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Children & Student Ministry Policies

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Welcome

Dear Volunteer,

Welcome!

At The Chapel, we take our responsibility to care for all children and students seriously. Our desire is to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which children can grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ.

These policies provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for our volunteers and staff members. Our policies and procedures set forth will be diligently enforced.

After you have carefully read these policies, please electronically sign the agreement form.

Sincerely,

The Chapel Children and Student Ministry Team

Overview of The Chapel's Safety System

Because we desire to protect all vulnerable people, The Chapel requires all staff members and volunteers working with children to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placement begin.

STEP ONE: Screening Process

Staff members and volunteers working or serving with children are required to complete The Chapel's Screening Process, which includes:

- Volunteer application;
- Interview;
- Reference check (two references required)

STEP TWO: Criminal Background Check

The Chapel requires that all volunteers serving in children's or student's activities undergo a criminal background check. Background checks will be renewed every three years.

STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures

Staff members and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this document and electronically sign via the link provided indicating that she/he has read and understood the material, and agrees to comply with the policy requirements.

STEP FOUR: Abuse Awareness Training

The Chapel's policies and procedures require that staff members and volunteers avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Staff members and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a Ministry Leader or a member of The Chapel's Safety Team.

To equip staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, The Chapel requires all staff members and volunteers, over the age of 18, to complete sexual abuse awareness training.

Children & Student Policy

Zero Tolerance

The Chapel has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in all environments, including ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer to act in the best interest of all children/students in every program, as well as everyone in the Chapel community.

In the event a staff member or volunteer observes any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse or neglect (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is that individual's responsibility to immediately report their observations to a Ministry leader, Chapel staff member, or to the Executive Pastor. Reports can be made directly (in person) or by sending an email to safety@thechapel.com. When necessary, and required by law, Child Protective Services and appropriate law enforcement will be notified.

Reporting Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors

The Chapel 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 or neglect will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to Child Protective Services, or another appropriate agency.

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, policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to a Ministry leader, Chapel staff member, or to the Executive Pastor.

Enforcement of Policies

The Chapel's staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Chapel policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from Children & Student Ministry positions for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Safety Team, Executive Pastor and, if necessary, the Board of Overseers.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

Reporting Violation of Policy

All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to a Ministry leader, Chapel staff member, or to the Executive Pastor. You may email safety@thechapel.com with any policy violations or reports of suspected abuse/neglect you are made aware of.

Consequences of Violation

If an allegation of abuse or maltreatment is reported that involves a volunteer in any position of trust with a vulnerable person at The Chapel, they will be asked to indefinitely pause in any serving capacity until there is sufficient resolution of the allegation (to include law enforcement involvement, where applicable).

Any person found to have violated this policy may be prohibited from future participation as a volunteer in all activities and programming involving children or students at The Chapel. Volunteers who fail to report a policy violation may be restricted from participation in any future activities involving children or students at The Chapel.

Response to Report of Abuse

The Chapel Leadership and Chapel Safety Team will take appropriate action on behalf of the church when a report of abuse occurs. This may include involvement of law enforcement and Child Protective Services when necessary.

Children & Student Ministry Monitoring Plan

Monitoring of Children and Student Ministry environments will include regular visits, to each campus, to provide an opportunity to observe staff and volunteers interacting with children. In addition to in-person visits, random viewing of security video footage will occur.

Building Safety

Children's Ministry

No child will ever be left unattended or unsupervised during ministry programming or events. Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from being alone with an individual child in any ministry environment or otherwise affiliated site. 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 an area occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others.

After every programming event, staff members and volunteers must ensure every room and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

Any two students together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open, visible) area.

Student Ministry

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from being in a closed or unobservable area with an individual student. If a confidential conversation or individual interaction is necessary, the staff member or volunteer will ensure the 'One-to-One Interaction' protocol is followed. (See pg. 11)

Ratios

Adult to Child Ratios

The Chapel is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Children’s Ministry environments. Accordingly, the following adult to child ratios are recommended:

Program	Workers	Children
Infants	2	4
Nursery, Crawlers, Beginner Walkers	2	8
2 years old	2	10
3, 4 and 5 years old	2	18
Elementary	2	20

If a volunteer discovers their classroom is ‘out of ratio’, it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify a Service Coordinator or Staff member. The service coordinator or Chapel staff member will make diligent efforts to find additional volunteers to immediately bring ratios into compliance.

Adult to Student Ratios

The Chapel is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Student Ministry activities and programs. Accordingly, the following ratios will be observed for Student Ministry activities and programs initiated and organized by the ministry:

Program	Workers	Students
5 th – 12 th Grade	2	Range of 1-25
5 th – 12 th Grade	3	Range of 26-40
5 th – 12 th Grade	4 or more	Over 40 students

If a worker is out of ratio, it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify supervisory staff responsible for the program or event. The responsible supervisory staff member will make diligent effort to immediately bring staff member/volunteer to student ratios into compliance with this policy.

Security Tag

After checking in a child(ren), the adult will receive a security pick-up tag. The child(ren) also receives a security tag to be placed on their clothing for reference. At pick-up, adult security tags and child tags will be compared for the unique code provided before releasing the child. When a security tag is lost, whether the adult's or child's, extra measures will be taken to ensure the safety of children. A Ministry Coordinator or Chapel Staff member must be notified to come and speak with the person attempting to pick up a child. The adult will be asked to provide other measures of proof or ID and a short conversation with the child will occur. The loss of a security tag and name of the person the child was released to will be documented internally.

Parental Contact

Parents whose child or student is participating in Children or Student Ministry activities and programs will be contacted if a child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem.

Discipline

It is our policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children or students. **No form of physical discipline or verbal shame/humiliation is acceptable.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, biting or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children/students. Children and students are to be disciplined using other non-physical methods of behavior management. If a child or student is unruly or fails to comply with verbal warnings or instructions from staff/volunteers, that child/student will be asked to leave (if not endangered by doing so) or the child/student's parent will be contacted to pick them up, or involve Chapel Leadership, when necessary. In employing this procedure, staff members and volunteers should observe the following guidelines:

- 1) First attempt to verbally redirect the child. 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, separate or direct the child/student away from the group to have a conversation about the child's behavior. In the event of a fight, physical altercation, or uncontrollable behavior, staff members will verbally redirect children/students involved and will try to avoid physical intervention. Behavior of this level must be reported immediately to a Ministry Coordinator or Chapel Staff member and the parent will be notified.

- 3) Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for being separated, and provide the child with clear explanation of your expectations, ie. "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 separated from the group will likely upset the child. Do not physically hold a child as punishment or consequence.
- 4) Provide the child with a "spot" to remain in (carpet square, chair, etc.) until their separation time is complete. Follow the rule of thumb that a separation is ineffective if it lasts longer than one minute for every year of the child's life (3 years old, 3 minutes).
- 5) Monitor the child through the entire separation without giving your undivided attention. For longer separations 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.")

Praise the child once he or she has completed the removal and tell them that their reward is being able to rejoin the group. Remind them that repeating their initial behavior will result in further removal. Follow this with praise.

Restroom Supervision & Assistance

Nursery/Preschool Children

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

Diapering

- 1) Changing of diapers should be done in plain sight of another volunteer or staff member.
- 2) Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
- 3) Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the Nursery will be recorded on the drop-off clipboard (ie. A parent might say, "Seth has a small diaper rash that we are aware of, please be careful when changing.")
- 4) Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
- 5) Children should be changed on changing stations only.
- 6) Regular monitoring of wet/soiled diapers should take place through-out the duration of care.

Toilet Training

- 1) No child will be forced to toilet train.
- 2) When children are taken into restrooms, the door will be left partially open; individual volunteers must remain outside the door.
- 3) Young children will never be left unattended in a restroom.
- 4) Parents should be consulted on each child's progress in the toilet training process before leaving the child with volunteers. Any special instructions given by parents leaving children in the Nursery will be recorded on the drop-off clipboard ("Lilly can use the toilet, but she needs to be reminded – ask her if she needs to go.").
- 5) Children should be verbally assisted whenever possible. If physical assistance is necessary, another staff member or volunteer must be present.
- 6) When a child has a bathroom "accident", a Coordinator or Staff member must be notified immediately, the Coordinator or Staff member will alert the child's parent and await direction. If the parent does not respond in a reasonable amount of time, the Coordinator or Staff member will assist another volunteer in changing the child and document the occurrence. "Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of necessary clothing.

Elementary School Aged Children

School age children may be accompanied to the restroom for supervision and assistance when needed. Children should receive the minimum amount of assistance needed based upon their individual capabilities.

If a staff member or volunteer must go into the restroom to check on an individual child, he or she should seek out another volunteer or staff member to accompany him/her while leaving the door open. Any assistance with the straightening or fastening of garments should be done in the presence of another volunteer or staff member in an open area. If an elementary age child has a bathroom 'accident', a ministry coordinator or Chapel staff member must be notified. The Coordinator or Staff member will alert the child's parent and await direction. If the parent does not respond in a reasonable amount of time, the Coordinator or Staff member will assist another volunteer in changing the child and document the occurrence. "Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child and completing the changing of necessary clothing.

Bathroom Policy for All Volunteers

No volunteer shall be in a closed single stall bathroom with children or students. In a multi-stall bathroom, volunteers and staff members will be diligent to not be alone with an individual child/student. If no other bathroom is available or opportunity for volunteer/staff member to utilize the restroom alone, the staff member or volunteer will use an individual stall within the multi-stall bathroom.

Medication

No staff member or volunteer may administer medication to any child while serving in the Children and Student Ministry Environments.

During overnight retreats or camps, any and all medication will be given to the person designated by The Chapel staff and your student is responsible for maintaining medication needs/schedule. Your student is responsible for his/her own administer of the prescribed medication provided at the appropriate schedule. For the safety of all, the designated person will hold onto all medications in a locked box. The Chapel staff, volunteers, and/or designated person will not track down students or be responsible in administering medication or the schedule of medication. Over the counter medication cannot be provided. In the event of an emergency, we will care for your student while keeping you updated – refer to our ‘Hold Harmless Form’ for more information. *An EpiPen may remain in the possession of the student it is prescribed to.

Verbal Interactions

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. 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 a reasonable observer as harsh, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. In addition, staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing and inappropriate language in the presence of children/students.

Physical Contact

The Chapel is committed to protecting children/students in its care. To this end, The Chapel has implemented a 'physical contact policy' that promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting children. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by those working in any Children or Student Ministry:

1. Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children/students are important for children's development.
2. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are prohibited. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to a Ministry Coordinator, Chapel Staff Member, or the Executive Pastor.
3. Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child/student, 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 easily visible by staff members or 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 the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers at The Chapel 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. Staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
8. Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse must be reported immediately to a Ministry Coordinator, Staff Member, or to the Executive Pastor.

One-To-One Interaction with Children

Staff members and volunteers should never conduct one-to-one, unobserved meetings or interaction with children while participating in Children's Ministry activities or programs. Another volunteer or staff member should always be present.

One-To-One Interaction with Students

Any time a one-to-one interaction is needed, they must be conducted in a space that is easily observed, heard by others, an unobstructed view, **and** monitored by a security camera. When meeting a student outside of programming there should be another volunteer or the student's parent present or parent permission is given in writing. All written parent permission must be given to the ministry leader to be documented.

Parental Involvement

Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child/student is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their child's program will be required to complete The Chapel's volunteer service application and onboarding process.

Sexually Oriented Conversations

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.

However, it is expected that from time to time Student Ministry discussions and lessons may address issues related to purity, dating, sex, and human sexuality. These lessons will occur in group settings, and will convey The Chapel's views on these topics. If you are unsure of a stance The Chapel takes on a given topic, please view our Statement of Faith or ask to discuss the topic with the Ministry Coordinator. Resources are available to help navigate these discussions.

Sexually Oriented Materials

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from possessing (or transmitting to a child/student) any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) or in the presence of children/students, including those in electronic form, while in the presence of children/students on or off site.

Tobacco Use

The Chapel 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 any on/off site Chapel sponsored activities. This includes e-cigarette vapes. The Chapel is a tobacco-free facility.

Intoxicants

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drug while in any church facility, while traveling with children/students, or while working with or supervising children/students during any Chapel sanctioned program or activity. This includes while in the presence of children/students during non-structured and off-site environments.

Additional Student Ministry Policies

Nudity

Staff and volunteers in student ministry should never be nude in the presence of students in their care. In the event there is a situation that may call for or contemplate the possibility of nudity (i.e. changing clothes during a pool party, weekend or overnight retreat, etc.), the staff member or volunteer leading the event will communicate a plan to the Student Ministry Coordinator concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

Transportation

Volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for students. The following guidelines must be observed when workers are involved in the transportation of students:

1. Under no circumstances should there be one adult and one child alone together in a vehicle. Where possible, two or more adults will be present in the vehicle, and preferably two or more children.
2. Documented authorization from the parent should be provided whenever transportation arrangements need to be made. The documented authorization needs to be given/provided to a Ministry Coordinator or Chapel Staff member to be kept for record. Any authorization given is valid for one school year.
3. Students 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 student in transport.
4. Volunteers must avoid physical contact with students while in vehicles.

Community Group Activities

As a community group, members and leaders may do activities off-site or outside of the regular meeting schedule. When community group leaders are organizing an activity of this nature, plans must be submitted in writing to your Ministry Leader in advance of the event. All ratio and interaction policies should be followed and parent permission for the extra activity must be documented. Documented permission from parents must be given to your Ministry Leader.

Sleeping Arrangements

It is anticipated that certain Student Ministry activities may occasionally require that overnight sleeping arrangements be made for students and staff members and volunteers (i.e. lock-ins, mission trips, ski trips, etc.). In the event an activity requires sleeping arrangements, staff members and volunteers will strictly observe the following rules:

1. The One-to-One policy must be followed; a single student should not be alone with a staff member or volunteer in an unobservable area.
2. All adult leaders must have previously completed The Chapel's onboarding and training process.
3. Overnight sleeping arrangements must be submitted in writing to and approved by the Student Ministry Coordinator prior to the activity.
4. When reasonable and appropriate, as long as any students are awake, one supervising adult must be awake and monitoring students to ensure safe behavior.
5. Leaders should check with parents and use good judgment regarding PG or PG-13 movies. No R-rated movies are permitted.
6. Appropriately modest sleeping attire must be worn; both tops and bottoms.
7. In the event of a sleepover on campus that involves both boys and girls, boys and girls must sleep in separate rooms, properly supervised by student leaders of the same gender.
8. Two Staff members/volunteers together will monitor sleeping students by periodically conducting visual room checks to ensure that sleeping students remain in designated sleeping places. During room checks, staff members and volunteers should never physically touch a student.
9. To the greatest extent possible, two staff members or volunteers will sleep in the same room (but not same bed) as students, or in an adjoining room with the door between the rooms kept open.

In the event that overnight arrangements do not include standard beds, each staff member, volunteer, and student will use single sleeping bags or blankets. In these instances, a "one-person-to-one bag or blanket" rule will be observed.

Policies & Procedures

Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement

I have received and read a copy of The Chapel's Children's and Student Ministry Policies and understand the importance of the matters set forth. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at The Chapel.

Further, I understand that these policies may be modified at any time, and that any guidelines may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by The Chapel.

I also acknowledge that I have reviewed and agree to fulfill the duties listed herein. While, ideally, I will serve in this ministry for the agreed term, I understand that I may choose to end this relationship at any time.

I further acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this document in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between The Chapel and me. If I am applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no compensation for hours worked.

Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new policies that are created and distributed, as well as policy guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I hereby acknowledge receipt of The Chapel's Children and Student Ministry Policies.

**Please complete the agreement for this policy electronically.*