

# CHILDREN'S CHURCH VOLUNTEERS

## Safe Church Mid Year Mini-Training for New Volunteers

Volunteer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Ministry Coordinator leading the mini-training: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Training: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please initial** next to each section, indicating that you have read through each of the 4 sections at home. Bring any questions to your Ministry Coordinator

\_\_\_\_\_ Supervision: Children's Church Guidelines  
My Questions:

\_\_\_\_\_ Discipline Policy: Age 3 through 5th Grade  
My Questions:

\_\_\_\_\_ Responding to and Reporting Child Abuse  
My Questions:

\_\_\_\_\_ Emergencies  
My Questions:

To do WITH your Ministry Coordinator

1. View 2 emergency exits from your classroom(s)
2. Safe Gathering/Meeting Space in an emergency:
3. Learn how to lock the door
4. Learn how to use the walkie talkie
5. Tour the church building - all emergency exits, all levels of the church.

## IV. SUPERVISION

### **B. Children's Church Guidelines**

The Children's Church guidelines are designed to protect the children in our congregation from harm and to protect the teachers in Children's Church from false or mistaken accusations.

1. All volunteers will be expected to attend the annual training session that includes Safe Church Policy protocol. When volunteers sign up in the middle of the school year, the Children's Church Coordinator will review the Safe Church Policy with the volunteer.
2. All volunteers (age 18 and above or upon graduation from high school) will have their clearances on file with STF.
3. All parents/guardians must fill out the Children's Ministries Registration Form and return it to the Children's Ministries Supervisor at the beginning of each school year.
4. The Children's Church Coordinator will be present during the beginning of Children's Church to make sure all children have safely made it into the Children's Church Classroom and to greet visiting families.
5. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class and updated when children arrive late. Teachers will keep attendance sheet with them during an emergency.
6. Bathroom Policy: Children will use bathrooms in the hallway and go with a partner. The partner will stand so he/she is in view of both the classroom door and the restroom door. Teacher will keep the classroom door open. This is so the teacher can hear the children and easily see them, if there is a problem.
7. Children's Church will have at least 1 adult teacher and one assistant.
8. A teacher should never be alone with a child.
9. No child should be left unsupervised.
10. Children must be picked up by a parent/guardian or older sibling (6th Grade or older).
11. All ministry activities should occur in open view. Each room or space where ministry activities/events occur must be open to public view. For example: enclosed spaces such as classrooms shall have a viewing window or glass panel in the door.
12. All volunteers must understand how to lock the classroom doors and shelter in place, in case of an emergency and be familiar with 2 emergency exit routes and emergency exit procedures. See Emergency Policies Section for more information.
13. A STF Incident Report must be filled out in the case of an accident or injury. A copy should be given to the child's parents/guardians and the Children's Church Coordinator. See Incident Report Form in Appendix for further instructions.
14. All adult volunteers are mandated reporters and are legally required to report any type of suspected Child Abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional abuse) to Childline immediately. The volunteer should fill out an STF Incident Form and notify both the Children's Church Coordinator and Lead Pastor of any suspected abuse.

## V. DISCIPLINE

### **A. Discipline for Children Age 3 through 5th Grade**

Spirit and Truth seeks to provide a loving environment for children and adults. Spirit and Truth staff and volunteers will show care for both the physical and emotional well-being of children in their care. The following guidelines must always be followed:

1. Appropriate Interactions:
  - a. Encourage each child to learn and grow in their faith
  - b. Respect each child's unique learning style
  - c. Treat each child equally - give equal opportunities for special responsibilities, etc.
  - d. Protect each child from shame or humiliation from either adults or other children
  - e. If a hug seems appropriate, give a brief side by side hug at the child's level.
  - f. Avoid kisses, massages, bear hugs, and contact with private body parts.
  - g. Unless the child objects to touch, a pat on the shoulder or forearm or a light squeeze of the hand is acceptable.
  - h. Any physical contact with a child should be done in plain view of others.
  - i. Words of praise and encouragement are the best way to communicate God's love, and your support and respect for a child.
  
2. Appropriate Discipline (age 3 through 5th Grade)
  - a. Set realistic expectations that reflect a child's age and comprehension.
  - b. Make eye contact with a child who is misbehaving and give a simple 'no' head shake.
  - c. Use distraction away from the cause of the problem, when appropriate.
  - d. Change a seating arrangement, or place yourself between misbehaving children.
  - e. Catch children making good choices (particularly a child who previously was misbehaving).
  - f. Focus on positive behaviors as a method for getting an entire group to join the positive behavior without the need for discipline (ex: "I like how Mary is sitting quietly, ready to listen to the story. Jake is ready to go, Sam looks great, and now the whole group is ready to start! Great job!").
  - g. If able, remove the child from the others and calmly identify the problem behavior and explain the expected behavior.
  - h. After trying other methods of redirecting behaviors, inform child a time-out will happen if the unacceptable behavior does not stop at the count of 3. Count to 3 and follow through with a time out if needed (without follow through the teacher loses all authority).
  - i. Time outs should be 1-5 minutes, depending on their age and the circumstances. Follow up with encouragement and reassurance. Note: Children in time out are to remain IN the classroom, and should not be facing a corner, wall or cause humiliation. They should simply be separated from the group and/or activity.
  - j. If a child continues to be very disruptive after multiple interventions, the child will be removed from the class and sent to their parents/guardians.
  - k. Parents/guardians are to be informed of any concerning/problematic behaviors upon picking up their child.
    - l. If a problem is ongoing, inform the Coordinator of the ministry and come up with an individualized behavior improvement plan with the parent/guardian and child. Such as - a sticker chart for good choices, setting attainable goals, etc. The plan should be communicated with other ministry volunteers.
    - m. If a child is persistently disruptive and puts the safety of other children at risk, and other interventions have not worked, the child will not be allowed to participate in the ministry (nursery, Children's Church or Sunday School) for a period of time to be determined by the

Children's Ministries Supervisor and Pastor, with input from the parents/guardians. The child will have another chance to join the class at a predetermined future date.

- n. If an adult begins to lose their cool, it's important to step back, ask the teaching partner to take over for a moment, to give yourself a break and re-group. In particularly difficult situations, ask the Coordinator of your specific ministry, or the Supervisor of all the Children's Ministries to step in and relieve you from teaching for the day.

3. Inappropriate Interactions are never permitted including:

- a. Physical Discipline (spanking, pinching, squeezing, slapping, etc.).
- b. Verbal or emotional manipulation (ex: silent treatment, name calling, insults, withholding bathroom privileges, causing shame, embarrassment and/or humiliation).
- c. Sexual manipulation (ex: sexualized hugs, strokes and/or kisses for good behavior).
- d. An adult blaming a child to justify the adult's inappropriate behavior.
- e. A particular child singled out for excessive discipline.
- f. A child told or threatened not to cry or tell anyone.

## VII. RESPONDING TO AND REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

### **A. General Response and Reporting Procedures**

Our first priority must be to prevent future harm. Reporting may be the best way to prevent harm and to begin helpful intervention.

1. It is essential to take allegations of child abuse seriously:

- a. Stay calm and do not overreact.
- b. Presume the child is telling the truth. Take the child seriously when he/she tells the story. Avoid judgmental statements such as, "I think you just had a bad dream." Do not try to convince the child that the story is untrue or that it did not happen the way the child reports it did.
- c. Listen to and reassure the child that he/she does not deserve to be hurt by anyone. Offer to support the child, and remind the child that you care about him/her.
- d. Do not appear frightened or disgusted by the child's story, since this may cause the child to stop talking or believe you are upset with the child.
- e. Tell the child you are glad s/he told you.
- f. Remind the child that whatever happened was not his/her fault. Remind the child that it was a good decision to tell someone what happened to him/her. Tell the child that you want to find help so the incident can be prevented from happening again.
- g. Do not make promises to the child that you will not tell anyone what has been shared with you. Do not offer a child a reward for telling the story or repeating it to another adult. Do not tell the child he/she has been abused. Do not make judgements about the alleged abuser.
- h. Do not frighten the child by talking about police involvement or medical examinations to verify the complaint. Share with the child that other people need to know about what happened.
  - a. In the case of physical abuse, observe only bruises that are accessible without removing clothing. Do not ask the child to show you any bruises that are beneath the child's underwear or clothing. Never ask a child to remove clothing.
  - b. Take notes immediately afterwards while it is still fresh in your memory. Keep a written record documenting any unexplained injuries, bruises, burns, or scratches. Keep the information confidential.
  - c. Do not investigate the child's story.

2. If you are uncertain about whether allegations are sufficient to make a report, be sure to engage the Lead Pastor and Children's Ministry Coordinator.

3. Anyone who has reasonable grounds to suspect a child has been abused or neglected is required by law to report the suspicion to either the Childline state hotline or the Department of Human Services (DHS). It is helpful to have contact information for the child's guardian when reporting (address, phone number, etc). The Children's Ministries Supervisor has these on file.

**Phone Numbers:**        **Childline: 1-800-932-0313**  
                                 **DHS (Philadelphia): 215-683-6100**

**Website:**                **Child Welfare Portal ([www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us))**

4. The person who made the report must also immediately inform the appropriate Ministry Coordinator and the Lead Pastor. The reporter must keep the information confidential. An STF Incident Report form (see Appendix) must be completed.

5. Failure to report can lead to criminal liability, so, when in doubt, report. You may also make a report anonymously. Do not investigate. Leave any investigation to specially trained experts.

## **IX. EMERGENCIES**

### **A. Communication**

A walkie-talkie will be used during Sunday service in both Nursery rooms, Children's Church, and one will be provided to a deacon at the main entrance of the church. Charging these will be the responsibility of the deacons. Obtaining them before teaching will be the responsibility of the respective volunteers. Volunteers will keep them on with the volume turned all the way up. Deacons will keep them on during the service. They will be stored in the overflow room and charged in the overflow room.

### **B. Emergency Exit Policy**

1. All classrooms and gathering spaces will have posted Emergency Exit Instructions for one main exit route and one alternate route.
2. All volunteers will be notified of the emergency exit routes and policies prior to service.
3. During a fire emergency, or other emergency requiring a swift exit, volunteers will bring the attendance sheet with them as they escort children out of the building to designated safe location.
4. Volunteers will take attendance once in the safe location outside the building to ensure all children are accounted for. If a child is missing, volunteer will use the walkie-talkie to communicate with other teachers and the deacon to try to locate the missing child.
5. Parents/guardians will reunite with their children at the designated safe location.

### **C. Lock Down Policy**

1. In the event of a lock down during Sunday service, teachers will be informed by the deacon with the walkie-talkie.
2. All volunteers will receive instructions on how to lock their door, in the event of an emergency.
3. Volunteers will gather children in a location in the classroom that is not visible from the classroom door windows and sit as quietly as possible.
4. No one may enter the classroom during the emergency, until the lock down has been lifted.
5. Deacon with walkie-talkie will inform teachers when the lock down has ended.

### **D. Active Shooter Policy**

1. Run, Hide, Fight
2. Teachers will remove children from the building immediately in case of active shooter (RUN), if believed safe to do so.
3. If not safe to leave, teachers will quietly gather children in location not visible from windows, lock the doors, and shelter in place (HIDE)
4. Teachers will trust their instincts and do what they believe is best.