

# NORTH RIDGE CHURCH

## CHILD SAFETY PLAN

*Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Matthew 19:14*

### **PURPOSE**

Our primary Child Safety Plan objective is to ensure a safe and healthy environment for all children in our care. The CSP reflects our sincere desire to accomplish this goal within our capabilities, while reasonably limiting the liability of staff and volunteers. We further aim to earn and keep the valuable trust of parents & guardians who allow us to serve their families.

### **SCOPE**

These policies apply to children (infant through 5<sup>th</sup> grade), at official church-hosted activities only within the confines of NRC property, while under the supervision of designated volunteer workers or staff. These policies are not intended to remedy existing medical or emotional conditions. Note that activities not explicitly associated with Children's Ministries are not covered by these policies, though they should still abide by the room-use, health, and safety rules listed below to protect children, volunteers and staff. This program does not provide a solution for all situations that may arise; all workers must use common sense and seek advice when in doubt.

**Official Volunteers** are defined as NRC approved and fully screened adults working with children. *Leaders and teachers* must be Official Volunteers and members of NRC.

**Approved Helpers** are defined as teens or adults who have been approved to provide assistance to Official Volunteers, prior to church membership.

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## **STEPS TO SERVE**

1. Review and understand entire NRC Child Safety Plan.
2. Communicate interest to specific ministry leader and/or Pastoral Staff.
3. On their recommendation, complete and submit Children & Youth Ministry Application.
4. Following a review of your application by Pastoral staff, a ministry leader or pastor will contact you for a brief interview to follow up on any need points of communication. The Elders are responsible for the final approval of volunteer candidates.

## **WHO MAY SERVE**

To be eligible to serve as an Official Volunteer for NRC Children's Ministries, all Official Volunteer candidates must meet the following prerequisites:

1. Follower of Jesus Christ, demonstrating love and growth as His disciple.
2. Agreeable to serve under the direction and authority of NRC Elders & ministry leaders.
3. Active member or pursuing membership, and have attended NRC for at least 6 months.  
*Non members may be approved as Helpers, if all other prerequisites are met.*
4. Complete and submit Children & Youth Ministry Application.
5. Approved by the Council of Elders for ministry to children and/or youth at NRC.

**Note:** The Children & Youth Ministry Application process requires that all applicants submit to a background investigation. It may be waived in the case of those attending NRC for 7 or more years. Should an application, reference check, or background investigation yield questionable information, the Elders and appropriate staff will assess the application.

## **TEEN HELPERS**

To serve as an approved Helper in NRC Children's Ministries, a volunteer age 12-17 must meet the following prerequisites:

1. Follower of Jesus Christ, demonstrating love and growth as His disciple.
2. Agreeable to serve with the permission of his or her parents, and under the direction and authority of NRC Elders, ministry leaders, and other official volunteers they are helping.
3. Attend NRC regularly for at least 6 months prior to application.
4. Complete and submit Children & Youth Ministry Application to the Youth Pastor.
5. With the Youth Pastor's recommendation, be approved by the Elders for ministry to children at NRC.

## **STAFF & SUPERVISION GUIDELINES**

1. Identification, Arrival, & Departure
  - a. Workers should arrive at minimum 15 minutes prior to the beginning of the class or event.
  - b. Upon their arrival to the ministry area, all volunteers and helpers should complete their worker check-in, and check-out upon departure, for each occasion of service.

- c. Official Volunteers and Helpers will wear a Children's Ministry Staff ID badge that clearly identifies them to children, parents, visitors, etc. ID badges will remain at NRC and are worn only when a worker is checked-in and "on duty."
- d. At the end of each event, the area should be returned to order and cleanliness, and toys, changing pads, counters, etc disinfected.

## 2. Two Worker Rule

- a. A minimum of two workers should be present for every class and activity, one of which must be an Official Volunteer. The other may be an approved Helper.
- b. If two workers are not present when children begin to arrive (including Host), ask one of the parents if they would kindly stay until the second worker arrives.
- c. A husband and wife may serve together, satisfying the two-worker rule. However, both must have been individually approved as Official Volunteers, and they are each expected to abide by all policies in the Child Safety Plan.

## 3. Supervision & Hospitality

- a. An Official Volunteer must be designated as the activity leader responsible for each occurrence of the program or activity. Typically this would be the ministry leader, however in their absence, an alternate should be identified.
- b. An Official Volunteer or Helper should be responsible to serve in a hospitality role. This Host or Hostess will welcome and help with check in/out, provide assistance for newcomers, and to help cover the two-worker rule as needed. This person may also be the leader of the activity, or another worker.
- c. The person designated as the leader of the activity is responsible to be aware and responsive should a special need or emergency arise. With the help of the worker providing hospitality, and/or other workers, he or she should be attentive to the safety and security of the building and those participating.

## 4. Policy Adherence

- a. Official Volunteers and Helpers are responsible to abide by all policies in the Child Safety Plan, and to assist other workers in doing the same.
- b. Should a situation arise in which full adherence is not possible, all workers are expected to act in a wise manner that is entirely above reproach, in good faith, and in keeping with the intent of the Child Safety Plan. Following the situation in question, those involved should quickly communicate with the ministry leader or pastor regarding how the situation was handled and potential difficulty in the future.

# **SECURITY & SAFETY GUIDELINES**

## 1. Child Registration

- a. All children attending should have registration forms on file. The activity or classroom roster shows those children who have been previously registered. Before leaving a child in our care, the parent or guardian of the child must complete a registration form if not previously registered.
- b. Registration for each child will be updated annually.

## 2. Child Check-In

- a. Identify first time visitors, explain key procedures, and have them fill out a registration form before allowing them to drop off their child.
- b. Each child's attendance and time of arrival should be noted on the attendance roster. Children not on the roster are not registered and a form should be completed for them.
- c. For infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, parents must complete an ID & allergy alert sticker, place on the child, and retain the matching sticker for check-out.
- d. For older children, place the ID sticker on the classroom attendance roster, and give the matching check-out sticker to the child's parent or guardian.
- e. Children in 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade or above may be checked in by an Official Volunteer.

## 3. Child Check-Out

- a. Children may only be released to the parent or guardian who checked them in, or to a responsible family member or known church member who the parent/guardian has sent *with the matching check-out sticker*. Children may not be released to any other person without the matching check-out sticker.
- b. Note the child's check-out on the attendance roster.
- c. Once checked out, children are not allowed back into the classrooms unless their parent/guardian accompanies them.
- d. Children in 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade or above may be checked out by an Official Volunteer.

## 4. Child Supervision

- a. No child should be without direct supervision by an Official Volunteer or approved Helper at any time.
- b. No child should be left alone with one worker, without another approved worker available to assist and monitor.
- c. Strive to maintain reasonable order and safety in classrooms and among the children.

## 5. Diaper Changing & Restrooms

- a. Only women may assist children in the restroom or change diapers.
- b. Diapers are only to be changed in the diaper changing area, which should be properly disinfected after each use.
- c. Men and teen helpers may not assist children in the restroom, or be in a restroom with a child with the door closed.
- d. In the nurseries: All children should be asked or checked to see if they need to use the restroom or if their diaper needs changing.
- e. Preschool & kindergarten children should be escorted to the restroom. The restroom door should be partially propped open.
- f. Older children may be released from their classrooms with permission to use the restroom.

## 6. Discipline

- a. Workers may not use physical impact, verbal threats, or shaming of any kind to discipline a child.
- b. The appropriate sequence for discipline is: *Reward* good behavior, *Remind* child of proper behavior, *Redirect* child to a different area during difficulty,

*Remove the child from the group for “time out,” Return child to parent if improper behavior persists, and Report the situation to ministry leader.*

## 7. Physical Affection

- a. Examples of appropriate physical affection are:
  - Meet the child at eye level by bending down or sitting
  - Listen with eyes, ears, and heart
  - Hold the child’s hand while listening or speaking, or walking to an activity
  - Putting an arm around the shoulder when comforting, quieting, or greeting is an appropriate way to hug (in public)
  - A light touch to a hand, shoulder, or back when encouraging
  - Hold a preschool child who is crying
- b. Examples of inappropriate physical touch that should be avoided are:
  - Kissing or coaxing a child to kiss you
  - Extended hugging and tickling, or prolonged physical contact of any kind
  - Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a bathing suit
  - Carrying an older child or sitting him or her on your lap

## 8. Special Events & Parental Permission

- a. Workers are not permitted to take students to events or activities off the church campus or outside of the normal weekly ministry programming without the express prior permission of the Governing Board or Pastoral Staff.
- b. Any child participating in an approved event or activity off the church campus or outside of the normal weekly ministry programming must submit a completed parental permission form for that specific event, prior to participating.

## **HEALTH AND WELLNESS GUIDELINES**

### 1. Clean Hands

- a. Workers should wash their hands before and after serving in the classroom, restroom breaks, diaper changes, etc. Children should also be directed to wash hands as appropriate.

### 2. Well Child Policy

- a. The following list of symptoms will determine if a child should not be admitted to our nurseries or classrooms:

• Persistent coughing with fever	• Diarrhea (within 24hrs)
• Fever within past 24 hours	• Fever (must be fever free for 24hrs)
• Persistent sneezing	• Unusually runny nose and/or eyes
• Discolored nasal discharge	• Unusual fatigue or irritability
• Vomiting (within 24hrs)	• Complaints of stomachache
• Inflamed throat	• Swollen glands
• Earaches	• Rash (except diaper rash)
- b. If these symptoms begin to show after the child is checked in to a nursery, the parent or guardian should be contacted to retrieve the child. For older

children, workers should maintain extra caution in separating the child from others, and if necessary contact the parent or guardian.

### 3. Food Allergens & Medications

- a. Teachers should maintain a working knowledge of specific child allergies, a list of which is available from the Director of Children's Ministries and kept in each classroom.
- b. Workers should strive to respect all food allergies but are not obligated to provide special snacks to accommodate other dietary restrictions. Parents should provide their own substitute snacks.
- c. Workers are not to administer medications. If a child needs medication, the parent must give it. Medications are not to be left in the classroom, with a worker, or with the child.

### 4. Accidents & Medical Emergencies

- a. A first aid kit is available in each area to treat minor accidents, including known simple injuries like scrapes, small burns, rug burn, and paper cuts
- b. When there is an incident involving injury and/or first aid care, workers should notify the child's parents upon pickup, and fill out incident reports (for parent and church office) located in the CE closet.
- c. In the event of medical emergencies, including chest pain, difficulty breathing, head injuries, and seizures: Call 911, administer emergency care as able, and immediately send a worker to notify the parent or guardian, as well as the ministry leader and church staff. Fill out incident reports (for parent and church office) after the situation has been resolved.

### 5. Fire Emergencies

- a. In case of fire or similar emergency, the activity leader should immediately instruct workers to take the attendance roster and lead children quickly and quietly out of the building through the nearest safe exit.
- b. As soon as classes are alerted to emergency, the activity leader should sweep the building, including all hallways, restrooms, and classrooms.
- c. The Emergency Assembly Point is on the lawn in front of the Administrative Office building.
- d. Have the children be seated in class groups, and check off the attendance roster. Pay close attention that no child enters the parking lot or wanders off.

### 6. Child Abuse Reporting

- a. North Ridge Church will report to the appropriate law-enforcement authorities those who are suspected with reasonable cause, of abusing a child.
- b. All workers must be familiar with the definitions of abuse and neglect:
- c. Physical Abuse: Non-accidental injury, which may include beatings, violent shaking, human bites, strangulation, suffocation, poisoning, or burns. The results may be bruises and welts, broken bones, scars, permanent disfigurement, long-lasting psychological damage, serious internal injuries, brain damage, or death.
- d. Sexual Abuse: The sexual exploitation of a child by another person, as in rape,

incest, fondling of the genitals, exhibitionism, or pornography. It may be done for the sexual gratification of the other person, out of a need for power or for economic reasons.

- e. Neglect: The failure to provide a child with basic needs, including food, clothing, education, shelter, and medical care; also abandonment and inadequate supervision.
- f. All workers who suspect possible abuse or neglect must report their concerns to the ministry leader and pastoral staff. A Suspected Abuse Form is attached for this purpose. It is not the responsibility of the reporting person or the staff to substantiate any allegations or suspicions. *Any person reporting a suspected case of abuse is immune to civil or criminal liability when acting in good faith.*

If a child comes to you with a possible abuse or neglect situation:

- 1. Take his or her word seriously. Do not deny the problem. Stay calm and listen carefully. Give emotional support, reminding the student that he or she is not at fault and that he or she was right in telling you about the problem. *Do not promise the student that you will not tell anyone.*
- 2. Immediately report any suspected abuse to the appropriate ministry leader and the pastoral staff. Complete and submit the Suspected Abuse Form.
- 3. It is the responsibility of the pastoral staff to report to the appropriate agency by telephone, letter, or in person.

# **NORTH RIDGE CHURCH**

## **SUSPECTED ABUSE REPORT FORM**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of child/individual: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of parent/caretaker: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person filing report: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person receiving report: \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of suspected abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect):

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Indications of suspected abuse (including facts, physical signs, and course of events where necessary):

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Action taken (including date and time):

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The above information will serve as a guide and will be necessary if a formal report is filed with the police or appropriate government agency. All information received is to be kept strictly confidential.

Signed, (person reporting): \_\_\_\_\_

Signed, (authority receiving): \_\_\_\_\_