

Christ Community Children and Student Policy Form

Important Principle No. 1:

If a policy document is intended to protect children from sexual abuse, it must be rooted in the grooming process. For policies and procedures to be effective, all staff members and volunteers must receive training to better understand the grooming process of a preferential offender and peer-to-peer abuse. At Ministry Safe, the training is called Sexual Abuse Awareness Training (SAAT).

Important Principle No. 2:

The grooming process varies depending on the age of a child, gender of a child and type of program. The grooming of a child unfolds differently in a student ministry than it does in a Pre-K, or an overnight camp, or a youth sport program. Policies and procedures must be rooted in the grooming process unique to that program and the age/gender of the children served.

Important Note: Sample Policies

Ministry Safe provides a variety of sample policy forms – rooted in the grooming process and tailored to different types of programs (youth ministry, education, camp, youth sport, day care and more); contact Ministry Safe to learn more about additional policy and screening forms.

This policy is related to Christ Community's Children and Student Ministries.

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Dear Children Volunteer, Student Volunteer, or Staff Member,

Welcome to Christ Community's Children and Student Ministries!

At Christ Community, we take our responsibility to care for children very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment in which children can grow in relationship with Jesus.

The pages of this handbook provide a general overview of procedures and guidelines for Christ Community volunteers and staff members. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children. The following procedures have been adopted and will be strictly enforced.

After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

Christ Community Staff

Christ Community Policies & Procedures for Children’s and Student Ministries

Contents:

- Overview of Safety System.....4
- Child Safety Policy.....5
- Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse.....5
- Safety Committee.....6
- Children’s Ministries Staff Monitoring Plan.....7
- Child Safety Measures.....8
- Disciplinary Policies..... 9
- Restroom Policies.....10
- Medication.....12
- Transportation.....12
- Verbal Interaction with Children.....12
- One-to-One Interaction with Children.....13
- Physical Contact.....13
- Intoxicants.....14
- Tobacco Use.....14
- Sexually Oriented Conversations.....14
- Sexually Oriented Materials.....14
- Nudity.....15
- Parental Involvement15

Overview of the Christ Community Safety System

Because we love children and desire to protect them, Christ Community requires all staff members and volunteers working with children or students (and other vulnerable populations) to complete **FOUR SAFETY STEPS** before ministry work or volunteer placements begin.

This safety system (screening process) applies to those who volunteer at events that occur on a regular, repeating basis (i.e. weekly events, every other week). It does not apply to special events in which the Church may employ childcare workers to supervise minors during such an event. For policies relating to special events, please see Appendix 1. Additionally, this policy does not apply to events that are tangentially related to the Church but not directly led by the Church, such as hiring a babysitter for a community group meeting.

STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

Christ Community 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 supervisor at Christ Community. Staff members and volunteers should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in 'grooming' a child for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or 'gatekeeper'), manipulate the child into sexual activity and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip Christ Community staff members and volunteers with information necessary to recognize abuser characteristics and grooming behavior, Christ Community requires all staff members and volunteers to complete sexual abuse awareness training. This training will be renewed every two years.

STEP TWO: Screening Process

Staff members and volunteers are required to complete the Christ Community Screening Process, which requires a staff member or volunteer to:

- complete the Screening Questionnaire (employees and volunteers)
- complete a face-to-face interview (employees and volunteers)
- provide references to be checked (employees and volunteers)
- started membership process

* The Leadership Team reserves the right to reject, revoke, or suspend serving privileges without cause.

STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures

Staff members and volunteers are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating that he or she has read and understood the material and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check

Christ Community requires that all staff members and volunteers working or volunteering in children's or student activities or programming undergo a criminal

background check. Depending upon position, differing levels or intensity of background check may be required. Individuals who have committed sexually-oriented or sex-related crimes may not serve in any area providing services to children or minors. In addition, certain other past criminal acts *may* preclude an applicant from serving minors.

Child Safety Policy

ABUSE TOLERANCE

Christ Community has a **zero tolerance for abuse** in ministry programs and ministry activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member and volunteer at Christ Community to act in the best interest of all children in every program.

In the event that staff or volunteers observe any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is their responsibility to immediately report their observations to their immediate supervisor, the Kids Director, or a Staff Pastor.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

Christ Community 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 will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to the Christ Community Caring Well Chair and the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agency.

An element of the safe environment referenced above includes the fostering of a culture of reporting relevant information to a supervisor or a member of the Christ Community Caring Well Committee. 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, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to a supervisor or Staff Pastor.

ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES

Christ Community staff members and volunteers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Christ Community policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or reassignment from a position in Children’s Ministries – for both volunteers and staff members. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Lead Pastor and the Board of Elders.

Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse

REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY

Last updated August 1, 2021

In order to maintain a safe environment for our children, Christ Community staff members and volunteers must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation that is a violation of these policies. All questions or concerns related to inappropriate, suspicious, or suspected grooming behavior should be directed to an immediate supervisor in the ministry area, the Kids Director, or a Staff Pastor.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATION

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered by the church to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from participation in Christ Community Kids or Student Ministries. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or child protective agencies.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act should be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children, students or vulnerable populations at Christ Community. If the person is a staff member or employee, such conduct may also result in termination of employment from Christ Community.

Failure to report a prohibited act to the designated person is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination (employee) or removal (volunteer). Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act may be restricted from participation in any activities involving children, students or vulnerable populations at Christ Community.

REPORTING ABUSE OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE

Christ Community is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children and their families. To this end, any report of inappropriate behavior 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 criminal law enforcement.

Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible that a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to groom a child for sexual abuse. Please report 'grooming' behavior, policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to an immediate supervisor, such that the church may take appropriate action to safeguard children in the program

REPORTING ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

We report all suspected or alleged abuse or neglect of children to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS)

Abuse Hotline: 1-800-422-4453

Because many adults are unfamiliar with North Carolina reporting requirements and may be fearful of the process, Christ Community utilizes a 'tandem or dual report' model, where permitted. A 'dual report' occurs when a Christ Community supervisor reports the suspicion or allegation *together* with the individual who

saw, heard or received information causing him or her to suspect abuse or neglect.

THIS PRACTICE IS NOT REQUIRED, OR INTENDED TO INHIBIT ANY STAFF MEMBER OR VOLUNTEER FROM REPORTING TO LAW ENFORCEMENT, CPS OR THE ABUSE HOTLINE *DIRECTLY*. Instead, it is meant to facilitate reporting, protect children, and support individuals who may not feel able or willing to report alone.

NO PERMISSION IS NEEDED from Christ Community before reporting to law enforcement personnel or the Child Abuse Hotline.

When in doubt, report.

As of December, 2019, North Carolina required any suspected child abuse to be reported.

Caring Well Team

SAFETY COMMITTEE

Recognizing the importance of providing and maintaining a safe environment for children, Christ Community will appoint and maintain a Caring Well Committee, which will meet once each quarter.

The purpose of the Caring Well Committee is to enable Christ Community Children and Student Ministries to carry out appropriate ministry activities while safeguarding program participants against emotional, physical or sexual abuse.

COMPOSITION

The Caring Well Committee will be comprised of the following members:
- 5- 7 members with no more than 75% staff.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Caring Well Committee will be charged with the following duties:

1. Applying existing Christ Community policies and procedures related to children's safety and risk management issues.
2. Monitoring all Children and Student Ministries programs for ongoing compliance with safety policies.
3. Making recommendations to the Christ Community Staff regarding safety issues.

Children's Ministry Staff Monitoring Plan

BUILDING SAFETY

Every ministry supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the ministry program area is monitored during programming serving children. This includes unobserved monitoring of staff members, volunteers and children. No child will ever be left unattended in a ministry area or on a playground during regular programming, classes or activities.

SUPERVISION

Only parents (dropping off children), screened ministry volunteers, church staff members, and children are allowed in areas where ministry to children is occurring. All other adults should be asked for identification and immediately escorted out of the area. If questions or concerns arise related to any person in the area, a ministry supervisor or security team member should be notified immediately. Non-screened volunteers, such as those shadowing volunteers, must be accompanied by a screened ministry volunteer at all times. These individuals must have completed and passed a background check before being allowed to accompany screened volunteers. Additionally, they must begin the full screening process in order to continue shadowing.

- Non-screened volunteers may not assist with bathroom procedures including, but not limited to: diaper changing, one-to-one bathroom assistance, or group bathroom assistance.

Two trained, screened adults should supervise children at all times.

Avoid being alone with an individual child in any room or during any ministry program. If one supervising adult must leave a group of children, another volunteer or employee must be notified so that the *Two Adult Rule* can be followed.

If two individuals serving in a room are related to one another, a third unrelated volunteer or staff member must be present.

If an unusual circumstance occurs and you find yourself alone with a single child, take the child to a room or building occupied by others, or to a location easily observed by others. (Example: if a child is the last in a class to be picked up by a parent, move to an adjoining room where other staff members or volunteers are present.)

If you need to talk with a child alone, do it in the hallway or a highly visible area, or have another leader with you.

After every ministry event, ensure that every room, area and restroom is checked prior to leaving.

PLAYGROUNDS

On the playground, remember to circulate, watching children during play periods, giving particular attention to areas not easily seen from all viewpoints. (Example: under slides, in corners, behind structures).

Any two children together in an unseen or less easily viewed area should be redirected to another (more open) area of the playground.

Child Safety Measures

WORKER TO CHILD RATIOS

Christ Community is committed to providing adequate supervision in all Children's Ministries programs. Accordingly, we will strive to observe the following worker to child ratio:

Program	Workers	Children
Nursery	2	8
Preschool, 2 & 3 years old	2	12
Preschool, 4 & 5 years old	2	18
Elementary	2	20
VBS	2	20

If a worker is 'out of ratio' it is his or her responsibility to immediately notify the program supervisor or the Children's Director. Supervisors will make diligent efforts to find substitute workers to immediately bring worker to children ratios into compliance with Church policy.

CHECK-IN

Upon check-in, each child will receive a nametag and their parent or guardian will be given a claim tag. Volunteers must check each claim tag before releasing a child at pick up.

If a claim tag is lost, send the parent or guardian to the Kids Community Director or designated service lead, where proper identification must be shown to a staff member before the child is released. (Have the child stay in the classroom; the parent may pick up the child once cleared).

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

At any time that a child has been entrusted to Christ Community staff members or volunteers, the Church incurs responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child. Staff members and volunteers must act to ensure the appropriate supervision and safety of children in their charge.

Children's Ministries staff members or volunteers are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated by parents or legal guardians at the close of services or activities.

It is presumed a person who drops off a child or student has authority to pick up the child.

In the event that staff members or volunteers are uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, they should immediately locate or contact their immediate supervisor or the Kids Director before releasing the child.

Disciplinary Policies

DISCIPLINE

It is Christ Community policy that staff members and volunteers are prohibited from using physical discipline in any manner for behavioral management of children. **No form of physical discipline is acceptable.** This prohibition includes spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or any other physical force as retaliation or correction for inappropriate behaviors by children. When a child is misbehaving, follow these steps:

1. Go to the child and calmly ask him or her to stop the behavior. (Most children respond immediately and correct the behavior.) Give a warning and remind the child of class expectations and redirect to a positive behavior. Do this individually when possible, try not to single out a specific child in a large group setting. *When working with younger children, some physical redirection may be necessary: for example, removing a toy from the hands of a child who is hitting another.
2. If the child repeats the action, guide them to a quiet place – separate from the other children – for a short but designated period of time. Stay within sight of others and avoid being alone (or unseen) with the child.

Provide the child with a simple, understandable reason for the separation, and a clear explanation of your expectations.

(“Terry, you didn’t stop hitting Kelly when I asked you to, so it was necessary for me to separate you from the group.”)

3. After a 3rd time, refer to a staff member. A staff member may inform a parent or guardian, who may be asked to become involved in redirecting misbehavior.

Uncontrollable or unusual behavior should be reported to ministry supervisor.

NEVER...

- Never yell at a child.
- Never grab a child.
- Never threaten a child. Always follow through with your word.
- Never hit a child.
- Never confront a parent in front of others.
- Never openly humiliate a child in front of the class.

BULLYING

Verbal, physical or emotional bullying is not acceptable in Christ Community ministry programs. At the first sign of bullying in any form, act decisively, and inform your ministry supervisor. There is no “harmless put-down” where bullying is concerned.

1. *First Offense:* Issue a warning to the child or student and a general reminder to the group that this kind of interaction is wrong. Try not to embarrass or chastise.
2. *Second Offense:* Pull the offending child(ren) or student(s) from the group (in a seen or supervised location) and discuss the inappropriate interaction or behavior. Set clear parameters and behavioral goals. Let the child know that the next step is communication with a pastor and the child's parents. Notify an immediate supervisor of ANY signs of bullying or verbal abuse.

Privately, but with another adult present, confirm that a child or student who was the target of the bullying behaviors is not in danger of continued harassment and is physically and emotionally stable. DO NOT SINGLE A CHILD OUT IN FRONT OF THE GROUP ... be discreet.

3. *Third Offense:* Send the child or student to a pastor or ministry supervisor for a phone call (or communication onsite) with his or her parent(s) and possible removal from the activity or event.

Restroom Policies

DIAPER CHANGING

1. Only 16 and older females may change diapers.
2. Never leave the child unattended, even if it is just for a moment.
3. Make sure all children have a clean diaper on before parents pick them up.
4. If the changing station is in a restroom, make sure to leave the door completely open.
5. Volunteers must wash their own hands as well as the child's hands going to the restroom or changing a diaper.
6. Supplies should always be kept within reach of the changing table.

NURSERY & PRE-SCHOOL

1. Never be alone with a child in the restroom with the door closed.
2. When escorting a child to the restroom make sure to stay outside the door.
3. Leave the door opened. Do not enter unless the child asks for help.

4. If the child needs help, make sure you leave the door partially open. Once you have helped the child, exit the restroom.
5. When helping with washing their hands make sure the door is open.
6. If at all possible, same-gender volunteers should assist the child(ren) the restroom.

ELEMENTARY

1. If at all possible, children should be escorted to the restroom by an adult of the same gender.
2. During every restroom visit, a volunteer of the same gender should stand at the entry of the restroom with the door propped open. Volunteers should be in plain sight of anyone in hall but accessible to monitor children.
3. Children should never be sent to the restroom unaccompanied.
4. Classes should never be left unaccompanied to escort a child to the restroom.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Parents will offer instruction to staff members or volunteers to change the diapers of individuals with special needs. After the age of 4, parents or legal guardians will change the diapers of all individuals with special needs. If someone with special needs requires assistance using the restroom, a special needs volunteer may assist them in the restroom.

Medication

Do not administer medication of any kind to any child while serving in ministry programs, including 'over the counter' drugs.

Transportation

Staff members and volunteers may from time to time be in a position to provide transportation for children. The following guidelines should be strictly observed when workers are involved in the transportation of children:

- Children should be transported directly to their destination. Unauthorized stops as well as stops to a non-public place should be avoided. Staff members and volunteers should avoid transportation circumstances that leave only one child in transport.
- Staff members and volunteers should avoid physical contact with children while in vehicles.

- No cell phones may be utilized by the driver while driving Christ Community vans, or vehicles owned or rented by Christ Community, unless in an emergency.

Verbal Interactions with Children and Students

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

One-to-One Interactions with Children and Students

Staff members and volunteers should never conduct one-to-one, unobserved meetings or interaction with children while participating in Christ Community Children's Ministry program. Another adult who has completed the Christ Community application and screening process should always be present.

Physical Contact

Christ Community is committed to protecting children in its care. To this end, Christ Community has implemented a 'physical contact policy' which promotes a positive, nurturing environment for our Kids Ministries while protecting children. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in Kids Ministries programs:

- Hugging, pats on the back and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children are important for children's development and are generally suitable in the church setting.
- Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate physical contact, touching or displays of affection should be immediately reported to an immediate supervisor, the Kids Director, or a staff pastor.
- Physical contact should be for the benefit of the child, and never be based upon the emotional needs of a staff member or volunteer.
- No elementary, middle school, or high school children are to sit in volunteers' laps.
- Physical contact and affection should be given only in observable places or when in the presence of other children or children's staff members and

- volunteers. It is much less likely that touch will be inappropriate or misinterpreted when physical contact is open to observation.
- Physical contact in any form should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers in Kids Ministries must foster trust at all times. Personal conduct must be above reproach.
 - Do not force physical contact, touch or affection on a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.
 - Children and Student staff members and volunteers are responsible for protecting children under their supervision from inappropriate or unwanted touch by others.
 - Any inappropriate behavior or suspected abuse by a staff member or volunteer must be reported immediately to an immediate supervisor, the Children's Director or the Staff Pastor.

Intoxicants

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol or any illegal drugs while in any Christ Community facility, while traveling with children and students, or while working with or supervising children and students.

Tobacco Use

Christ Community 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 Christ Community activities or programs. Christ Community is a tobacco-free facility.

Sexually Oriented Conversations

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually oriented conversations with children or students and are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating or sexual activities with any child or student in the program.

Sexually Oriented Material

Staff members and volunteers in Kids or Student Ministries at Christ Community are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, images, videos, films, etc.) on church property or in the presence of children.

Nudity

Staff members and volunteers in Christ Community Kids or Student Ministries should never be nude in the presence of children 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.), staff member/volunteer will submit a plan to the Kids Director or a staff pastor concerning arrangements for showering or changing clothes.

Parental Involvement

PARENTAL CONTACT

Parents who leave a child in the care of Christ Community staff members and volunteers during church services or activities will be contacted if their child becomes ill, injured, or has a severe disciplinary problem while participating in Kids or Student Ministries programs.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents are encouraged to visit any and all services and programs in which their child is involved at Christ Community. Parents have an open invitation to observe all programs and activities in which their child is involved. However, parents who desire to participate in or have continuous, ongoing contact with their children's programs at Christ Community will be required to complete the Christ Community volunteer application and screening process.

Policies and Procedures Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement

This page is to be signed, detached, and delivered to the Ministry Supervisor.

I have received and read a copy of Christ Community Kids and Student Ministries Policies and Procedures and understand the importance of the material in the manual. I agree to abide by these guidelines while serving or working at Christ Community.

I understand the manual may be modified, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated by Christ Community.

I have reviewed the duties listed in my ministry position description, and I agree to fulfill these duties. I understand I may choose to end my employment or voluntary service at Christ Community at any time (If possible, I will provide two weeks' notice to my supervisor).

I acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this handbook in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between me and Christ Community. If applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no monetary compensation for hours worked.

I understand it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which may be created and distributed.

I acknowledge receipt of Christ Community policies and procedures manual.

Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: _____

Appendix 1: Child Watch Requirements

SPECIAL EVENTS

The above policy, rooted in Principles 1 and 2 (page 1), is designed to keep children safe at all times and especially to prevent the grooming process from occurring. While these policies, procedures, and guidelines should be followed at all times in any situations involving minors, several exceptions exist for special events requiring the use of outside child watch adults.

SCREENING:

In those events, the screening requirements are as follows:

- Completed background check
- Adult must sign a statement indicating they have read and agree to our child and student safety policy.

SUPERVISION:

In those events, the supervision requirements are as follows:

- At least one adult over the age of 18 in every room

Events that fall into this category include, but are not limited to, a church member meeting, kids ministry volunteer training, or special churchwide conference.

RECURRING SPECIAL EVENTS

Any child watch event that is regularly occurring, such as a weekly Bible study, a monthly mothers day out, etc., must adhere to all policies in this document with the exception that they are not required to take steps towards church membership as outlined in step two of the screening process (page 4).