grade**

Pre-approved snacks of Goldfish, pretzels, Nilla Wafers, or dry cereal will be offered to the children in the Treasure Seekers class room. Apple juice or water will be given as a drink. There will be a white board in the drop off room notifying parents of the snack and drink of the day. If a child should not be given a snack/drink of this nature, the parent should do the following:

- Verbally notify the caregiver on duty so an alternative can be given.
- Let the volunteer at the Parent Pager station know so they can update information and note the nature of the allergy and how to respond to an allergic reaction.

### **Ongoing Care for Children with Allergies**

No food except for the pre-approved snacks mentioned above will be permitted in the classrooms. In rare cases, an exception to this policy can be considered. Parents wishing to provide an alternative snack for their child must make prior arrangements with the Director of Children's Ministry to ensure that all known needs of the children in the class will be met.

## Healthy Child Policy

### Communicable Illness Policy

In order to prevent the spread of communicable illness among the children, four rules are in place concerning illness. Both parents and caregivers must be familiar with these policies.

1. Children with infectious illnesses should be kept home until they are no longer contagious. If a child is exhibiting symptoms of illness such as fever, diarrhea, open skin lesions or blisters (as in chicken pox), or colored nasal discharge, the parent should keep the child home.
2. Caregivers will use latex gloves and proper hygiene procedures to change diapers, wipe noses and handle blood spills.
3. Hand washing is a regular habit for both children and caregivers.
4. Toys and equipment are disinfected regularly. Westwood is dedicated to preventing the spread of illness among the children. Caregivers do have the right to refuse a child on the basis of questionable symptoms. To prevent this, parents are asked to comply with the following guidelines and keep a child at home when any of the following exist:
  - Fever (Note: Children should be free of a fever for 24 hours after a contagious illness before taking child to kid's program.)
  - Vomiting or diarrhea
  - Any symptom of childhood illnesses such as scarlet fever, German measles, mumps, chicken pox, or whooping cough
  - Common cold – from onset through one week
  - Sore throat
  - Croup
  - Any unexplained rash
  - Any skin infection – boils, ringworm, impetigo
  - Pink eye or other eye infection
  - Thick green, yellow or constant nasal discharge (related to cold/flu, not allergy)
  - Any communicable illness

Parents will be located or paged if children appear ill during a class.

**Please inform the Director of Children's Ministry if your child appears to have contacted illness while attending a Westwood event so that other parents may be notified if necessary.**

Neither caregivers nor church staff is allowed to give any medication to any child.

The Fellowship Hall streams the service on the wall for those who cannot attend their grade and cannot sit in service.

### Universal Precautions

Universal precautions are employed so that all human bodily fluids are treated as if they carried infectious illnesses. Universal precautions are applicable in a nursery setting and should be utilized. The method is very effective for protecting both the children and caregivers from illness. This is not to imply that any children or caregivers are carrying infectious illnesses. 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.