

Crossview's Safe Place Policy
Approved 12/15/15

INTRODUCTION

The church must apply ample diligence to protect the children we serve – physically and spiritually. Background and reference checks conducted for all staff, whether paid or volunteer, are our first line of defense to protect children. Our first goal is to provide a safe, secure, and loving environment for children and youth where parents feel comfortable leaving their child. Therefore, we have taken steps to protect both our kids and our workers. These policies are intended to protect both the children and volunteer workers and are intended to be a helpful resource in addressing the issues of child safety. All workers are expected to adhere to the following policies, regardless of their area of ministry.

QUALIFICATIONS OF SERVICE

All volunteers should be attendees of the church before being appointed to any leadership positions in the children's ministry.

All volunteer workers must be 18 years of age or older unless working under the supervision of an adult who has met the qualifications in these policies.

All volunteers in children's ministry and youth must have a signed application on file with the church. A Volunteer Application is available from the staff member for the specific ministry area, we are asking that every volunteer working with children and youth complete and turn in a signed application.

APPLICATION PROCESS AND PROCEDURES

Background Checks: Security background checks for persons 18 years and older, including a search for criminal history, will be conducted through an agency authorized to perform a security background check. The staff member overseeing the ministry area you are applying for will review the results of the background checks.

Confidentiality: All personal information voluntarily disclosed, the result of the security background check, or the refusal of any person to participate in a program or activity in lieu of such disclosure requirements will be considered confidential. Should the results of the background check need further review, the staff member may conduct further inquiries, as necessary. Without the written permission of the volunteer, the information contained in the confidential portion of the volunteer application and the results of the security background check will be disclosed only to the appropriate staff as necessary.

Storage of confidential records: The church will maintain a secure storage facility for all volunteer applications and results of all security background checks. Volunteer background checks are required to be updated every two years, but only if the worker is still a current volunteer.

Volunteers should be reviewed annually for re-appointment to their current or new positions.

All volunteers must have the approval of the staff member overseeing the ministry area you are applying for before being placed in any position of ministry to children. Volunteers that are not approved for working with children for one reason or another will be graciously assisted in finding another place of ministry in the church.

VOLUNTEER IDENTIFICATION

All volunteers must wear the appropriate identification whenever serving.

Do not allow unauthorized individuals into your classroom, or trust children to their care. Please direct them to a staff member instead.

If you see an adult wandering around the building, please ask if you can help them find their way. Otherwise, for security purposes, we do not permit people to wander around the children's areas.

CLASSROOM GUIDELINES

All visiting children must be registered upon their first visit. Children from nursery through third grade must be checked in and out by their parents at the appropriate check-in stations. Children in grades four through twelve can check in and out themselves with permission from their parents.

Teacher/Student ratios: We will try to maintain the following teacher/student ratios. However, at all times there will be a minimum of two adults per classroom.

Nursery (0-36 months)	1:4
Preschool (3-5 years)	1:5
Children's Church (3-6 yrs.)	1:5
Kindergarten – 5 th grade	1:15

If the classroom exceeds these limits, it may have to be closed to ensure the safety and quality of education for each child. The area Coordinator will have the freedom to lower the ratios if necessary.

Classrooms and teaching areas should never be locked while in use. Lights should remain on at all times unless a video is being played.

Each door of a classroom should have a window. If there is no window, the door should be left open. Sight lines through each window should remain unobstructed at all times. This will allow the Coordinators access for support without disturbing the class.

Any room usage must be approved by the staff to make sure there is adequate staffing and the rooms are age appropriate.

During services, children are not allowed to wander around the building. If you see a child who is not in an appropriate place, please approach them or contact a staff member. We will take the child to their class or to their parent.

DISMISSAL PROCEEDURE

Children through 3rd grade must remain in the classroom until picked up by a parent. Parents must check their children in and out. Each department will develop this system in accordance with the needs of their particular age group.

4th-5th graders may be dismissed on their own after the 10:30 hour with permission from their parents.

Kids at midweek programming must be picked up in their room by a parent. Children will not be released to a sibling or to 'go to the parking lot' alone.

VISIBILITY POLICY

No workers are ever to be alone with a child. At least two workers should be present whenever possible.

If a child arrives early, prop the door open and remain visible.

In the event that a middle or high school student is volunteering in a ministry area where other adult volunteers would not be safe place trained (such as the worship teams, kitchen crew, etc.), the expectation is that at least two adults are present with the youth.

Doors without windows should never be closed completely when children are inside with adults.

When holding a private talk with a student, especially of the opposite sex, be sure to sit in view of an open door or window.

PHYSICAL TOUCH GUIDELINES

Physical touch and affection is important to a child's physical and emotional development. It is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives. However, there is an obvious danger with inappropriate touch or affection either intentionally or inadvertently

in a children's/youth ministry. Physical contact with children/youth should be age and developmentally appropriate. Be aware of and sensitive to differences in sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, individual personalities, and special needs. The following guidelines are to be promoted for pure, genuine and positive displays of God's love:

ALL physical affection needs to be in the presence of other workers. The contact should occur in reference to the needs of the child/youth and not the needs of the worker.

Physical touch or affection should be brief in nature, and never on private parts. Children/youth are not to be hit or shaken.

Preteens and older girls should be hugged from the side.

Kids on laps should be sitting on legs, not straddled over adult private areas.

The following signs and symptoms do not always mean abuse. Repeated incidents of injury combined with behavioral problems, inconsistent stories, etc. are typical indicators a family may need assistance. Fears of a teacher, adult worker or relative, may indicate something unhealthy in the relationship.

- **Physical:** Unexplained bruises, welts, broken bones cuts or scrapes, burns, missing hair, injuries or redness around the genitals, injuries at different stages of healing, injury or medical condition that hasn't been properly treated, bodily complaints related to stress-stomach aches, headaches, vomiting without cause, suicidal gestures or self mutilation, substance abuse or eating disorders, appearance may be one of poor grooming and dirty, clothing may be in poor condition or not suited to the weather.
- **Child's Behavior:** Aggressive or withdrawn behavior – especially as a shift in personality, unusual fears (of certain people, going home, etc.), craving for attention, running away, fatigue without physical cause, and/or depression, lack of concentration, school problems-misbehavior, hunger, begging for food, stealing, frequent tardiness or absence from school, unusual knowledge of sex, explicit language, inappropriate behavior with peers, knowledge beyond developmental age, regression to earlier behaviors such as thumb sucking, bed wetting, afraid to be alone with certain people, "clingy" with other people, or pseudo-mature behavior. Children may talk about being abused. Take what they say and any suspicions you have seriously.
- **Adult's Behavior:** Harsh punishment of child in public, refer to the child as "difficult", "different" or "bad," seem unconcerned about the child, give conflicting stories about injuries, become defensive when asked about the child's health, presence of family stress – loss of job, financial difficulties, marital problems, family history of violence or substance abuse, parents who were physically or sexually abused as children, families in which children or women are seen as possessions; male authoritarian and rigid households; also strongly religious homes in combination with these factors.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY & ABUSE

Individual Responsibility: In order to maintain a safe environment for all children and youth, all persons must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, admission, or situation which endangers or threatens children. All questions or concerns of suspected activity of abuse or harassment by a volunteer should be reported directly to the appropriate staff member. Should the activity of concern involve a paid church employee, the matter shall be reported to the Senior Pastor or the Church Chair. Pending the outcome of an investigation, all information pertaining to the alleged incident should be kept confidential. A mere allegation of improper behavior by a volunteer will not be treated as an actual occurrence pending the completion of the investigation, and the church will take steps necessary to protect the integrity of the volunteer involved.

Response to the Accuser: Allegations should be taken seriously, and emotional support given to the accuser. The care and safety of the accuser is the first priority. All efforts should be made to reach out to the accuser and the accuser's family, extending whatever pastoral and professional resources may be needed.

Response to the Accused: Treat the accused with dignity and support. He/she will be relieved of his/her duties until the investigation is finished. Pastoral and/or professional resources should likewise be extended to the accused.

ILLNESS POLICY

We have a well-baby policy. We do not provide care for sick children, our facilities and staff are too limited. If a child is sick, they should not be accepted into the program. If they get sick, or are discovered to be sick, during the program, go get the parents. A child will not be admitted with any of these symptoms: matter in the eyes, frequent coughing, runny nose (anything but clear discharge).

If you suspect a child is ill, please call the staff member in charge.

Do not give children medicine of any kind. If a parent requests you give a child medication, refer the parent to the staff member in charge.

We ask you not to volunteer in any ministry if you are sick. Please notify your leaders and request a replacement.

Bodily Fluid Accidents:

1. All caregivers should wear disposable gloves when there is a possibility of contact with blood or blood-containing fluids.
2. Remove gloves when contaminated or before leaving that work area. Remove gloves after diaper change, wiping each nose and coming into contact with any body fluid.
3. Dispose of gloves in plastic lined waste container. Wash hands thoroughly and dry with disposable towels.
4. Blood on surfaces should be cleaned with bleach and water disinfectant solution (1/4 C. bleach, 1 gallon water). Use disposable towels and gloves for clean up.
5. Discard all items into covered container. Vomit areas should be cleaned up, and then covered. Again, report the incident.

OVERNIGHT POLICY

All overnight events must be accompanied by at least 2 approved, unrelated staff.

All overnight events should be pre-approved by the appropriate paid staff member.

There will not be overnight events for children younger than 3rd grade unless it is specifically a parent/child outing.

At least two supervising adults attending the overnight need to have a ministry application and approval on file.

Supervising adults are never to sleep in a closed room alone with any children/youth attending the event. (Except for their own children.)

If both male and female students are attending the overnight activity, there must be at least two male and two female screened adults present. All overnight activities must provide for separate sleeping accommodations for the male and female participants.

It is understood that circumstances may arise that necessitate the need for deviating from this policy. For such infrequent and unusual situations that are not easily classified elsewhere in this policy, the standards and spirit of this policy shall be recognized as being in force. Exceptions should be cleared with the staff in advance. As soon as an unavoidable or uncorrectable deviation is observed, please notify the staff member as soon as possible for your own protection.

SEVERE WEATHER POLICY

When a Tornado or Severe Weather Warning is activated by the National Weather Service, the appropriate staff member will alert leaders. Children will then be moved to the designated rooms as outlined in the Crossview Emergency Procedures Manual.